

ABSTRACT

A critical study of the literary works of J.A. Froude with special reference to the novels, the essays and the biography of Carlyle.

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James Anthony Froude (1818-94) was one of the most prolific, versatile and controversial writers of his age. An early work, The Nemesis of Faith (1849), a fascinating novel of faith and doubt, was publicly burnt during a lecture at Oxford. His History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada (1856-70) earned its uncompromisingly Protestant author a popularity which rivalled that of Macaulay. His Short Studies on Great Subjects (1st series, 1867) contains some of his most provocative essays on theological, philosophical and political topics, many of which had previously appeared in journals such as Fraser's Magazine which Froude edited from 1861 to 1874. As Carlyle's literary executor and authorised biographer, Froude wrote what has been referred to as the first modern biography: when it appeared in 1882-84 it provoked a storm of controversy even more virulent than that occasioned by his study of the Irish problem in The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (1872-74). Shortly before he was appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, Froude travelled widely (partly as an official Government representative), and his experiences are vividly recorded in works such as Oceana (1886), an engaging if partisan portrayal of life in the colonies.

The picture which emerges from a reading of his works is of an interesting, intelligent and accomplished author. However, Froude

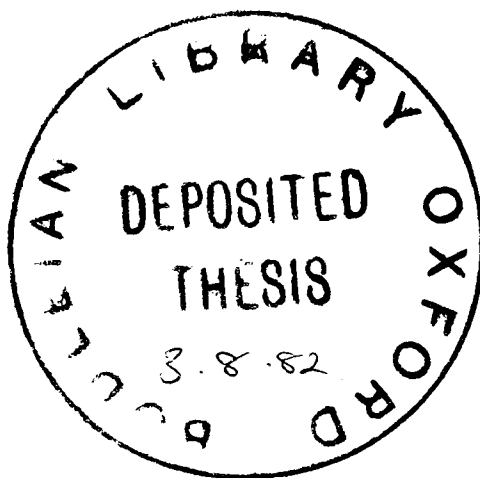
has been curiously ignored by critics of nineteenth-century literature. Few of his works are in print, and although a number of articles and two biographies have been written about him, a book considering his literary achievement has yet to appear. It is my contention that he has been unjustly neglected.

The significance of his works is two-fold. First, they are interesting in terms of their art. In his mature writings Froude's handling of narrative and his prose style are especially impressive. Secondly (and perhaps more importantly) his works are of great interest to the student of Victorian ideas for the light they shed on a whole range of issues and questions which preoccupied many of Froude's contemporaries.

In this thesis I examine the thought and art of Froude's literary productions. The opening chapter provides a broad overview of his published works including his historical writings and his travel books. Successive chapters deal in some detail with his four novels (the two short novels published under the title Shadows of the Clouds, The Nemesis of Faith and The Two Chiefs of Dunboy), a selection of his essays and literary criticism, and his biography of Carlyle and the controversy which surrounded it. These texts (and especially the Carlyle biography), the most interesting and important of his works, are considered both as literary artefacts and as documents of value to the historian of ideas. The critical reception each work enjoyed is discussed where appropriate. In the conclusion I define and evaluate the precise nature of Froude's contribution to English letters.

A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE LITERARY WORKS
OF J.A. FROUDE
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NOVELS, THE ESSAYS
AND THE BIOGRAPHY OF CARLYLE

BY
C.J. WALSH
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
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REFERENCES

The following editions of those of Froude's works discussed in detail in this thesis are referred to throughout:

Shadows of the Clouds, by Zeta (1847)

The Nemesis of Faith, 2nd ed. (1849)

The Two Chiefs of Dunboy, or An Irish Romance of the Last Century,

Silver Library ed. (1906)

Short Studies on Great Subjects, Silver Library ed., 4 vols (1898-99)

Thomas Carlyle, a history of the first forty years of his life, 1795-1835,

Silver Library ed., 2 vols (1901)

Thomas Carlyle, a history of his life in London, 1834-1881, Silver Library

ed., 2 vols (1902)

The 'Silver Library' editions were published by Longmans, Green & Co., the first two works above having been published by John Ollivier and John Chapman respectively. Here, and in the citations of all other books in the footnotes and bibliography, the place of publication is London unless stated otherwise (for periodicals this information is not given).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following modern periodicals and scholarly compilations are referred to by the abbreviations given here:

<u>AJT</u>	<u>American Journal of Theology</u>
<u>AM</u>	<u>Atlantic Monthly</u>
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</u>
<u>BMJ</u>	<u>British Medical Journal</u>
<u>CW</u>	<u>Catholic World</u>
<u>DNB</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>ELN</u>	<u>English Language Notes</u>
<u>E & S</u>	<u>Essays and Studies</u>
<u>HS</u>	<u>Historical Studies</u>
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>JRH</u>	<u>Journal of Religious History</u>
<u>MLQ</u>	<u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>
<u>MR</u>	<u>Monthly Review</u>
<u>N & Q</u>	<u>Notes and Queries</u>
<u>NS</u>	<u>New Statesman</u>
<u>PBSA</u>	<u>Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America</u>
<u>PHR</u>	<u>Pacific Historical Review</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
<u>SAQ</u>	<u>South Atlantic Quarterly</u>
<u>SB</u>	<u>Studies in Bibliography</u>
<u>TLS</u>	<u>Times Literary Supplement</u>
<u>TRB</u>	<u>Tennyson Research Bulletin</u>
<u>TSE</u>	<u>Texas Studies in English</u>
<u>UTQ</u>	<u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u>
<u>VN</u>	<u>Victorian Newsletter</u>
<u>VS</u>	<u>Victorian Studies</u>

PREFACE

Froude is probably the sole remaining Victorian man of letters of considerable significance who has yet to receive serious critical attention. He is the sort of writer about whom countless isolated paragraphs, frequently saying the same things, have been written; two or more consecutive paragraphs (let alone a page or a whole chapter) of intelligent discussion of his writings, the interested scholar will encounter but rarely. Many an index to works on the Victorians contains references to Froude, but seldom is anything of value revealed: his biography of Carlyle is quoted; readers may be referred to The Nemesis of Faith for an example of the 'loss of faith' process - but the reference is not usually elaborated upon.

That Froude is a neglected figure then, there can be no doubt. But why has he been neglected? And is this neglect perhaps deserved? My answer to the second question is clearly no: this thesis is the result of my belief that he (or, rather, various writings of his) has indeed been unfairly (even if accidentally) ignored or deliberately cold-shouldered by literary scholars. The first question is more difficult to answer. At first sight the neglect appears curious. Attempts have been made in the last four decades to revive the reputations of other Victorians - even relatively minor ones such as George Borrow, Charles Reade or Mrs Humphry Ward - so why not Froude? Only two critics have hinted that Froude is overdue for a reappraisal: Phyllis Grosskurth and John Clubbe. But so far he remains something of an obscure figure. I can only guess why this should be. A number of reasons suggest themselves. Froude is usually thought of as primarily an historian, and (rightly or wrongly) as an unsatisfactory, because a notoriously inaccurate if not an actually discredited, historian at that, whose works have been superseded by those

of more modern scholars. Certainly Froude thought of himself as an historian first and foremost, and many of his works are historical in character. And if historians are not interested in his writings, literary critics are inclined to be even less so, for apart from his historical works (so, I imagine, their thinking runs) what is there of a literary nature? The novels - of some limited interest for their ideas, no doubt, but hardly worthy of serious attention as art. The essays - dabbings in a literary form which even in the hands of master practitioners more renowned than Froude (Charles Lamb, Matthew Arnold, G.K. Chesterton) has scarcely received the attention it so plainly needs. And the biographies - and Froude's sternest critic (if there were one) would surely admit that he wrote a great biography of Carlyle - ventures into what is only just beginning to be recognised as an art form which repays detailed critical study, in the wake of the recent substantial biographical endeavours and critical pronouncements by Leon Edel, Richard Ellmann and Michael Holroyd. So Froude has been neglected perhaps partly because he was an historian and partly because his so-called literary works either do not merit a detailed consideration or are difficult to talk about because it is felt we lack an appropriate terminology and the 'necessary' framework of critical comparisons thereby rendering essays and biographies awkward to discuss in the 'expected' critical fashion - a problem which no longer exists where most novels, poems and plays are concerned. Perhaps also Froude is seen as a mere subordinate to Carlyle, as so whole-hearted a disciple (pace the biography) that since the sayings of his master have already been dissected and discredited why should their repetition, in a minor key, be of any interest to us whatsoever? And finally, I suppose, Froude is a neglected author because he is not a 'paperback' Victorian: a voluminous writer, most of his works are only to be found in large second-hand bookshops or in the copyright libraries.

In writing this thesis I have been conscious, therefore, of treading paths along which a few have occasionally ambled but none has purposely walked. Thus much of what follows, although inescapably 'original' insofar as the texts I examine have hitherto received scarcely any detailed attention, is largely introductory in nature. Familiarity cannot be assumed with each and every text, and some time is spent summarising the contents and structures of certain works (though I have tried to keep such synopses to a minimum). I have been concerned to provide an initial commentary, a 'first' reading of Froude's more important works, drawing attention to features of interest and pointing out various implications. To advance sophisticated critical theories would clearly be inappropriate in this thesis and so I have refrained from doing so, even where the temptation to do so has been quite strong. The uniqueness of this venture, and the fact that quotations from and references to the principal texts discussed are for convenience incorporated in the body of the thesis, explain the relative paucity of footnotes (for a doctoral thesis) for large sections of the study.

It is a 'critical' study, although inevitably in certain instances (where I consider the novels, for example) greater emphasis is sometimes placed on the interest of Froude's ideas than on his artistry which, because of its obvious nature or middling qualities or both, does not really always justify a wholly critical treatment. Apart from a brief glance at his historical and other writings in the first chapter for contextual purposes, I have concentrated on his 'literary' works. Beyond noting what other historians have said about him I am not qualified to pass judgement on Froude's status as an historian or on the perspicacity of, say, his political statements. The works I have selected are not necessarily representative of Froude's output but are both interesting and, since they possess a wider representative quality, important, and often show

him at his artistically most assured.

What follows, then, is offered tentatively and in all humility. It would be ludicrous to claim that Froude's true stature is great enough to sustain many weighty tomes of criticism on his writings. But, equally, he is certainly not sufficiently insignificant to warrant the fate which has hitherto befallen his works.

CHAPTER 1

FROUDE'S LIFE AND WORKS - AN OVERVIEW

Background and early writings

James Anthony Froude was born at Dartington, Devonshire, on 23 April 1818, the feast of St George and the anniversary of Shakespeare's birth.¹ He was the youngest of the eight children of Robert Hurrell Froude (Archdeacon of Totnes from 1820 until his death in 1859), and Margaret Froude née Spedding (who died just two years after giving birth to him). Apart from Anthony (as he came to be called) only two of the siblings lived into the second half of the century. His eldest brother, Richard Hurrell Froude (1803-36), who was perhaps the most brilliant of the Froudes and who exerted a strong influence on his youngest brother, became renowned as the co-founder (with Newman and Keble) of the Oxford Movement. Another brother, William Froude (1810-79) was a celebrated engineer and naval architect and friend of Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

¹ In this chapter, to lend coherence to my account of Froude's large and varied literary output over nearly fifty years, I provide only the barest outline of the more important events in his life. A fuller picture may be obtained by consulting Froude's own writings, especially those which have a strong autobiographical element such as The Spirit's Trials in Shadows of the Clouds (1847), those which reveal something of the author's enigmatic personality in passing (as most of his works do), and in particular his essay, 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', in Short Studies on Great Subjects (4th ser., 1882). Waldo Hilary Dunn's adulatory (and in many ways unsatisfactory) biography, James Anthony Froude, 2 vols (Oxford, 1961-63), does at least print almost entire an autobiographical sketch Froude had written. See also: W.H. Dunn's 'A Valiant Professorship', SAQ, 50 (October, 1951), 519-29; Herbert Paul's readable, if somewhat inaccurate, Life of Froude, 2nd ed. (1906); John Skelton's The Table Talk of Shirley, 4th ed. (1895), chs. 8 and 9; Albert Frederick Pollard's summary of Froude's life in the supplement to DNB. Works of some help, treating of the other members of the Froude family, include a recent account of Froude's eldest brother in Piers Brendon, Hurrell Froude and the Oxford Movement (1974) and Gordon Huntington Harper, Cardinal Newman and William Froude, F.R.S.: a correspondence (Baltimore, 1933). The only bibliography (a highly incomplete one) is Robert Goetzman, James Anthony Froude: A Bibliography of Studies (New York, 1977).

Froude's childhood and upbringing were not very happy. He was educated for awhile at Buckfastleigh School before being sent to Westminster, where he was King's scholar, in 1830. Three miserable years later he left the school and was educated privately until matriculating in December 1835 from Oriel College, Oxford, where he had rooms just above Newman's.

