

## LITERATURE.

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE.

**F**EW men have been more closely connected with the great literary and religious movements of this century than James Anthony Froude. The intimate friend in his earlier years of Newman, Keble and Pusey, and associated with them in the Tractarian Movement, he afterwards left that party, and gave up church orders, to devote himself to literature, and especially to history, and later still he became the friend of Carlyle, who confided to him his literary remains.

One of three brothers, each of whom was distinguished in his own sphere, his childhood was spent at Totnes in Devonshire, that county so fertile in reminiscences of an olden time. In due time he went to Oxford where the memory of his brother Hurrell was still fresh, and he naturally became associated with those who had been his brother's friends, especially with Newman and Keble, who edited "Hurrell's Remains" in that loving spirit which so characterized them. It was doubtless through these associations that Newman, who was then publishing *The Lives of the Saints*, asked young Froude to undertake the life of St. Neot. This was the turning point of Froude's life. Newman had taught him that there was no difference between the miracles of the Saints and those of the Bible; but his short study of the life of one of these Saints convinced him that it was simply "an excursion into a Spiritual Morass." He realized that these lives were entirely legendary, yet to which it was necessary to lend a semblance of truth; and he was led to regard all supernatural stories as of the same legendary character. To one who had been a close student of Gibbon and Hume, of Goethe and Carlyle, of Lessing and Schliermacher, there could be little to attach him to the Tractarian school. He therefore left Oxford, and gave up his Deacon's orders, to which he had been admitted. That this separation from his early friends, and from his previous life of faith, was a painful one we can not doubt and the sorrows of this spiritual Werther are disclosed in his two writings, "The Shadow of Clouds" and "The Nemesis of Faith."

Separated from Oxford and from church orders it became an anxious question as to what he should now direct his attention. Law seemed to hold out several inducements, but for some reason he found himself unable to take up that study, and he concluded to give himself to literature and especially to history. The Tractarian School had deplored the Reformation as a retrograde movement, and had abused the Reformers, and it was only natural that Froude, in his revulsion from that school, should

direct his attention to that period of history, and study the characters of Erasmus and Luther, and a sketch of the life of Luther was published in his "Short Studies," while the life of Erasmus formed the subject of his prelections delivered last year at Oxford. It was this period of English history which he now resolved to thoroughly study, and, answering prejudice by prejudice, Henry VIII became his strong man, around whom all else seemed to group itself. This however was not the spirit in which such an important period of history should be approached—not the spirit likely to lead to a dispassionate study of facts, or of representations of life.

There was something noble in Froude's leaving Oxford. He gave up his fellowship, and his profession, with the loss of his means of living, and his future prospects, and he was obliged almost entirely to depend on his literary efforts, on his contributions to the *Westminster Review* and *Fraser's Magazine*, of which in later years he became editor. The first two volumes of his great *History* appeared in 1856, and he was occupied with the work for the next sixteen years. The same causes which no doubt directed Froude to the period of the Reformation made the English people eager to read all that could be said about it, and his volumes at once became popular.

Froude's history to those who do not trouble themselves as to exact truthfulness is very attractive. His style is graphic and full of life, and we may recall, as an example, that passage where he narrates the execution of Mary Stuart,—as effective a picture as we have in the English language. But we cannot accept Froude's judgment of the period, or of the actors. It is quite evident that, consciously or unconsciously, he has perverted his facts, his representation of Henry VIII is too roseate, and is not borne out by his authorities, while that of Elizabeth is too dark. He seems to lack the power of forming a true and unprejudiced estimate of character. But if Froude's view of Henry VIII cannot be wholly accepted, it must be admitted that he did good service in dispelling the narrow and prejudiced views which had prevailed regarding that prince and his relations to the great Reformation movement.

It is doubtful if Froude's great work will long retain its popularity as a history, though it may as a literary effort. It cannot be accepted as the last *pronunciamento* on such an important period. It will doubtless be superseded, as Macaulay, with his finished periods, is rapidly being displaced by the rougher but more truthful and judicious histories of Ranke and Gardiner. Froude's idea of history differs from that of Stubbs or of Freeman. Theirs is essentially political, his ethical, but he seems to lack the critical judgment to detect the ethical