



## OUR TABLE.

LORD'S MODERN HISTORY.

THOSE of our readers who listened to the eloquent lectures recently delivered by Mr. Lord before the Mercantile Library Association of this city will need no further recommendation of the work before us. It is a rapid and spirited narration of that vast complication of religious and political events which intervened between the rise of Luther, and the fall of Napoleon. Exhibiting no marked originality of thought or style, without pretensions to a philosophical acuteness, it is still a vivid picture of those wondrous agitations which the last three hundred years present. It gives a greater prominence to

the agency of spiritual ideas, in promoting revolutions and reforms, than to the bravery of soldiers or the subtlety of kings. It traces, not the lives of individuals, however great and powerful, except so far as they affect directly the important interests of the race. And this is right, for History abandons its true dignity when, stooping to record minutely private fortunes, it neglects to contemplate the progress of humanity.

Mr. Lord has chosen the Protestant Reformation as his starting point, because from it proceeded those disastrous wars, and furious theological controversies, which distracted society for the two succeeding centuries.

The condition of Europe when Luther arose, affords a boundless field of thought. Powerful princes vied with each other in the splendor of their courts, the magnitude of their armies, and the brilliancy of their exploits. Each sought unrivalled glory, and they spilled the blood of thousands in their contest for supremacy. The masses were in lamentable ignorance, subjected to the guidance of a profligate and avaricious clergy. At length the light of truth was shed upon this darkness. Man awoke to a consciousness of his degradation, and threw off the yoke which had so long oppressed him; the freedom which he won he has not since resigned.

The Reformation, then, is properly the starting point in Modern History. It was the revival of intellectual power, and the origin of all subsequent civilization.

Of course, within the limits of this notice, we can only be expected to advert in the most general terms to the plan which Mr. Lord has pursued. Among the many excellencies his work possesses, may be mentioned its invariable candor. This is no ordinary merit, in an age so marked as ours by arrogance and dogmatism. This candor is most strikingly apparent, when it stands in opposition to venerable authorities or popular prejudices. To Queen Mary of England, for example, has been usually ascribed the basest sentiments which ever reigned within a human breast,—sentiments unredeemed by a single amiable quality. Mr. Lord has found, in the sorrows of her life, the secret of her errors. Long styled the Bloody Mary, few perhaps will now believe that she was "affectionate, sincere, high-minded,—attentive and considerate to her servants, charitable to the poor, and sympathetic with the unfortunate." Yet such she was, in spite of her intolerant religious zeal, which was the offspring of a bruised and broken spirit. While a blind and senseless enthusiasm has almost deified Elizabeth, all the arts of bigotry have been employed to hide the virtues and to magnify the faults of Mary. A proper judgment of the memory of each, depends upon the extension of knowledge and the love of truth.

The latter portion of this work is mainly devoted to a consideration of the circumstances which led to the American and French Revolutions. The first of these is regarded as the most important event of modern times,—as an event which called into existence an empire of vast extent and unsurpassed resources; which proclaimed the triumph of true liberty, and stirred the hearts of patriots throughout the world. The second; though less important in its ultimate results, was far more terrible and exciting while it lasted. Its causes are somewhat difficult to trace, and indeed have perplexed philosophers more eminent than Mr. Lord. He, however, seems to find the matter simple enough; for he hastily generalizes these causes under five heads—a generalization which we do not like, but which our want of space compels us to refrain from combating. His views upon this subject contain but little originality yet, the language in which they are expressed, is pure and elegant. Indeed, those passages which speak of Rousseau and Voltaire, are among the finest we have ever seen. Of the former it is said, that "he poisoned the weak and the susceptible by pouring out streams of passion in eloquent and exciting language, under the pretence of unburdening his own soul and revealing his own sorrows. He was always talking about philanthropy and generosity, and yet seldom bestowed a charity. No man was ever more eloquent in paradox, or sublime in absurdity. He spent his life in gilding what is corrupt, and glossing over what is impure."

From the short extracts we have made, a general idea may be formed of the character of the author's style. It is flowing and flexible,—easily adapting itself to the varieties of the subject,—seldom rising above, yet never descending below it. As a whole, we have found the work agreeable and profitable, and we cordially recommend it to our readers. It may be obtained from Mr. Dawson of the *Place d'Armes*.