Up at Oxford Froude began to lead a rather happier life, reading voraciously and making friends with such figures as Arthur Hugh Clough, Mark Pattison, Matthew Arnold and Arthur Penrhyn Stanley. It was a life marred at this time only by his father's disgruntlement at his habit of running up debts, and a broken engagement with one Harriet Bush whom he had met in the course of a vacation reading party in the summer of 1838. Froude took a second class degree in the honours school of literae humaniores, graduating B.A. in 1842 and M.A. a year later.

On 8 June 1842, in the Sheldonian Theatre, Froude read out the English essay which had won the Chancellor's prize for that year. Its title was 'The Influence of the science of political economy on the moral and social welfare of a nation'. Although this is, strictly speaking, Froude's first published work, it is of relatively little interest except tangentially insofar as it reveals Froude's awareness of the 'all or nothing' psychology of the acceptance or rejection of a prevailing set of beliefs and the consequences entailed - a pointer to the way in which he was to regard the Oxford Movement.¹ Sundry theological references would seem to indicate that Froude had not yet doubted - much less thrown off - the elementary truths of his childhood faith: he speaks of 'the deluge' as a fact and decries those 'infidels' who seek 'to disprove the facts related to us in the Bible'.² The young

¹ 'Influence of political economy', (Oxford, 1842) p. 11. Cf. 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', Short Studies on Great Subjects IV, 231-360.

² 'Influence of political economy', pp. 15, 14. Cf. p. 27.

Froude is already widely read (he cites Malthus, Bentham and 'the German sophists' as well as the more traditional classical and English authors). He inveighs against rationalism, regards the evidence of geology, philology and chemistry as supporting what we learn in revelation, and concludes that the 'science' of political economy is 'irreconcilable with the history of the world as revealed from God'¹ - a view he was to retain unchanged in later years when a fervent disciple of Carlyle. And throughout Froude stresses the importance of a dedication to truth and to religion ('the object of our existence') in the spirit of 'reverence'.²

Froude's next appearance in print in 1844 - the same year he took deacon's orders (then a necessary step in retaining a fellowship)³ - was instigated by Newman, who was helping to edit some saints' Lives.⁴ Froude's contribution to the 'Hermit Saints' volume was notably entitled 'A Legend of St. Neot'.⁵ His introduction to this short exercise in 'hagiography' recalls the hermeneutical and exegetical pronouncements of such German Biblical critics as D.F. Strauss whose Das Leben Jesu was to be translated into English by a then little-known Mary Ann Evans just two years after the saints' Lives were published. Froude, who was certainly familiar with the critics' writings,⁶ alludes to his difficulties in writing the life of this medieval saint: the conflicting authorities of the extant Lives with their factual discrepancies, the

¹ 'Influence of political economy', p. 27.

² 'Influence of political economy', p. 43.

³ He was to divest himself of these minor orders in 1872 on the passing of the Clergy Disabilities Relief Act.

⁴ Lives of the English Saints, 4 vols (1844).

⁵ op. cit., III, 73-127.

⁶ 'Froude...has become regularly Germanized, and talked unreservedly about Strauss, miracles &c.' So observed Benjamin Jowett in 1844: Evelyn Abbot and Lewis Campbell, Life of Jowett, 2 vols (1897) I, 111.

general lack of sound historical evidence, and the problem of deciding where history and biography end and inspired myth and edifying fiction begin - how are we to regard the reported elements of the miraculous, for example? The rationalist and the sceptic in Froude appear here for the first time. He resolves his difficulties by suggesting that rather than ask whether such tales of the miraculous are historically accurate, we should ponder their transhistorical or eternal 'truth' and the extent to which these tales have a meaning or teach us anything: herein lies their value. The actual narrative evinces a certain skill of description and the character portrayal, although simple, is vivid and concise. The tone reflects perhaps Froude's own ambivalent feelings towards the subject matter, shifting uneasily throughout from that of the moralistic story-teller with his biblical allusions, fairy-tale motifs, archaisms, apostrophes to the reader and aura of solemnity (not quite matching the reverential air of the medieval sections of Carlyle's Past and Present of nearly two years earlier) to that of the sceptical historian, quoting extensively from his authorities duly cited in the scholarly footnotes. The narrative does not end with the misattributed statement that 'this is all, and perhaps rather more than all, that is known of the life of the blessed St. Neot', as a contributor to Notes and Queries pointed out.¹

The next five years were the most turbulent of Froude's career. The reaction against his initial Tractarian leanings had deepened with his favourable impressions of Protestantism while engaged as a private tutor in Ireland, Newman's secession to Rome in 1845, and the revolutionary tide sweeping Europe which was to come to a head in 1848. His reading of Gibbon, Chambers's Vestiges of Creation (1844), the Germans (whom he encountered through reading Carlyle - somebody he was to meet

¹ Paul, p. 34, is one author who makes this mistake. See 'An Injustice to Froude', N&Q, 188 (2 June 1945), 233.

personally in 1849), Emerson (whom he met in 1848), Spinoza (upon whom he wrote twice, the first time as early as 1847¹), Hume and Rousseau among others, taken with the parallel experiences of his Oxford friends (especially Clough and Pattison) tended to exacerbate Froude's doubts concerning orthodox Christianity.² The outcome was a phase of scepticism (if not 'agnosticism' - the word had not yet been coined by T.H. Huxley) which led to his writing Shadows of the Clouds (1847) and The Nemesis of Faith (1849), discussed in detail respectively in the next two chapters. It was only with his departure from Oxford in 1849, after a period of recuperation in Manchester and then at Ilfracombe (where, staying with Charles Kingsley, he met Charlotte Grenfell, Kingsley's sister-in-law, who became his wife later that year³) before settling down at Plas Gwynant in Wales, that Froude began to regain his composure and had time to take stock and view his confusing experiences at a very hectic Oxford from a calmer perspective. As he reflected, read further and started to contribute articles and reviews on subjects of interest to the Westminster Review and Fraser's Magazine, he no longer saw the choice before him as Newman had

¹ 'The Life of Spinoza', Oxford and Cambridge Review, 5 (October, 1847), 387-427.

'Spinoza', Westminster Review, N.S.8 (July, 1855), 1-37; included in Short Studies (1st Ser.), where the article is dated 1854. These articles are discussed in the next chapter.

² The development of Froude's beliefs is chronologically problematical. It was a gradual and not a consistent development in one direction only. Thus, in his preface to Johann Ludwig Tieck's Tales from the 'Phantasus' &c. (1845), Froude speaks favourably of Catholicism and distastefully of infidelity; 'A Sermon preached at St. Mary Church, on the death of the Rev. George May Coleridge' (Torquay, 1847) is a wholly conventional meditation in a strictly orthodox Christian mould. Skelton notes that Froude's 'opinions might change - as no doubt they did; but he wrote always with the most absolute sincerity. He did not pride himself on consistency' (p. 123).

³ Charlotte Grenfell was the original of Argemone in Kingsley's Yeast (1851): see Paul, p. 53.

painted it: all or nothing, Catholicism or atheism. Recollecting with fond nostalgia his childhood faith and intellectually drawn (through his reading of Spinoza and Carlyle) towards a loosely Calvinistic Protestantism, Froude evolved his own personal, mature and critical Christian faith, with its mixture of conservative and sceptical elements.¹ Arnold's picture of Froude the practising Anglican, with all its wry humour, indicates that by 1853 Froude was already viewing his painful Oxford experiences with some equanimity.² Later, as Froude embarked upon his research into the sixteenth century at the archives of Simancas and elsewhere, his view of the Reformation and of the chief actors involved (from Luther and Henry VIII through to Oliver Cromwell) was to change, so that he became diametrically opposed to Catholicism and its Anglican counterpart, taking upon himself the role of a militant defender and apologist of an intensely nationalistic, secular English Protestantism as the whole of his History of England illustrates.³

¹ See the various philosophical and theological essays in Short Studies (1st ser.) for example. Two instances of the later Froude at his most sceptical can be found in the correspondence between Froude and the Rev. S.G. Potter, entitled 'Prayer, as it affects the immutability of nature's God and nature's laws' (Sheffield, 1879) and in Froude's remark in a letter to Skelton of 1870 which reads: 'I suppose if there is such a thing as a Personal God at all, this sort of theory [election] is the true one' (Skelton, p. 144).

² The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. H.F. Lowry (Oxford, 1932), p. 140.

³ Frederick Meyrick sums up Froude's 'eventual' religious position thus: 'For himself he chose the position of an eighteenth century Protestant, unemotional, unecclesiastical, and unspiritual, but not unbelieving' - Memories of Life at Oxford (1905), p. 310.

Miscellaneous writings

But in tracing the development of Froude's religious beliefs thus far, I anticipate, for while his beliefs were still very much in a state of flux he was trying his hand at various kinds of literary composition before embarking on his twelve volume history, including the essay (discussed below in chapter five) and the short story and fable. Froude's first attempt at writing shorter fictional pieces was 'The Swedenborgian'.¹ Froude's own comment on this short story can be found in an unpublished letter to Clough:

You have perhaps read my little imprudent Swedenborgian. It is absolutely without merit as I told you & only² filthy anxiety for ten Pounds made me send it where it is.

Froude's comments are misleading: there is nothing particularly 'imprudent' about the story which is not 'absolutely without merit'. The narrator (Mr Frankland) describes the impact that Fenton, the Swedenborgian apostle of the title, has upon polite society in Cheltenham. Written in a more dramatic mode than Froude's early novels, containing as it does a sizeable portion of dialogue, this short tale of romance and (apparent) intrigue recalls the novels of Jane Austen - a favourite writer of Froude's. Fenton bears comparison with Darcy of Pride and Prejudice, appearing at first mysterious, and exciting the narrator's suspicions. Frankland believes Fenton to be an impostor and a rival for Georgina de Courcy's hand, only to be later enlightened (after an accident during a storm scene) as to Fenton's ultimately good and honourable intentions. Fenton successfully helps persuade Georgina's mother that Frankland would make her daughter a worthy husband. A latent theme would seem to be that while

¹ Fraser's Magazine, 39 (January, 1849), 64-78.

² Bodleian MS Eng. Lett. c. 190, fols 287-88.

'there are many creeds - there is but one humanity'.¹ This story is certainly by no means perfect: there are tinges of melodrama and inconsistencies of character portrayal, but as a whole it is coherent, well-written, and free from several of those faults which mar Froude's novels.

Somewhat longer is Froude's four part short story, 'The Cat's Pilgrimage', which he included in the first series of Short Studies but which is dated 1850. This 'humorous and wise-hearted' tale² is Froude's gentler version of Johnson's Rasselas, a meditation upon the twin themes: 'What are we here for?' and 'What is the way to be happy?'³ peopled with various animal characters to each of which the cat of the title goes seeking answers to her questions. She fails to discover the answer to the first question, but the key to the second, she concludes, seems to lie in doing one's allotted duty. Although hardly startling in what it reveals, the tale is nevertheless delightfully contrived. Accompanying it in the Short Studies volume is a number of neatly constructed short fables and parables, in which animals also largely feature, embodying similarly straightforward moral lessons. A further example of this form (to which Froude obviously felt drawn at one stage), 'The Merchant and his Wife', which appeared in the second series of Short Studies, is briefly considered alongside my discussion of his essay, 'England and her Colonies', in chapter five below.

Two further, longer pieces appeared later on. 'A sibylline leaf'⁴ is Froude's sole attempt at futurist writing. The story opens in the year 1950, as a number of international savants gather for a conference

¹ 'The Swedenborgian', p. 78.

² The words of a critic in The Athenaeum, No. 2252 (24 December 1870), 838.

³ See 'The Cat's Pilgrimage', Short Studies I, 630-31, 636.

⁴ Blackwood's Magazine, 133 (April, 1883), 572-92.

in Cape Town. The picture Froude gives of the mid-twentieth century is a world in which democratic 'progress', liberty of opinion, a large growth in population, a marked inequality in the distribution of wealth, and the erosion of religion by superstition and science had resulted in a world anarchic and confused. Fortunately, the new wisdom which had been so badly needed had been forthcoming, so that by 1950 most people had returned to their senses, acknowledging anew God's existence, and resuming 'the condition of moral and reasonable beings'.¹ The ostensible reason for the savants' meeting is to allay popular fears about the significance of the appearance of an unknown star in the sky which had 'seized on the universal imagination'; the star soon 'waned' however and Froude uses the remainder of his 'story' to present to the reader a picture of various characters at the meeting discussing his own favourite political hobbyhorses in Carlylean terms: the ills of free speech, oratory and party government, the significance of the Reformation to the greatness of the English nation, the stupidity of casting off the colonies and the importance of the 'gospel of work'.

Much more accomplished is a dream allegory entitled 'A Siding at a Railway Station'.² The allegory is of the last judgement when every person has to give an account to God of how he has spent his life on earth. Froude briefly portrays a group of people from different walks in life, describing their lives and fates (in some cases involving re-incarnation) - satirising some (himself among them) while treating others sympathetically. As with 'The Cat's Pilgrimage', the points made are unsurprising, but they are made effectively so that the reader is forced to ponder some of their ramifications as he reflects on his own life

¹ 'A sibylline leaf', p. 578.

