

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

MATTHEW ARNOLD IN DEFENCE OF LITERATURE.—FROUDE'S LIFE OF CARLYLE.—

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It would be a strange thing if such a department as the present were to pass over in silence Matthew Arnold's Rede Lecture upon "Literature and Science." All that Mr. Arnold writes has the knack of attracting public attention, and upon such a subject as this, he could hardly fail to have something new to tell us or some new way of putting an old truth. His contention in his late discourse was that "If there is to be separation and option between humane letters on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other, the great majority of mankind, all who have not exceptional and overpowering aptitudes for the study of nature, would do well, to choose to be educated in humane letters rather than in the natural sciences. Letters will call out their being at more points, will make them live more." This to many people will appear rather a bold stand to take at the present day, and the lecturer himself confesses it, contending for his own point of view because, it seems to him, "those who are for giving to natural knowledge, as they call it, the chief place in the education of the majority of mankind, leave one important thing out of their account—the constitution of human nature." Conceding the interest that naturally attaches to the knowledge of the results of science, Mr. Arnold urges that for the majority of mankind this knowledge does not take us far enough. "For the generality of men there will be found, I say, to arise, when they have duly taken in the proposition that their ancestor was a 'hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits,' there will be found to arise an invincible desire to relate this proposition to the sense within them for conduct and to the sense for beauty. But this the men of science will not do for us, and will hardly even profess to do." And this it is his further belief that men of letters and literature can do. "We shall find, as matter of experience, if we know the best that has been thought and uttered in the world, we shall find that the art and poetry and eloquence of men who lived, perhaps, long ago, who had the most limited natural knowledge, who had the most erroneous conceptions about important matters, we shall find that they have, in fact, not only the power of refreshing and delighting us, they have also the power,—such is the strength and worth, in essentials, of their authors' criticism of life,—they have a fortifying and elevating and quickening and suggestive power capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty."

It was Matthew Arnold who popularised for us the term, which probably has caused diamay to many readers as a kind of mysterious entity, the *Zeit-Geist*, or, as we call it in English, the Spirit of the Times. No man formed a more important factor in this *Zeit-Geist* in his life than a man who died two years ago, and of whom we have heard a good deal since, I mean Thomas Carlyle. The appearance of the first instalment of his life by Mr. Froude has terminated, hardly in his favour, a controversy which was hotly waged for some considerable time and in many quarters. Scarcely had the papers published their obituary eulogies when voices of protest were raised. *Punch*, at first silent, at last pronounced a disparaging verdict. Our own *Bystander* showed its hostility from the first; the London *Spectator*, at first eulogistic, in a second article sounded a note of warning, hinting that Carlyle's was hardly a life distinguished by heroism, that his ideal was more perfect than his character, etc. Still no definite charges were brought against Carlyle till Froude published the "Reminiscences," whereat men's tongues were loosened. Mrs. Oliphant's *Macmillan* article hinted that he had not treated his wife as she