

The Writings of Mahony, or The Prout Papers.

THE Rev. Francis Sylvester Mahony, most of whose writings were given to the public in *Fraser's Magazine* during the second quarter of the nineteenth century as the Reliques of Father Prout, was one of the most original, learned and humorous of the writers of that period. He was educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood, but his tastes led in a different direction. He drifted from the service of the church to the realm of literature where he left behind him some of the most charming compositions in prose and verse to be found in the English language.

The authorship of Mahony was unique in many respects, one of which I will mention. Other eminent writers, such as the author of the Letters of Junius, used *noms de plume*, and others, like Sir Walter Scott, for a time withheld their names from the public; but Mahony was not satisfied with a simple *nom de plume*. His plan was like the combination of a safe, and his ingenuity in working it was so great that not only ordinary readers but literary men have been bewildered by it.

Father Prout is represented as a priest ministering in a parish called Watergrasshill, near the city of Cork, and is noted for his learning, his hospitality and his opposition to the Repeal Movement under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell. He makes the absurd claim for himself that he is the son of Dean Swift and Stella. Frank Cresswell, who is introduced as playing a principal part in recovering the "Chest" containing the posthumous papers of Prout, is represented as a young English law-student, who was made heir to a rich Roman Catholic aunt—a parishioner of Prout's—on condition that he should keep Lent, although remaining a Protestant. With these literary ruses or combinations in the