² Fraser's Magazine, 100 (November, 1879), 622-33. Reprinted in Short Studies (4th ser.).

with the help of Froude in his guise as a kindly, gently ironic and wordly-wise narrator.

Moncure Conway wrote that 'It was Carlyle who persuaded Froude to renounce imaginative work [such as fiction] and write history'.¹ Whether or not this was the case - certainly as Conway indicates both Carlyle and Froude had some harsh things to say of both novelists and poets in later years - with the exception of the occasional piece of short fiction such as we have been considering, and a few rare poems,² Froude's writings after 1849 are almost wholly factual or argumentative. He continued to favour narratives - historical, biographical and travel accounts - and, pace Conway's implication, did of course continue to write 'imaginatively' about his chosen subjects. With the exception of the drama (an odd exception given Froude's liking for the form, his admiration of Shakespeare's history plays, and his ability to write convincing dialogue) he experimented in his literary career with nearly every literary form, and wrote on a bewildering array of subjects. In 1854, for example, he published anonymously his translation of Goeth 's novel, Die Wahlverwandtschaften (1809) as Elective Affinities,³ a work

¹ Moncure D. Conway, Autobiography: Memories and Experiences, 2 vols (New York, 1904), p. 183.

² Froude wrote three poems, none of them especially interesting. The earliest does shed some light on his frame of mind as he was writing the Nemesis in Ireland, and is found in a Bodleian MS letter to Clough, reprinted with comments by Frederick L. Mulhauser, 'An Unpublished Poem of James Anthony Froude', ELN, 12 (1974), 26-30. The second, thought to be by Froude, is entitled 'Together' and was published in Fraser's Magazine, 65 (May, 1862), 564, just after his second marriage. The third, 'Romsdal Fiord', Blackwood's Magazine, 133 (April, 1883), 539, he wrote on a voyage to Norway.

³ Published as part of the Bohn Library. David J. De Laura provides the evidence for the authorship of the translation in two articles: 'Froude's Anonymous Translation of Goeth ', PBSA, 69 (1975), 187-96, and 'Froude's Translation of Goeth : an addition & a possible George Eliot attribution', PBSA, 70 (1976), 518-19. Robert R. Hare and Peter L. Shillingsburg in PBSA, 71 (1977), 508-12, confirm De Laura's evidence but emend his bibliographical information.

which, for all the apparent simplicity and symmetry of the plot involving a married couple and their respective lovers, suggests that our human life and loves are much more complex than the chemical process alluded to in the title. Froude also wrote on education,¹ on the legal implications of the report of the Copyright Commission,² and on the philosophy of materialism.³ He wrote the obituary of John William Parker,⁴ his predecessor as editor of Fraser's - the magazine Froude was to edit so assiduously, as the occasional editorial notes he added, indicate.⁵ As a private and public correspondent, as a writer of several introductory and prefatory notices to the works of other authors and as an essayist and reviewer he was prolific and versatile in a way equalled by few of his contemporaries. As one of the earlier members of the Metaphysical Society (he was elected in 1869, the year it was founded)⁶ he contributed two

¹ Apart from his inaugural address as Rector of St Andrew's on 'Education', reprinted in Short Studies (2nd ser.), he contributed 'Suggestions on the best means of teaching English History' to the second number of Oxford Essays (1855) - a very practical, and in some ways progressive, reflection (based on his own experiences) on how history should be taught at university. See also a review of Mark Pattison's Suggestions on Academical Organisation, Fraser's Magazine, 80 (October, 1869), 407-30, also thought to be by Froude.

² Edinburgh Review, 148 (October, 1878), 295-343.

³ 'Materialism - Miss Martineau and Mr. Atkinson', Fraser's Magazine, 43 (April, 1851), 418-34. Froude argues astutely and cogently against the philosophy.

⁴ Gentleman's Magazine, N.S.10 (February, 1861), 221-24.

⁵ See Walter E. Houghton (ed.), The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900, 3 vols (Toronto, 1966-), II, 303-19 for a list.

⁶ See Alan Willard Brown, The Metaphysical Society: Victorian minds in crisis, 1869-1880 (New York, 1947). Froude played an active part in this society, being present during at least seven meetings (other than those where he gave the paper) and his acuity and humour were much appreciated by most members (with the unsurprising exceptions of Gladstone and Cardinal Manning). Brown's book gives a fascinating account of the brief life of this society, the membership roll of which reads like a hall of fame list.

papers on empiricism¹ and the philosophy of mathematics.²

The History of England

But of course all these various incidental writings, although testifying to the authorial fecundity of Froude's mind, were offshoots to what he thought of as the main work of his life for some twenty years - his writing of the history of England during the Reformation (and especially throughout the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth). And it was as an historian that he gained a celebrity which extended beyond Oxford, throughout the country, and eventually overseas in the colonies and in America.³ The first two volumes of his History were published in 1856; by the time of his removal to London, in 1860 (shortly before the death of his first wife) he had already achieved a high degree of recognition, for a year earlier he had been elected a member of the Athenaeum Club, and the famous 'group portrait' of Froude with Carlyle, Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Bulwer Lytton, Thackeray, Trollope, Macaulay and George MacDonald⁴ would seem to indicate that Froude was evidently well known in literary circles by the end of the 1850s.

Froude's interest in history, evident as early as 1844 when his 'Legend of St. Neot' was published, became more widely obvious with the publication of a series of articles and reviews in Fraser's, the Westminster and the National Review in the early 1850s. Most but not all of these were unsigned; several were to be later reproduced in Short Studies and

¹ 'Evidence', Metaphysical Society Papers, No. 17 (privately printed, 1871).

² 'Are Numbers and Geometrical Figures real things?' Metaphysical Society Papers, No. 24 (privately printed, 1872).

³ How famous Froude was later to become is nicely illustrated by a note, '"FROUDES" = STUFFED DATES', N & Q, (10th ser.) 11 (29 May 1909), 430. In Massachusetts, more than fifteen years after his death, Froude's name had been appropriated to designate the delicacy 'stuffed dates' - a designation reflecting Froude's 'legendary' inaccuracy.

⁴ Reproduced as the frontispiece to Amy Cruse's The Victorians and their books (1935).

some anticipated parts of his magnum opus.¹ Froude's History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada - to give its title in full² - established, in the words of Albert Pollard, 'Froude's claim to rank among the greatest English prose writers of the nineteenth century' but, Pollard went on to point out, 'its value as history is more open to question'.³ The first of Pollard's points is incontestable: the History is written in a clear, flowing, vivid style; as narrative it seldom fails to arouse and retain the reader's attention (except, perhaps, at times in the volumes on Elizabeth where Froude tends to rather over-document his materials); his characterisation and set-piece description are alike excellent. Considered as prose, the work is a remarkable example of the smooth, rhythmic, translucent, at times ironic, and highly concise prose style which later came to be associated with Froude's mature writings (the essays and biographies, for example) and with the beautiful style of his erstwhile mentor, Newman. (Carlyle, who read early drafts of parts of the History and commented on them, encouraging Froude, although evident here and elsewhere in Froude's writings as a thinker, is nowhere in evidence as an influencing stylist.) At times, indeed, Froude's prose style evinces moments of great beauty, as when he charts with 'nostalgia' the fading of the middle ages and the onset of those changes in the religious and intellectual climate which were to be identified as the Reformation and the

¹ The earliest is, I think, 'King Alfred', Fraser's Magazine, 45 (January, 1852), 74-87. Excluding those which were later to reappear in Short Studies, five articles were published before the History saw the light of print; nine during the years 1856-70; and one as late as 1882 in the Edinburgh Review. Most of them treat of the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, some of them being the direct result of his work in the Simancas archives. A complete list will be found in the bibliography.

² 12 vols (1856-70); an earlier title indicates he had originally intended to cover Elizabeth's reign in its entirety. His book The Divorce of Catherine of Aragon (1891) he regarded as 'supplementary' to the History.

³ DNB (Supplement), p. 681.

Renaissance:

For, indeed, a change was coming upon the world, the meaning and direction of which even still is hidden from us, a change from era to era. The paths trodden by the footsteps of ages were broken up; old things were passing away, and the faith and the life of ten centuries were dissolving like a dream. Chivalry was dying; the abbey and the castle were soon together to crumble into ruins; and all the forms, desires, beliefs, convictions of the old world were passing away, never to return. A new continent had risen up beyond the western sea. The floor of heaven, inlaid with stars, had sunk back into an infinite abyss of immeasurable space; and the firm earth itself, unfixed from its foundations, was seen to be but a small atom in the awful vastness of the universe. In the fabric of habit in which they had so laboriously built for themselves, mankind were to remain no longer.

And now it is all gone - like an unsubstantial pageant faded; and between us and the old English there lies a gulf of mystery which the prose of the historian will never adequately bridge. They cannot come to us, and our imagination can but feebly penetrate to them. Only among the aisles of the cathedral, only as we gaze upon their silent figures sleeping on their tombs, some faint conceptions float before us what these men were when they were alive; and perhaps in the sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of mediaeval age, which falls upon the ear like the echo of a vanished world.

The 'transition out of this old state', Froude continues, is what he has 'undertaken to relate'. For Froude this entails providing an account of how England and the English became emancipated once and for all from bondage to a foreign power in Rome. And in Froude's view, the person most responsible for freeing the English from the Romish Church was Henry VIII: hence (taken together with Froude's post-Oxford anti-Catholicism and his adoption of Carlyle's concept of hero-worship) his extremely

partisan vindication of this hitherto unpopular Tudor monarch.¹ Froude's defence of the Reformation in the later volumes, which treat of the reigns of Edward VI and Mary Tudor and all but fifteen years of Elizabeth's

¹ Cobbett's acidic (but English, Protestant) picture of Henry VIII in his History of the Protestant Reformation (1824-27) may be taken as representative of the popular picture of this monarch. Froude states more than once that he did not start out with any definite conception of the king's character and actions. He knew that Henry was popular with the common people throughout his reign however (see the late sixteenth-century play about him, attributed to Shakespeare, which presents him sympathetically) and wondered at the discrepancy between this view and the later view of him as a tyrannical, monstrous wife-murderer. Froude's attitude was certainly untypical, and unrepresentative of those of other nineteenth-century historians. Henry Hallam, for example, in his Constitutional History of England from the accession of Henry VII. to the death of George II, 2 vols (1827), pays relatively little attention to Henry's religious scruples where his behaviour to Catherine of Aragon is concerned. John Richard Green, in A Short History of the English People (1874) disagrees with Froude's assessment of Henry, accusing him of putting forward a 'reckless defence of tyranny and crime' (p. 325). Mandell Creighton in The Tudors and the Reformation 1485-1603 (1876) takes a thoroughly cynical view of Henry, paying particular attention to his wish for an heir, his feeling for Anne Boleyn and his distaste for Catherine of Aragon as weighing more with him than doubts about the validity of his marriage. A more modern view - such as that of John Joseph Scarisbrick in Henry VIII (1968) - would tend to confirm the most traditional picture of the king, although acknowledging with Froude that Henry in his day was indeed popular (epitomising in the eyes of the people what an ideal king should be) and emphasising that many of his achievements (with the help of Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell) were no doubt impressive. Scarisbrick believes that, pace Froude, Henry did commit adultery with Ann Boleyn's sister; that he 'seriously mishandled his divorce suit' (p. 508); that he was a more severe overlord to the English Church than the popes had been; and that he was generally irresponsible and destructive: moreover 'it is difficult', writes Scarisbrick, 'to think of any truly generous or selfless action performed by him' (p. 507). Froude's unfavourable opinions of More, Fisher, 'Bloody Mary' and Mary, Queen of Scots, and his ambiguous attitude towards Elizabeth (he became increasingly less enthusiastic about her abilities as his research progressed, preferring to stress the importance of Dudley's role as her minister) similarly fail to coincide with modern historical opinion.

reign, culminates in his account of the destruction of the Spanish fleet off the English coast - the last great blow struck for freedom, consolidating the advance made initially by Henry by breaking with Rome. Indeed, nearly all of Froude's writings from now on can be seen in relation to his understanding of the Reformation as embodied in the History - the central stock of his thought and writings. Towards the very end of his life, while Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1892-94, his very popular lectures which were later published as books (some posthumously) still centred on aspects of the Reformation, as he dealt with the Council of Trent, the life and letters of Erasmus and - one of Froude's most exciting and entertaining of studies - English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century (1895) in which he described the exploits of the great Elizabethan sailors. Even his account of Ireland in the eighteenth century and his later imperialist writings (such as his travel books, Oceana and The English in the West Indies) are more than marginally related to his studies of the Reformation, for 'The Reformation is the hinge on which all modern history turns'¹ - England's history in particular, for the greatness of England and her empire owes itself, in Froude's eyes, to the casting off of her fetters during Henry VIII's reign.²

In general the reviews of Froude's History tended to reflect on the one hand the popularity and readability of the work, acknowledging the diligence of Froude's scholarly excavations in the archives of

¹ Lectures on the Council of Trent (1896), p. 1.

² Froude's Englishness was remarked upon by John Ruskin in a letter to his friend: 'You have taught me, more beautifully than any other Englishman I ever read except Shakespeare and Chaucer, what an Englishman is...' - Helen Gill Viljoen, The Froude-Ruskin Friendship as Represented through letters (New York, 1966), pp. 133-34.

Simancas, Rolls House and the British Museum and his skill in presenting much original material, while on the other hand disagreeing with some of his conclusions and in particular with his portrayal of Henry VIII, Thomas More and others, regarding Froude as more than somewhat biased in his understanding of some of the principal actors in the Reformation. The writer in The Edinburgh Review, for example, reviewing the first four volumes of the History, mingles praise for Froude's narrative gifts with blame for his misjudgement of Henry VIII: Froude's apparent attempt to effect a revolution in this period of English history is doomed to failure despite the History's interest, the reviewer points out, unless he revises his opinions of the king.¹ F.D. Maurice, reviewing the next two volumes, writes more favourably of Froude's work.² He explains how it was Froude's detailed study of official papers which led him to formulate the view he did of the king together with the realisation that Henry could not have really been the bête noire historians have sought to make him out to be if he had so much to do with the all-important and beneficial Reformation. Froude is no apologist for immoral acts, avers Maurice, although he does try to sympathise with Henry's conception of kingship in an attempt to understand the workings of his mind. Quoting extensively, Maurice sums up Froude's picture of the age so far and finds it a generally impartial one. In disturbing settled conclusions, Maurice points out, Froude is surely performing a service for us. Charles

¹ Edinburgh Review, 108 (July, 1858), 206-52. Froude actually replied to this review in Fraser's Magazine, 58 (September, 1858), 359-78 - a rare step for Froude to take. The reviewer made a further rejoinder in the Edinburgh Review, 108 (October, 1858), 586-94. A similar line is taken by E.S. Dallas, reviewing the next two volumes in The Times, 31 August 1860, pp. 8-9: Froude's style is praised, his theories and portraits criticised.

² Macmillan's Magazine, II (August, 1860), 276-84.

Kingsley's notorious review of volumes seven and eight of his friend's work, which prompted Newman to write the Apologia¹ and the historian Stubbs to write some witty verses on Froude and Kingsley,² is predictably hard-hitting as he commends Froude's intense Protestantism as appealing to his readers - an explanation, for Kingsley, of the book's popularity. M.W. Oliphant in her unsigned review of the final volumes of the History concentrates on what she regards as Froude's insulting and farcical treatment of Mary, Queen of Scots.³ She focuses on Froude's marvellously dramatic reconstruction of Mary's execution - an account which Mrs Oliphant believes few could have read 'without emotions of indignant disgust'.⁴ Froude certainly possessed the ability to offend this particular reviewer's sensibility as we shall later observe in considering the Carlyle controversy in chapter seven below.

But, unquestionably, the most extraordinary and vociferous of reviews were penned (usually anonymously) by Edward Augustus Freeman. This historian's method in his sneering, pedantic reviews was to damn summarily with faint praise before proceeding to give a list of Froude's alleged

¹ Macmillan's Magazine, IX (January, 1864), 211-24. Froude himself regarded the Newman-Kingsley controversy with distaste, and certainly realised that Kingsley was in the wrong and that Newman must inevitably have the better of him in argument. Cf. 'The Oxford Counter Reformation', Short Studies IV, 270-71, 326-29 and Dunn II, 306-07.

² Stubbs preceeded Freeman who was Froude's own predecessor as Regius Professor at Oxford. The verses are reprinted in Dunn II, 594.

³ Blackwood's Magazine, 107 (January, 1870), 105-22. One Catholic writer, James F. Meline, in Mary Queen of Scots and her latest English historian (New York, 1872) devoted well over three hundred pages to his attempt to refute Froude's 'violations of historic [sic] truth' concerning Mary (p. 192).

⁴ According to William Allingham in A Diary, ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford (1907), p. 235, even Carlyle shuddered at Froude's account of Mary's execution.

'blunders', thereby suggesting that although Froude might be an accomplished and popular writer of history, he was a poor scholar.¹

And this despite Froude's uncovering of a great deal of new material in the course of his research at Simancas - something Freeman, working on secondary sources, seems to have deliberately failed to acknowledge.

That Froude was inaccurate is, I think, pace Dunn, quite clear.² A swift perusal of Bodley's annotated copy of Froude's edition of William Thomas's The Pilgrim: a dialogue on the life and actions of King Henry the Eighth (1861) should suffice to convince the most sceptical reader of this fact.

But many of his errors were peccadilloes, and Froude's extreme opinions were more than matched by his opponent's use of hyperbole and his uttering of such ludicrous statements as 'an historian [Froude] is not'.³

Beatrice Reynold's comments that Froude managed to upset at least three groups of historians: the liberals, the Catholics (and Anglo-Catholics) and the scientific historians,⁴ and George Saintsbury's remark

¹ A false distinction? See C.V. Wedgwood's Literature and the Historian (Presidential Address to the English Association, 1956). Freeman's reviews appeared in The Saturday Review: 17 (16, 30 January 1864); 22 (27 October, 24 November, 1 December 1866); 29 (22, 29 January, 5, 12 February 1870). He also attacked Froude's forays into medieval history. Froude contributed essays on Becket, St Hugh of Lincoln and St Alban's Abbey to various journals (reprinted in Short Studies) - Freeman regarded Froude as trespassing on his private domain. Froude eventually answered Freeman's attacks with devastating skill and panache in 'A few words on Mr. Freeman', Nineteenth Century, 5 (April, 1879), 618-37. Freeman's reply was feeble in comparison. The Freeman-Froude controversy has been documented in some detail by Paul and Dunn. Both biographers take Froude's part but are largely justified in so doing. Ronald McNeill, who had earlier taken Froude's part in the Carlyle controversy in 'The Real Froude', Contemporary Review, 84 (August, 1903), 224-32, also thought Froude wholly in the right in the controversy, and quoted Jowett's remark: 'Froude is a man of genius; he has been abominably treated', in 'Froude and Freeman', Monthly Review, 22 (February, 1906), 79-91. For a further view see the unsigned article, 'Freeman, Froude and Seeley' by J.A. Doyle in the Quarterly Review, 182 (October, 1895), 281-304.

² Preface to vol. II of Dunn's biography.

³ The debate about Froude's inaccuracy did not cease with Freeman's death. See E.E. Neff, The Poetry of History: the contribution of literature and literary scholarship to the writing of history since Voltaire (New York, 1947), p. 197.

⁴ And Freeman had links with all three. The observation in the fourth essay of Herman Ausubel et al. (eds), Some Modern Historians of Britain (New York, 1951), p. 61.

that Froude's natural element was 'hot water',¹ confirm the extent to which Froude as a dogmatic historian was prone to be drawn into controversies: it was the pattern of his life from the 'Legend of St. Neot' (1844) to the posthumously published My Relations with Carlyle (1903). It is this controversial, topical quality about many of his writings - including his History - which makes him an interesting figure to the student of nineteenth-century intellectual history. Those ideas and beliefs which excited such extreme responses then are obviously worth exploring now for what they reveal of characteristic Victorian attitudes and opinions. But it must be admitted that his History - considered as history - has not weathered the years well. In no sense is it a living classic, and very few students today, I imagine, would consult it as a reliable guide to what was actually happening in the sixteenth century. The decline in the work's popularity (which once rivalled Macaulay's) can be measured in some sense by tracing the development of later historians' views of Froude as an historian. Herbert A.L. Fisher, in 'Modern Historians and their Methods' published just two months after Froude's death, paid tribute to Froude's attractive presentation of his materials - both as an eloquent, stimulating lecturer and as a great storyteller, and was at pains to stress that in some respects (for example, his palaeographical endeavours at Simancas) Froude was at once an original and assiduously 'scientific' scholar, despite Freeman's asseverations to the contrary. He admitted, however, that Froude was often inaccurate over details.² Frederick Harrison (a Comtist) saw Froude as a great writer with a brilliant touch but an untrustworthy (because 'anti-scientific') historian, writing with

¹ A History of Nineteenth Century Literature 1780-1895 (1896), p. 248.

² Fortnightly Review, 62 (December, 1894), 803-16.

a 'purpose'.¹ Edward Gaylord Bourne, writing just after the turn of the century, confirms this picture of Froude: 'A sentimentalist in nature, he was deficient in sobriety and poise of judgment, and he lacked the patience for accuracy in details'.² G.P. Gooch offers a generally fair and concise appraisal of Froude's achievement as an historian, though he sees him as a brilliant amateur whose early volumes, despite creating 'a sensation only less than that of Macaulay', failed to change popular opinion about Henry VIII.³ Froude's early formative experiences at home and Oxford are cited by Kingsbury Badger to explain his personal development and his attitudes as an historian⁴ and Joel Hurstfield, writing at the time when the Victorians were beginning to be evaluated afresh, briefly makes out a similarly sympathetic case, urging a selective, cautious re-reading of the historian for his many insights into the sixteenth century.⁵ He is never dull, he observes, and he never deliberately falsified facts or omitted information - his biases are due

¹ Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill & Other Literary Estimates (1899), especially ch. 12, 'The Historical Method of Froude'. Harrison is excessively vehement in his protestations, at one point referring to Froude very unfairly as 'a real charlatan'. I discuss Froude's attitude to the 'science' of history in ch. 4 below.

² 'James Anthony Froude', Essays in Historical Criticism (1901), p. 296. Goldwin Smith similarly detects 'a feminine susceptibility of impression' in Froude's mind, in 'Froude', AM, 97 (May, 1906), 681.

³ G.P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century (1913), pp. 323-39. In another article, Gooch develops his thesis about Froude as an author who combined 'shining merits with glaring faults': 'Some Great English Historians - I', Contemporary Review, 190 (December, 1956), 344-49.

⁴ 'The Ordeal of Anthony Froude, Protestant Historian', MLQ, 12 (March, 1952), 41-55.

⁵ '"That Arch-Liar Froude"', The Listener, 50 (9 July 1953), 62-63. Harold Wheeler's line is not dissimilar: 'Whatever Froude's faults in the matter of interpretation may be, he most assuredly presented his characters as flesh and blood and not as puppets', This Thing Called History (n.d. [1945]), p. 85.

to his 'literary' (as opposed to 'historical') purposes - 'Froude is entitled to his place in Parnassus', he concludes.¹ 'A historian of rare gifts' is how a more recent writer, L.M. Angus Butterworth, sees Froude; for Froude (whose lectures were crowded, unlike Stubbs's) had the ability to make history interesting to the lay reader and the student alike, partly due to his 'keen sense of the dramatic'; and he never allowed himself to be carried away by his own verbosity - a fault to which Macaulay, in Angus-Butterworth's view, was prone.²

'[T]he scientist of the human past is of the same stuff as his materials' commented Peter Gay. He went on: 'That is what makes history into the most fragile of the sciences, susceptible to all the germs carried by the winds of doctrine, and vulnerable to the charges of prejudice or ideology that are so familiar...'³ Froude may have been more 'susceptible' than many another historian in the nineteenth century or since ('scientific' or otherwise): hence his interest to us. We may read him no longer to appreciate the roles of Henry and Elizabeth in the English Reformation. But we would be foolish indeed to ignore him as one of the more militant, eloquent and representative spokesmen of the Victorian Protestant tradition.

Imperialist Writings

On 23 August 1874, just six months after the death of his second wife and two months after he resigned the editorship of Fraser's, Froude embarked on the first of his tours of the colonies, travelling in this instance to South Africa in a semi-official capacity on behalf of the

¹ Cf. J.R. Hale: 'The essential authoritativeness of the Elizabethan volumes remains, and his slips and carelessnesses in transcription have never been shown to spring from a desire to distort the evidence', The Evolution of British Historiography (1967), p. 55.

² L.M. Angus Butterworth, Ten Master Historians (Aberdeen, 1961), ch. 9.

³ Style in History (1975), p. 215.

Earl of Carnarvon (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) to discover what the main obstacles to confederation were. This entry into practical politics was a new departure for Froude but one that would concern us little but for the fact that as well as feeling prompted to write a number of political articles and pamphlets (the fruit of his imperialist reflections)¹ he also recorded his impressions of this journey and of further travels abroad in two interesting and highly readable volumes: Oceana, or England and her colonies (1886) and The English in the West Indies, or The Bow of Ulysses (1888). Oceana is an account of his voyage to South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, The English in the West Indies (with engravings based on Froude's drawings) of his tour of Barbados, Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica and Cuba. Delightful as Froude's accounts of his travels are - his narrative seldom flags and his scenic descriptions are wonderfully vivid - their chief interest for us lies in what they reveal of his imperialism (as representative in some ways of, and as influential contributions to, late Victorian attitudes to the Empire) and this I consider briefly below in chapter five in my examination of his essay, 'England and her Colonies'.² But something may be said here, perhaps, of the reception these two works enjoyed, and of what later scholars have made of his imperialism.

¹ The articles, letters, lectures, prefaces and pamphlets on John Bright and progress, democracy, liberty and property, Russia and the Crimean War, and English policy in South Africa, are all listed below in the bibliography.

² How influential Froude's distinctive imperialist vision was, is, of course, extremely difficult to estimate, and a comprehensive study of his contribution has yet to appear, although various scholars have considered it briefly, as I indicate in the following pages. But a letter to the editor of the Pall Mall Gazette by one G.W. Forrest in the issue of 29 June 1897 suggests that Froude's influence was by no means negligible. The letter in part reads:

Sir,

It is meet and right that at the present hour we should not forget the man whose far sight first saw and whose splendid genius familiarised us with the romantic idea of our country's greatness...The Colonial procession on Jubilee Day is in a great measure due to the brave and patient teaching of James Anthony Froude. He first raised his voice against the measures being taken and the language being used by responsible statesmen which were indisputably designed to lead to certain and early disintegration of the Empire...Oceana is now an accepted article of faith...(p.3).

The unsigned review of Oceana in The Athenaeum (by William Wickham) is less than enthusiastic: Froude's account of his travels and his reflections thereon are seen as unrealistic - his holiday was luxurious and he failed, therefore, to report on the dark underside of life in the colonies.¹ Edward Wakefield, a member of the New Zealand House of Representatives, also maintained that Froude's picture of the antipodes (and of New Zealand in especial) was full of inaccuracies, trivialities and irrelevances: he found the account very personal, highly selective and biased: 'It is certainly the worst book which has ever been written on the colonies' he commented wildly.² Thus two unrepresentative responses: most of the reviewers were very favourable, reflecting the book's popularity (a new edition was issued the same year). The writer in the Edinburgh found it 'a delightful book of travels', although disagreeing with Froude's political views - a not untypical attitude where Froude's writings were concerned, reminiscent of the reviews of his History and, in some ways, of his biography of Carlyle: the style, the treatment (Froude's art, in fact) are frequently praised; about the subject matter and the ideas expressed the reviewers tended to be markedly less enthusiastic and sometimes pointedly hostile.³ L.J. Kennings in the Quarterly viewed Oceana, a book so 'suggestive of thought', in this way.⁴ Even the writer in the Saturday acclaimed the book as brilliant: 'Oceana will prevail over the most obstinate prejudices' he predicted, but goes on to note that 'The most popular portions of an eminently readable book will be those which invite

¹ The Athenaeum, No. 3040 (30 January 1886), 159-60.

² 'New Zealand and Mr. Froude', Nineteenth Century, 20 (August, 1886), 172. Certainly the work is very personal but as this largely accounts for the book's charm, it is an aspect which one might have expected to be praised rather than criticised.

³ Edinburgh Review, 163 (April, 1886), 405-36. The author is one Cyprian Bridge.

⁴ Quarterly Review, 162 (April, 1886), 443-67.

no difference of opinion.¹ Froude's friend, John Skelton, reviewing it for Blackwood's, predictably finds in the work 'sound sense and brilliant writing',² while the reviewer in the Westminster, commenting on the timeliness of publication, adjudged the work 'high above the ordinary book of travel', with its 'very judicious mixture of episode and picturesque description'.³ And, in contrast to Edward Wakefield's view, an Australian (B.R. Wise) wrote: 'It is impossible for an Australian to lay down "Oceana" without a sense of pleasure and pride. It is the best book upon Australia which has yet been given to English readers.'⁴

The English in the West Indies proved a less popular work. The response from people living in the West Indies, if we are to judge by two short polemical books, prompted by Froude's work, was certainly indignant. N. Darnell Davis criticises Froude's ignorance, superficiality, and racial prejudice: 'Let anyone who knows the West Indies well, but read The English in the West Indies, and he will readily admit that imagination plays a very active part in that Traveller's Romance.'⁵ J.J. Thomas similarly regards Froude's book as libellous, unjust and uninformed and proceeds to illustrate these qualities with numerous examples.⁶ The reviewer in The Athenaeum

¹ Saturday Review, 61 (13 February 1886), 230-31.

² Blackwood's Magazine, 139 (February, 1886), 218-27.

³ Westminster Review, N.S. 70 (July, 1886), 256-59.

⁴ Macmillan's Magazine, 54 (August, 1886), 261-65 (p. 261).

⁵ Mr. Froude's negrophobia, or Don Quixote as a Cook's tourist (Demerara, 1888), p. 11. How far the public's reaction was muted by having already had the benefit of two other celebrated authors' accounts of the West Indies (those of Trollope and Kingsley) it is difficult to say. Davis certainly preferred Trollope's book to Froude's.

⁶ Froudacity: West Indian fables by James Anthony Froude, explained by J.J. Thomas (1889).

thought the book distinctly inferior to Oceana: 'It is a book of words and of little else' commented the reviewer, in a passing reference to Froude's rhetorical embroidering of Carlyle's 'gospel of despair' and the emphasis Froude placed on the inability of the negro to govern himself.¹ The notice in The Saturday Review was more equivocal, welcoming the book as a valuable means of directing attention to the serious plight of the West Indies, commending its wholesome tone and 'indisputable' conclusion (even if Froude had reached this 'conclusion' before actually arriving there), but finding the book somewhat repetitious and monotonous - an untypical response.² The Edinburgh Review article described the work as 'a volume of singular animation and picturesque description', its author being in turns amusing, incisive, 'exquisitely curious', scornful, fastidious and paradoxical (a favourite word used by reviewers of Froude's writings), in marked contrast to the wholly misanthropic and pessimistic later writings of Carlyle on such matters.³ Both the reviewer in the Quarterly⁴ and Henry Dunckley in the Contemporary⁵ liked the book. Dunckley, referring to this 'book which everybody has read', found its charm 'seductive' and comments on the sense one gains, reading it, of being in the company of an amicable intelligent companion.

The imperialism of Oceana, The English in the West Indies, and some of his essays and historical studies has attracted a modicum of scholarly attention. The fullest treatment has been by C.A. Bodelsen who traces back Froude's imperialist position partly to his opposition (alongside

¹ The Athenaeum, No. 3143 (21 January 1888), 77-79.

² Saturday Review, 65 (4 February 1888), 140-42.

³ Edinburgh Review, 167 (April, 1888), 319-49.

⁴ Quarterly Review, 166 (April, 1888), 496-514.

⁵ Contemporary Review, 53 (March, 1888), 340-57.

figures such as W.E. Forster) to the Manchester school of economists.¹

Identifying three different phases in the development of Froude's imperialist thinking, he presents a picture of Froude as a pioneer of imperial consolidation. George Bennett, on the other hand, traces Froude's imperialism, with obvious justification, back to Carlyle. He points out that Froude was one of the sponsors to the Queen in 1870 of a petition against the Gladstone administration's anti-imperialist policies.²

L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan stress the idealism of his imperialist vision, born of his disgruntlement with the ills following in the wake of the industrial revolution in Britain³ - a point taken up by Martin Green, who sees Oceana as embodying Froude's exciting wide-ranging and 'morally noble' idea of empire, and as such as 'one of the trumpeting' of later nineteenth-century imperialism which was to find its fictional equivalent in the writings of Rudyard Kipling.⁴

The minor biographies

Whatever the extent of Froude's influence as an imperialist thinker, there should be little doubt about the significance of his biographical contribution to English letters. I refer, of course, to his outstanding Life of Carlyle which I consider in detail in chapters six and seven, below. But Froude also wrote a number of other biographical works and although

¹ Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, New ed. (1960).

² George Bennett (ed.), The Concept of Empire, Burke to Atlee 1774-1947 (1953), p. 5. Bennett's view does not conflict with Bodelsen's: Froude was following Carlyle in opposing the political economists.

³ Burden of Empire (1968), p. 29.

⁴ Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire, (1980), pp. 115, 4.

they do not approach the brilliance of the Carlyle biography, they are generally well-executed works not altogether redundant of interest and may be considered very briefly here, together with their critical reception.

His Caesar: a sketch (1879) Froude considered 'the best book [he] had written'.¹ Froude was fascinated by Julius Caesar's personality which he thought 'perhaps the most remarkable which the human race has produced'² - hence the rather odd comparison, perhaps, with Jesus, towards the end of the biography.³ Caesar himself does not appear until the sixth chapter (of twenty-eight), the first five chapters being devoted to mapping out the historical background to the Roman Empire and to events in the few years preceding his birth. Inevitably, much of the biography centres upon the relationship and rivalry between Caesar and Cicero. Froude provides very full accounts of Caesar's exploits abroad, of his performance as a military tribune, consul, and so on through to his dictatorship. As might be expected, his battles (with Pompey, for example) are vividly described. And Froude does not hesitate to discuss the details of Caesar's private life, including his relations with women. After describing the assassination, he sums up Caesar's character and significance, concluding by stressing how Caesar's government in some ways prepared the world for the introduction of Christianity. But the critics were not so enthusiastic about the 'sketch' (of some 550 pages). Trollope, himself a keen Caesar scholar, judging from his marginalia to Froude's book, was certainly in disagreement with Froude over his characterisation of the principal figures, and irritated by his frequent errors and 'mis-

¹ Skelton, p. 162. The Carlyle biography had not been written by then.

² 'Anthony and Cleopatra', Cosmopolitan, 17(September, 1894), 518.

³ Caesar, p. 494. Froude removed this comparison from later editions of the work: its implications no doubt offended some sensibilities. Elsewhere, in one of his essays ('The Oxford Counter-Reformation'), Froude compares Caesar's appearance with that of Newman's (Short Studies IV, 273).

interpretation' of evidence.¹ The reviewer in The Athenaeum also considered that what was generally an 'able and interesting' re-telling of a story which bears repetition by a master of character portrayal and narration like Froude was 'disfigured by numerous and often serious inaccuracies'. This writer thought the work too long: the first five chapters could have been omitted, and too much emphasis was placed on Caesar as a politician.² William Young Sellar's review is much more complimentary, praising Froude's 'command over the whole idea of his action' and his 'skill in subordinating details to general effect'.³ Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb's review contains examples of Froude's mistakes, but Froude's handling of the substance of Caesar's life is praised: 'Mr. Froude's narrative has the two merits which most conspicuously distinguished Caesar's strategy, clearness of plan and swiftness of movement'.⁴ A much more recent writer, although pointing out that the book sold extremely well, going into several impressions, regards the work as 'a pale reflection of Mommsen'. Of Froude's inaccuracies this writer noted: 'the sanctity of inverted commas in quotations meant nothing to him'.⁵

Froude's Bunyan, which was published as part of the 'English Men of Letters' series under John Morley's editorship in 1880, is a less

¹ Bradford A. Booth, 'Trollope on Froude's Caesar', The Trollopian, No. 2 (March, 1946), 33-47. Trollope himself wrote a Life of Cicero, 2 vols (1880).

² The Athenaeum, No. 2687 (26 April 1879), 529-30. A similar line was taken in the Quarterly Review, 148 (October, 1879), 453-89, and by the Saturday Review, 47 (31 May 1879), 677-78, in which Froude was thought to have been too harsh on Cicero.

³ Fraser's Magazine, N.S. 20 (September, 1879), 315-37.

⁴ Edinburgh Review, 150 (October, 1879), 498-532.

⁵ James Westfall Thompson, A History of Historical Writing, 2 vols (New York, 1942), pp. 304-06.

substantial work, largely produced according to the series' format:

Froude runs together an account of Bunyan's life with criticism (or, rather, synopses) of his principal literary works. The attraction for Froude of Bunyan (as with Luther of whom he wrote a very brief account¹) lay in his position as a persecuted Protestant dissenter. Froude had come to The Pilgrim's Progress relatively late in life (unlike many other Victorians, he never encountered it as a child, his father not having allowed a copy in the house) but his enthusiasm for the work is muted by his rather plodding summary of 'what happens' in it. Not surprisingly the book did not attract a great deal of attention. The critic in The Athenaeum was one of the few who noticed the work. He commended the 'spirit of intelligent sympathy' Froude evinces in writing of Bunyan and his age, and the strictly biographical sections he found 'sensitive and

¹ Luther: a short biography (1883). The biography is even shorter than the three lectures, 'Times of Erasmus and Luther', in Short Studies (1st ser.). Much sympathy as he had with Luther's position, one senses that at bottom he found the man unattractive. His last historical-biographical work, on Erasmus, was far longer and detailed and surprisingly sympathetic. His Luther went relatively unnoticed. The reviewer in The Athenaeum noted how 'we find the old enthusiasm, the old style, and the old want of historical accuracy': No. 2926 (24 November 1883), 662. The Life and Letters of Erasmus (1894), the proofs of which Froude was correcting on his deathbed, I do not consider here, as it is partly history and partly a selection of Erasmus's letters, based on the lectures Froude delivered while Regius Professor, rather than a proper biography. It was fairly widely reviewed, most of the critics praising the presentation of his materials but, as usual, lamenting his mistakes and biases. See, for example, the Quarterly Review, 180 (January, 1895), 1-35. A modern biographer of Erasmus, George Faludy in Erasmus (New York, 1970), describes Froude's book as 'virtually useless' for such reasons (p. 262).

sufficient and very strongly marked with their author's understanding and admiration of Puritanism'.¹ A more interesting and laudatory reaction to Froude's biography was that of William Hale White in his own biography of the author:

Although Swift, Johnson, Southey and Macaulay admired Bunyan, the educated classes did not apprehend his real meaning and neglected him until Mr. Froude wrote his Essay on him in English Men of Letters. Mr. Froude, although he is inaccurate, may claim to have been the first person who saw clearly the eternal element² in Bunyan, and that he does not belong to a sect but to the world.

It was by now usual - almost mandatory - to refer to Froude's inaccuracy in the course of a review of one of his works. And often the reference was justified. But matters had reached such a head nine years later that even his novel on Ireland (which was, after all, a piece of historical fiction) was criticised for the same fault.³

Froude's last noteworthy biographical endeavour was his biography of Disraeli, which was published as part of a series on Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers.⁴ The biography is interesting, lively, impressionistic, at times gently mocking, and rather stronger on Disraeli as a novelist and a Jew than on the political leader and statesman - roles about which Froude had some reservations (although greatly preferring him to his 'worse alternative', Gladstone⁵). Carlyle's influence is obvious from the opening lines, and Froude quotes his mentor's opinion of the 'Hebrew Conjuror' more than once.⁶ Froude's estimate of Disraeli was that

¹ The Athenaeum, No. 2730 (21 February 1880), 240-41.

² John Bunyan (1905), p. 229. Hale White certainly had something in common with Froude apart from his admiration of Bunyan. Like Froude he was a keen student of Spinoza; he was a curious mixture of agnostic and fervent Protestant, and The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford (1881) bears comparison in some respects with Froude's Nemesis.

³ See below, p. 128.

⁴ Lord Beaconsfield (1890).

⁵ Beaconsfield, Everyman ed. [n.d.], p. 3.

⁶ Beaconsfield, pp. 1, 3, 92-93, 253.

although he 'cannot be called great, either as a man of letters or as a statesman' yet he achieved much, 'his ambition ['for fame and not for fortune'] was a noble one' and he succeeded in distinguishing himself 'above all his contemporaries' - for Froude, not a high compliment perhaps, but to most of his readers, surely, it would have seemed a veiled but undoubted tribute.¹ The reviewers were generally politely enthusiastic. Herbert Cowell thought it able, conscientious and insightful.² Another writer thought it lacking in originality (Froude had done relatively little first-hand research, certainly) but 'as a study of character it seems to myself nearly perfect'.³ The Saturday Review thought Froude himself too much in evidence in what is on the whole a well-written biography, but 'much more a capriccio than a sonata'.⁴ The Athenaeum wanted a longer study, and found Froude's somewhat unbalanced (too much on the 'romantic' years of the young Disraeli) but praised Froude for his accounts of Disraeli's religion and novels.⁵ Also laudatory in tone was the reaction of Francis Espinasse who thought it 'the most complete synopsis and the most authentic account of Lord Beaconsfield's career...'⁶ Compared to later, more comprehensive 'standard' works, such as those by Monypenny (1910-20) and Robert Blake (1966) Froude's is obviously only a light sketch - an etching with traces of water-colour but hardly an oil-painting like his own Life of Carlyle.

¹ Beaconsfield, p. 262.

² Blackwood's Magazine, 149 (January, 1891), 87-102.

³ Nineteenth Century, 28 (December, 1890), 988-92.

⁴ Saturday Review, 70 (1 November 1890), 497.

⁵ The Athenaeum, No. 3290 (15 November 1890), 657-59.

⁶ Literary Recollections and Sketches (1893), p. 415.

By the time Froude died on 20 October 1894 he had produced some twenty-six books and numerous articles and smaller pieces on a great variety of subjects. He was an uneven writer and many of his works to which I have referred very briefly in this chapter are of relatively little interest to us today. But certain of his works - his novels, his essays and his biography of Carlyle - are well worth a much closer, more detailed consideration. The remainder of this thesis is devoted to an examination of them.

CHAPTER 2

'CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES': SHADOWS OF THE CLOUDS

In a letter of 18 April 1849 to her friend, Sara Hennell, Mary Ann Evans, at that time busily engaged in translating Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, enthusiastically recommends a book she has just finished reading:

You must read the 'Shadows of the Clouds' - it produces a sort of palpitation that one hardly knows whether to call wretched or delightful. I cannot take up the book again though wanting very much to read it more closely.¹

The book in question (a copy of which she duly sent her friend) was the first venture into fiction of James Anthony Froude.² It had been published two years previously in 1847 under the pseudonym 'Zeta'.³ The anonymity of the work did not, however, prevent the discovery of the author's true identity. When this became known, both his immediate family and his colleagues at Exeter College, Oxford (where Froude was a fellow) reacted with predictable hostility, given the nature of the book's religious, moral and social criticisms.⁴ The rift with the fellows, it is clear from the Exeter College manuscripts, did not become serious until Froude published The Nemesis of Faith two years later. But the publication of Shadows certainly caused a major upset in Froude's relationship with his father, the Archdeacon of Totnes. So incensed was the latter with the report of his son's slighting portrayal of himself (as Canon Fowler) in the first part of the book, that he bought up all the copies of the book he could find and had them destroyed - a factor which largely accounts for the book's extreme rarity.⁵ It never went into a second edition, and the text we have is riddled with many typographical errors.⁶

¹ The Letters of George Eliot, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (1954), I, 280.

² His first venture, that is, if we exclude his 'Legend of St. Neot' (1844).

³ For an illuminating explanation of this pseudonym, see A.O.J. Cockshut, Man and Woman: A Study of Love and the Novel 1740 - 1940 (1977), p. 101: the origin, Cockshut suggests, was Hurrell Froude's 'zed', a pejorative epithet he often used.

⁴ The second part of the work contains a brothel scene: that a young, celibate deacon should write of such matters would surely have shocked many readers. Lewis Carroll, who liked the book very much, had it bound, but 'only after cutting out the objectionable parts'. The Diaries of Lewis Carroll, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green, 2 vols (1953), I, 50.

⁵ Archdeacon Froude, it seems, did not actually read the book (Dunn I, 105).

⁶ In particular it should be noted that there are two chapters numbered 'VIII' in the first part, and two numbered 'VI' in the second.

It comprises two short novels. The first and longer (nearly two hundred pages) is entitled The Spirit's Trials and is a partly autobiographical account of Froude's own life hitherto. The second short novel (not quite one hundred pages), The Lieutenant's Daughter, has for its subject the history of one Catherine Gray. Both novels are of some interest insofar as they offer various insights into Victorian moral and social attitudes, especially with regard to such diverse institutions as the public school and the brothel. But valuable as such insights undeniably are, the novels' chief importance for the student of Froude's thought and art lies elsewhere. For both are what we may loosely term 'novels of ideas', written to illustrate Froude's newly acquired (but lifelong) belief in a Spinozan determinism. The two novels have for their common theme the moral implications of such a philosophy. The precise nature of these ideas and their artistic expression form the subject of this chapter.

Because of the complex nature of the ideas with which Froude is concerned in Shadows, I shall first spend some time examining those elements of Spinoza's philosophy which he adopted. I shall refer in particular to Froude's two essays on Spinoza, the first of which was published in the same year as Shadows and the second just eight years later.

Secondly, I shall consider each of the novels in turn, paying special attention to Froude's fictional presentation of his theme in the light of the above examination.

Finally, I shall evaluate both novels in terms of the success with which each embodies Froude's deterministic philosophy. How well suited to the exploration of his chosen theme was the novel genre as he handles it? What is their significance as novels for the critic of Victorian fiction?

Froude on Spinoza

To trace the direction Froude's reading took in the 1840s is a

rewarding and not very difficult exercise.¹ His intellectual experiences, moreover, were probably not dissimilar from those of his contemporaries at Oxford. His 'discovery' of Spinoza came about in a somewhat roundabout fashion. Spinoza was the 'darling' philosopher of the German Romantics: Schleiermacher, Novalis, Lessing and especially Goeth  (to name but some) were all indebted to this great thinker. Froude read him after reading Goeth  - a favourite author of his - and Goeth  he had read fresh from Carlyle.

Froude wrote two essays on Spinoza, both of which had as their starting point various German and French books which he reviews in the course of the essays. The first article, entitled 'The Life of Spinoza', appeared in 1847, in the Oxford and Cambridge Review,² and the second, simply entitled 'Spinoza', first appeared in 1855, in the Westminster Review, and was subsequently reprinted in the first series of Short Studies on Great Subjects.³

The first of these, as its title indicates, was mainly biographical in emphasis. Froude sets out to defend Spinoza against the conflicting charges of being an atheist, a pantheist, a fatalist, a mystic, and a materialist. He was none of these, avers Froude. 'Spinoza was a very great man, one of the very greatest men' and one who, moreover, 'followed God with an undivided heart'.⁴ The essay sketches vividly Spinoza's lofty character, and is an eloquent plea for a calmer, fairer consideration of the philosopher's ideas.⁵

¹ Froude's autobiographical fragment, reproduced almost in full in Dunn I, passim, is helpful here.

² Oxford and Cambridge Review, 5 (October, 1847), 387-427.

³ Westminster Review, N.S.8 (July, 1855), 1-37; Short Studies I, 339-400.

⁴ 'Life of Spinoza', pp. 388-89.

⁵ It is interesting to compare this essay (which a thinker the calibre of Emerson regarded highly) with Matthew Arnold's essay on Spinoza. Both Froude and Arnold found Spinoza's anti-superstitious stance liberating. Cf. Matthew Arnold, 'Spinoza and the Bible' rpt. in The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, vol. III (Lectures and Essays in Criticism), ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor, 1962), 158-82.

The second essay dwells in much greater detail on Spinoza's thought. Reading it, George Eliot thought his 'account of Spinoza's doctrines admirable'.¹ As we shall observe in chapter five, a notable characteristic of Froude's essays is their lucidity of expression.² This quality is in evidence in his exposition of the thought of a notoriously difficult philosopher.³

It is not Spinoza's logical methodology which Froude finds convincing - indeed, he perceives many problems and obscure areas in this regard. Thus, he has no time at all for Spinoza's adaptation of the ontological argument for the existence of God. But having refuted his arguments in some detail, Froude comments:

We believe for ourselves that logic has no business with such questions; that the answer to them lies in the conscience and not in the intellect. Spinoza thinks otherwise; and he is at least true to the guide which he has chosen.⁴

'The power of Spinozism', he comments elsewhere in the essay, lies in the way 'it addresses itself, not to the logical intellect, but to the imagination, which it affects to set aside.'⁵ And, for Froude, there is no conflict between Spinozism and the brand of Protestant Christianity for which he has the most sympathy: 'If Calvinism be pressed to its logical consequences, it either becomes an intolerable falsehood, or it resolves itself into the philosophy of Spinoza'.⁶ Froude is clearly referring here to the close parallels between the Calvinist doctrine of

¹ George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals, ed. J.W. Cross, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1885), I, 276.

² It is not inconceivable that Froude's own style owes something to Spinoza inter alia. Over a century later, another Oxford graduate, Dominic Bede Griffiths, O.S.B., in his autobiography, The Golden String (1954), found that 'the economy of Spinoza's style with its clarity and precision gave me a kind of aesthetic pleasure', Fount paperback ed. (1979), p. 50.

³ Alfred North Whitehead in Science and the Modern World (New York, 1925) commented that 'In earlier times the deep thinkers were the clear thinkers - Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz. They knew exactly what they meant and said it. In the nineteenth century, some of the deeper thinkers among theologians and philosophers were muddled thinkers' (p. 78). Froude-unlike, say, Coleridge - although hardly a 'deep' thinker, is never muddled.

⁴ 'Spinoza', p. 364.

⁵ 'Spinoza', p. 351.

⁶ 'Spinoza', p. 364. See also p. 387: 'Thus, by a formal process of demonstration, we are brought round to the old conclusions of theology...'

predestination and Spinoza's determinism.¹ The last fifteen pages or so of the essay are in fact devoted to a consideration of Spinoza's teaching on the issue of free will versus determinism and the 'moral' implications of a belief in the latter.

It is in this section, as he comments upon and analyses Spinoza's views (rather than merely expounding them), that we realise how close in his thinking Froude is to Spinoza. Like Spinoza, Froude is a determinist, but although such a view may seem logically inconsistent with a belief in morality (since, if the will is not free, one cannot be held responsible for one's actions) Froude does not believe that such a distinction affects the 'practical bearings' of the question of self-control in matters of conduct: 'Conduct may be determined by laws - laws as absolute as those of matter; and yet the one as well as the other may be brought under control by a proper understanding of those laws.'² Only 'the foolish and the ignorant are led astray by the idea of contingency, and expect to escape the just issues of their actions', writes Froude, but 'the wise man will know that each action brings with it its inevitable consequences, which even God cannot change without ceasing to be himself'.³ As the above caveats indicate, Froude takes a more complex view. A belief in the freedom of the will is 'contradicted by facts' he writes, while a belief in determinism seems to go against 'the instinct of conscience'.⁴ The

¹ It is interesting to note here that Chambers (the anonymous author of Vestiges of Creation (1844)) whom Froude was also reading about this time was likewise a determinist.

² 'Spinoza', p. 382.

³ 'Spinoza', p. 388. This theme we shall see developed in The Nemesis of Faith, where the hero, Markham Sutherland, in a disquisition upon the consequences of a belief in determinism, alludes to sin as a 'chimera': he is later reproved for holding such heterodox opinions by Father Mornington (a fictional Newman) who insists that sin is real. See the Nemesis, pp. 90-96, 220. Cf. 'Spinoza', p. 389: 'Evil is unhappily too real a thing to be disposed of...'

⁴ 'Spinoza', p. 394.

solution lies in between. We are largely determined in all sorts of ways: by our genetic conditioning,¹ by the upbringing we receive at home, by our education, and many other 'environmental' factors. But, 'for practical purposes', Froude urges, we must go along with Spinoza in 'regard[ing] the future as contingent, and ourselves able to influence it', otherwise the regulation of one's life would be impossible.²

Froude develops his argument in a passage which is almost an elaboration of the quotation from Spinoza's Ethics which stands as one of the two epigraphs to Shadows:

While we are governed by outward temptations, by the casual pleasures, by the fortunes or the misfortunes of life we are but instruments, yielding ourselves to be acted upon as the animal is acted upon by its appetites...we are slaves - instruments, it may be, of some higher purpose in the order of nature, but in ourselves nothing...³

Nevertheless, Froude argues, we must act as if we can control those extraneous factors (such as education) which influence and mould an individual's character, for the quality of a person's life depends upon our so acting. And such a recognition will necessarily involve a modification of one's moral perceptions and evaluations:

[W]hy all the care which we take of children? why the pains to keep them from bad society? why do we anxiously watch their disposition, to determine the education which will best answer to it? Why in cases of guilt do we vary our moral censure according to the opportunities of the offender? Why do we find excuses for youth, for inexperience, for violent natural passion, for bad education, bad example? Why, except that we feel that all these things do affect the culpability of the guilty person, and that it is folly and inhumanity to disregard them?⁴

¹ 'Spinoza', p. 396: 'those natural tendencies which each of us brings with him into the world'.

² 'Spinoza', pp. 394-95. The form this distinction takes is neither unique nor spurious. It was St Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, who urged everyone to pray as if everything depended on God and to act as if everything depended on oneself.

³ 'Spinoza', pp. 385-86. Cf. the preface to part 4 of Spinoza's Ethics.

⁴ 'Spinoza', p. 395.

Thus, in the case of an individual who has perpetrated some 'immoral' act, one must seek to understand that particular turn of events, this particular flaw in his character, those particular mitigating circumstances (his unhappy childhood, his lack of a proper education...) which determined his conduct. In short, his 'actions must be measured against his opportunities'.¹ For 'circumstances alter cases',² and one must not be too hasty in judging another person's actions:

The act is one thing, the moral guilt another.
There are many cases in which...if we trace a sinner's history to the bottom, the guilt attributable to himself appears to vanish altogether.³

Froude is thus a 'motivist' when it comes to moral philosophy: like Carlyle he had little sympathy for the 'consequentialist' Utilitarian school of thought, developed during Victoria's reign by John Stuart Mill. He is, however, far from denying the possibility of moral guilt. Froude's point is that we are so greatly influenced by so many different factors that 'the free will theory [must] be thrown aside as a chimera'.⁴ Furthermore 'some degree of power there is in men of self-determination, by the amount of which, and not by their specific actions, moral merit or demerit is to be measured'.⁵ Thus Froude is not a thoroughgoing determinist. As Willey sagely observes in his essay on Froude:

What Froude...gained from Spinoza was a deeper awareness of the laws which mould and govern character and determine conduct, and hence a more tolerant judgment of human error.⁶

This 'deeper awareness' we see exhibited in Shadows. Behind both novels lies the rationale of Froude's qualified determinism. How each novel illustrates such a philosophy, we must now consider.

¹ 'Spinoza', p. 400.

² The observation of Mr Grewgious in Dickens's The Mystery of Edwin Drood (ch. 9).

³ 'Spinoza', p. 396.

⁴ 'Spinoza', p. 397.

⁵ 'Spinoza', p. 399.

⁶ Basil Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies (1956), Harper Torchbook paperback ed. (New York, 1966), p. 117.

The Spirit's Trials

The Spirit's Trials is substantially (but not wholly) a confessional autobiography.¹ Its plot is fairly straightforward. The hero, Edward Fowler, having spent an unhappy childhood at home and at school goes up to Oxford. One vacation, he meets and subsequently falls in love with Emma Hardinge: they become engaged. Emma's father soon learns, however, that Fowler has accumulated substantial debts while at university, and he breaks off the engagement to the evident distress of the two betrothed. Emma eventually marries one Henry Allen, a former friend of Fowler's. The latter, after a bout of acute depression, devotes himself to his studies, resigned to his fate. Some six years later, Fowler, slowly dying of tuberculosis, is making a futile attempt at recuperation in Torquay, when he meets Emma and her husband, having unwittingly saved their son from a watery grave, to the further detriment of his own health. He later dies and is buried nearby.²

Such is the barest outline of the story. Clothed with the flesh of Froude's thematic concerns, it comes to life. The presentation of his materials in the novel is, however, unexceptional. He adopts a straightforward, largely chronological approach (with only the occasional flashback) which is well suited to the bildungsroman basis of the novel. The intrusive, third person narration of 'Arthur', which includes various letters and manuscript fragments for the reader's illumination, is a means whereby the otherwise chaotic, elusive thoughts and experiences of Fowler can be lucidly presented. The author's name, the inclusion of letters and manuscript fragments, inevitably invite comparison with the Nemesis. But although both novels in Shadows prefigure the later

¹ See the beginning of ch. 4: 'What a load off my mind these last few pages are' (Shadows, p. 50).

² The hero of Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere (1888) also dies after rescuing somebody from drowning (ch. 48).

novel in various ways and to varying extents both technically and in their contents (the preoccupation with suicide, the references to Newman, the anti-clerical notes, the discussions of an after-life, the heart/head motif), the divergences and differences of emphasis more than outweigh the incidental similarities. With the exception of the rather peculiar dream motif with which the novel ends, the formal, structural qualities of The Spirit's Trials are thoroughly conventional - unlike the more radical moral theme which the novelist explores within this framework.

The theme of The Spirit's Trials is a simple one. Froude is exploring in this novel the many factors which determine the course of a person's life. Three chief influences are identified at various points in the narrative: the nature of those genetic characteristics an individual inherits; the character of one's upbringing at home (or lack of it) and the quality of one's education; the relationships one forms with other people. The last two factors are dealt with in the greatest detail. These are what condition and mould a person's character, and it is the interaction of that person's character with the various circumstances of the world which determine what sort of life he will lead. One should first understand that this is so; secondly, one should take this into account in judging the quality of someone's life. The judgement which fails to take account of such elements is harsh, unfair and unrealistic.

The theme is woven into the texture of the narrative in two ways: first, by the explicit, didactic comments of the author, and secondly, it is implicit in the characterisation and resolution of the plot.¹

In the first chapter, Mr Hardinge (Emma's father), introduced to the reader in language as concise and faintly ironic as that of Jane Austen,² is

¹ 'The emphasis is (especially in the early chapters), on 'telling' rather than 'showing'. It is certainly a much less 'dramatic' work than its companion piece, The Lieutenant's Daughter.

² The reference to an ear-trumpet (Shadows, p. 4) is one such nice touch, which is reminiscent of Froude's favourite authoress.

portrayed as someone who views people and the morality of their actions in simplistic black-and-white terms:

Right and wrong with him stood each with a rigid outline; there was no shading off of one into the other by imperceptible degrees; if a thing was clearly bad it was bad altogether, and if he was called upon to form a judgment of the person, he was a bad man who did it. (p. 5)

The author is at pains to alert the reader to the many areas of grey of which Mr Hardinge is so ignorant, for such a realisation the novel has for its most basic premise. The author points to those inherited characteristics about which we know so little:

Mr. Hardinge did not know the infinite variety of natures men received at the hands of Providence, he had never studied the strange laws which govern the moulding of them into characters, he had no idea that the same temptation acts as variously on different men, as the same temperature on metals and gases; that all these things must infinitely modify our judgment on the sinfulness of the individual that falls before them... (p. 6)

(The thinking becomes more overtly deterministic here at the mention of the word 'law' and the use of a scientific analogy to illustrate his point.) Elsewhere he alludes to the influence of post-natal factors on a person's character, referring in particular to:

the difficulties which are thrown in men's way from the artificial structure of society, the conflicting temptations, the fluctuating judgment of public opinion ...all the thousand complicated threads and fibres which draw men up and down, and do really so very seriously affect the character for goodness or badness of all the actions that are done under them...(p. 5)

The crucial first step is to try and understand something of these laws for 'benevolence, undirected by knowledge, may do untold evil', as we shall shortly witness in the case of Mr Hardinge (p. 7).

The second chapter, by way of sketching the environmental background of the Hardinge family, opens with a passage evincing the influence of a Spinozan-Wordsworthian pantheism. The fine moral and physical qualities of the children, we are informed, are a direct consequence of their 'father's exuberant kindness' and 'their mother's grace' which they have inherited, and of the unrestrained influence of 'the most natural atmosphere in the world' (p. 11). An Eden-like picture is painted before the reader's eyes. There is no question of the children choosing to act morally

or immorally: 'All they did, all they got, seemed to flow out of themselves, as if it could not help it...' (p. 11). The author's gentle irony underlines his belief in what is important for a truly beneficial moral education. 'Such was their education, evincing the most shocking deficiency in all its most essential, even elementary acquirements' he comments (p. 13). The lengthy description of the children, their parents, upbringing, environment and education serves two purposes. First, it illustrates the cause-and-effect relationship which obtains between 'background' and 'character' (and hence we are given the necessary information to understand Emma's own character). Secondly, the upbringing and education which Emma, her sister and brothers receive - idealised though it is - constitutes a standard, a point of reference, against which we shall shortly be able to measure Edward Fowler's experience.

We meet Fowler for the first time in the third chapter. Before we are given an account of his past history - his family background and schooling - the author ponders on how the innate dispositions of children should be considered prior to deciding how they should be brought up and educated. 'It is idle to be ideal and utopian' he states. 'You must make what you can of things as they are' (p. 24). There are 'weak' and 'strong' natures: this is one of the facts of 'human nature'. Treat them accordingly: make allowances, since their behaviour will inevitably be affected by the moral and social attitudes they encounter: 'Treat them as if they deserved suspicion, and as infallibly they soon actually will deserve it' (p. 23). This is what happened in the unfortunate case of Fowler. The author's plea for realism in understanding an individual's psychological makeup prepares the reader for what follows.

The account of Fowler's family and his time spent at Westminster School contrasts vividly with Emma's background. 'His nature required

treatment the most delicate, it received the very roughest', we are told (p. 27). Fowler's character is explained thus: 'The defect in Edward's nature, as I understand it, was that he was constitutionally born a coward. Constitutionally, I say. It was not his own fault. Nature had ordered him so, just as she orders others constitutionally brave...' (p. 38). He is bullied mercilessly at school and treated with suspicion and harshness at home. The result of these years of unhappiness for Fowler is a permanently scarred character. It is only when the harsh treatment stops, as he is privately tutored before going up to Oxford, and subsequently at the university, that his personality undergoes a change for the better. He begins to respond to kinder treatment. Yet this marked change in his attitudes and behaviour (previously he had been sullen and 'mean') brought about by his changed circumstances is almost involuntary: it was certainly not the result of any conscious decision on his part: 'His affections naturally very strong, finding themselves forced out of their proper channel, poured themselves out on any one that happened to attract him' (pp. 50-51; my emphasis). Almost Hobbesian in conception, the role of the 'will', it is implied, is minimal. This impression is reinforced by the relation of one of those little quirks of fate which affect one's fortune. Fowler's father opens one of his son's letters by mistake, and so learns of his debts at an inopportune moment not of Fowler's choosing. And it is this occurrence which precipitates the breaking off of Fowler's engagement to Emma.¹ Hardinge's decision regarding his daughter's future provides the author with yet another opportunity to lecture the reader on the merits or otherwise of the relative ethics of the situation:

¹ Although almost Hardy-esque, the sense of 'fate', however, is not so strong in this novel as it is in The Lieutenant's Daughter, as we shall see. Indeed, at one point, the author specifically decries a fatalistic philosophy: see Shadows, p. 64.

Whether in this proceeding Mr. Hardinge was acting right or wrong I am not prepared to say. Such a question to be answered would require a long intricate analysis of the formation of character, the nature of the obligations, varieties of knowledge, and varieties of disposition impose [d] on men. (p. 66)

Hardinge typifies the person who acts without taking into account the above factors: thus he is later explicitly criticised by the author (p. 67).

Fowler's character, as we might expect, undergoes a further metamorphosis after this debacle. 'His conduct [had] changed...out of love for Emma Hardinge': with this all-important element changed, Fowler sinks into a mood of despair, with 'a more complete conviction of his wretchedness' (pp. 69-70). He actually contemplates suicide on more than one occasion, before leading for a short while a life of dissipation.¹ Soon, however, Fowler resolves upon a more 'manly' course: he will 'rule fate' and, we are told, 'directly Edward determined to trust himself and not circumstances, he began to rise' (p. 73). And although there are occasional backslidings, on the whole Fowler develops and matures as a person, morally, intellectually and emotionally.

The novel now switches back to Emma, who avoids a potentially disastrous match with one suitor (Barnard) and marries another (Henry Allen) two weeks later, news of which Fowler receives stoically. This is perhaps the least convincing part of the novel: in it we are told much and shown little. The two successive rivals for Emma's hand in marriage are not very well characterised. Barnard is altogether almost too impossibly good to be true - and Froude seems to sense this as he indulges in a moment of rare humour at his expense (p. 106). Allen, on the other hand is unconvincing because inconsistently drawn. Thus, on one

¹ The 'waste land' imagery which begins chapter six, prefigures the ending of Nemesis where Sutherland's (suicidal?) death is similarly described.

page he is described as 'a thoroughly excellent and very popular man... [whose] only serious fault...was that he was very poor', while a little later on the impression is given that he deliberately speaks of Fowler to Emma in order to win her affections - hardly a sensible or commendable way of acting (pp. 84-85). Neither Barnard nor Allen is described in relation to their backgrounds in the way that the protagonists, Fowler and Emma, are, and they suffer as a result, given the nature of the novel's theme, which impinges directly upon the method of characterisation. Thus Barnard is a type and Allen a somewhat insipid character.

The traumatic experiences (including a nervous breakdown) through which Emma passes 'like an automaton' are wholly due to the removal from her life of the vital element of her love for Fowler, her will 'broken' by her father (p. 81). While Fowler makes the most of his unfortunate background, determining to be 'master of his fate', Emma is unable to capitalise on her hitherto much happier upbringing, since she fails to impose her will on the circumstances: instead she subjugates her will to her father's. Yet, the curious thing is, nobody seems to be at fault in all this. If only this had not happened, the reader finds himself saying, then that would not have transpired. The delicate sketching of cause and effect means that there is no such thing as a sudden, unexplained impulse on the part of any character which changes the direction of the story. Each decision, each action is predictable, or at least explicable in terms of the socio-psychological context in which it occurs. The merest 'whim' is pre-determined and brings in its wake fresh consequences. Emma's nature is indeed 'bound in chains'.¹ Chapter nine ends with the reflection that Emma, having identified what 'seemed her fate'

¹ Shadows, p. 96. One is inevitably reminded of the famous dictum of Rousseau (whom Froude was reading about this time) that man is born free but is everywhere in chains.

has 'surrendered herself to it, if not readily yet without reluctance' (p. 111).

The next chapter takes up the story some six years later as we return to Fowler, ailing with tuberculosis. Reflecting, in a letter to Arthur, on his short life hitherto, he asks what he has made of himself:

But the great question of right and wrong seems far too complicated to let me think each act can have a specific value, with an equivalent of pain or pleasure weighed over against it in a scale. I cannot believe we are any more answerable for the mistakes of an early life than a young student of painting for his bungling first attempts. (pp. 115-16)

The interesting analogy between art and morality is developed: the moral seems to be that one has to make the best of whatever raw materials one has. To fail in one's attempts at making something is 'neither stupidity nor vice': 'teaching does much, and bringing up more', but one is limited in the end by the resources with which one starts (p. 117).

The part of the novel which now follows looks forward to the Nemesis. After the chance-meeting with Emma and her family, there come the discussions (in a letter and in person) on matters of faith between Fowler and Arthur, with the references to Newman and Carlyle among others,¹ and the sentimentalised colloquy on death with Emma's child prior to the death-bed scene itself.² Fowler denies that differences in the minute particularities of belief affect one's character or conduct: it is false to suppose 'that the Socinian leads a less virtuous life than the Anglo-Catholic' (p. 158). Belief and conduct are indeed intricately bound up

¹ F. Espinasse puts it well when he says that 'the hero...hovers between a half-orthodoxy and a half-heterodoxy': 'Mr. Froude's Prehistoric Writings', The Bookman, 5 (March, 1894), 182.

² Shadows, pp. 135-37. Fowler's own attitudes, though, in this matter, are free from any such taint of sentimentality, pace the passage from 'Jean Paul'.

with one another, in Fowler's view, but the cause-effect relationship does not obtain in the way many suppose: 'the vicious life is not the consequence of the wrong belief' he avows at one point (p. 159). We know from the foregoing narrative the very real extent to which his own character and attitudes have been shaped by the influences the author has delineated. This section owes much to 'Jean Paul' (Richter), a German Romantic Froude had probably encountered through Carlyle's writings on him, apart from the long passage quoted. As Walzel points out, in his study of the German Romantics, 'Jean Paul' was particularly fond of 'the peculiar habit of turning away from the narration of the story itself to discussions of problems of interest...'¹ The carefully monitored author-reader relationship and the pretence that parts of the narrative are manuscripts which have been entrusted to the author are further devices employed by 'Jean Paul' which Froude makes use of at the end of this novel. The German writer's influence is more generally pervasive in the novel in that, along with Goethe, he was 'the chief germinative influence of that type of romantic novel which dealt with the theme of education'.²

The abrupt ending of the novel is strange and problematic. With Fowler's death the focus of our interest in the novel has disappeared for there is no more that can be added to the thematic development thereafter. Thus the fragment of manuscript recording Fowler's vision in Magdalen College chapel seems oddly out of place. Behind the vision seems to lie the fear of exclusion from heaven on the grounds that he has sought for the truth as an individual rather than as a member of the church: a

¹ Oskar Walzel, German Romanticism, trans. Alma Elise Lussky (New York, 1932), p. 214.

² Walzel, p. 260.

concern more apposite to the Nemesis than to this novel.

The drama of Fowler's life and death, acted out in front of the reader's eyes ,together with the ancilliary comments of the author on the subject-matter is, quite simply, an application of Spinoza's ideas, in the words of Willey, 'to the problems of parenthood and up-bringing'.¹ The novel illustrates graphically the way in which one's actions are the result of complex antecedent causes over which one has little control. The critic who found that 'submission to God's will is the sum and substance of the book's message' was clearly mistaken.² Technically, the novel is badly flawed. It does have its merits: its use of metaphor and natural description are particularly felicitous.³ The style throughout (with the exception of the occasional grammatical lapse) shows a lightness of touch which is more characteristic of Froude's later prose style. But, as Wolff points out, the improbability of certain scenes, the unevenness of the characterisation, the sentimental, prayerful apostrophes and melodramatic orientation of the whole novel makes the underlying message less palatable perhaps to the modern reader than it would have seemed to Froude's contemporaries.⁴ Above all, the theme is stated explicitly more often than it is dramatically illustrated. This inevitably limits the exploration of the complexities of the theme's human dimensions. The loss of focus towards the end weakens further one's grasp of the point Froude is making. For these reasons it is a largely unsatisfactory, albeit interesting, fictional work. Possibly

¹ Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies, ed. cit., p. 119.

² Susanne Howe, Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen (New York, 1930), p. 233.

³ See Shadows, pp. 162, 150 respectively, for two of the best examples.

⁴ Robert Lee Wolff, Gains and Losses (Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England) (1977), pp. 389 ff.

the confessional anxiety at the back of the hurried writing of this part of Shadows and the consequent lack of attention to the technical treatment of his theme may account for this. Its companion piece, to which we now turn, shows striking differences in these respects.

The Lieutenant's Daughter

The Lieutenant's Daughter is a very different work. It opens with what The Spirit's Trials ended - a vision; like the latter, it is a bildungsroman; it treats of the same theme: the way in which our conduct as human beings is dependent upon the tyranny of attending circumstances, and the moral implications involved therein. But there the similarity ends. It is not in the least degree autobiographical. It incorporates into its limits elements which are found in such diverse sub-genres as the gothic novel, the work of science fiction and the novel of the 'fallen woman'. Technically, it could hardly be more different from The Spirit's Trials, for it employs two unusual devices of considerable structural (and hence thematic) significance: the story is told 'backwards',¹ and we are presented with an alternative ending.²

The novel opens with a philosophical disquisition on the nature of time by the first person narrator, who is looking back on a few days he spent ill in bed, in a state of near delirium. His speculations, he thinks, may have 'so disposed the particles of my body, that...a series of incidents were presented to my notice'. He denies that it was a dream, avowing that he was awake, and the pictures were 'not produced by an act of will, because if so, I could have controlled them, which I found I could not'. He later continues:

¹ This method of narration explains the quotation from Euripides in the epigraph which may be translated: 'Upwards and back to their fountains are the sacred rivers stealing'.

² Thus we are in effect given two different stories - one of them sketched out at length and the other alluded to briefly at the end.

I had no power at all (or I did not feel that I had) over the images that presented themselves to me. It was all as really and truly external, and independent of my power of willing, as the ordinary incidents of orderly daylight life.

(my emphasis; pp. 196-99)

The powerful sense of the very minutiae of life being predetermined even in the meta-narrative, is conveyed in the above quotation. The vision he has is of time flowing backwards ('effects and causes had changed places'). And one of the first things that makes a strong impression on him, as he sees this, is the very ludicrousness of the free-will theory:

But what struck me most, was the very comical idea [the people he sees in the vision] all had, that they were quite at liberty to do or not do, that they were perfectly free agents with uncontrolled volition, when they were not only going along a course so rigidly determined, uncoiling, and uncoiling everything, so exactly as it had been; but it was their very own footsteps they were treading back along, and they could not see it. (p. 204)

He watches (in reverse) the lives of several people (he is able to pick and choose with the aid of a genie of the Arabian Nights variety) including that of himself. As he observed these lives in retrospect, he applied a test:

I would watch something they had done, and form an opinion from it of what they were, and test my judgment on the order of circumstances along which they had passed, and which had determined them. (p. 205)

He found he was nearly always right. The last case he examines forms the subject matter of the main narrative.

The second chapter opens with a detailed description of a graveyard at night. All the motifs needed for a gothic novel are present: 'the black shadows', the 'vampire like' ivy, owls, windows lit as if with 'spectral tapers', the clock bell ringing out a 'death knell' and, in the mind of the narrator, at least, 'the spirits of the old dead monks...fulfilling the night services' (pp. 207-08). The sinister beauty of the quiet scene is evoked in language which waxes almost lyrical as the cadence of the alliterative and onomatopoeic phrases

exerts its spell:

So awfully still it was, there was not a voice, there was not a sound, save when an old owl was scornfully wooing his mistress with his sad serenadings, and one far-off nightingale whispering its sweet good night. (pp. 208-09)

Into this scene stumbles the 'heroine' of the novel, Catherine Gray.

With her long flowing hair and tattered clothing, she is very much the typical prostitute who has fallen prematurely on hard times. (That she is only some twenty years old, we learn later.) The narrator soon realises from her tearful soliloquies and Job-like ranting that she has come to the churchyard only to commit suicide on the grave of her parents. As she is about to drink the poison from the phial, a sea-bird screams, the clock chimes the magic hour of midnight, the candle in the cottage which used to be her home is extinguished and a shooting star flashes across the night sky. The chapter closes in the same vein with the owls flitting round her body, hooting 'in solemn mockery'.¹ In the following chapter the reader is offered a glimpse into Catherine's past through being shown a newspaper report on her death in the course of composition, the moralistic, hypocritical tone of which alerts the reader to the far from objective nature of the commentary.

Chapter four starts to fill in some of the details of Catherine's life. We go back a stage further in time, the language describing this being highly reminiscent of a passage in chapter three of H.G. Wells's The Time Machine (1895). En route there is a brief glimpse of Catherine as a prostitute, being spurned by a nameless gentleman (whom we later learn is her original seducer, Henry Carpenter). Next we find ourselves on the platform of Paddington Station. Here, a younger, prettier, healthier Catherine is about to be corrupted by the deceptive advances of Miss Caroline Arthur, a bawd. The latter promises to take her to Carpenter's

¹ One is reminded of several of the interpolated tales in Dickens's Pickwick Papers (1836-37): see, for example, chs. 21, 29.

house (he having promised to marry her). The implied contrast in perceptions and intention between the two women is well conveyed by the ensuing dialogue: the bawd is worldly, wily and insidious, whereas Catherine is innocent-like, gullible and naive. By a ruse, Catherine is given the impression that Carpenter has left London for the day. "Come with me, you must, the fates say so,"¹ urges the bawd (p. 225). Catherine is thus persuaded to stay in the 'lodgings' run by Miss Arthur and her elder sister, until she can meet Carpenter the next day. The description of the two sisters as they plot her downfall illustrates Froude's satirical powers. The elder has:

a flush upon her cheek, which might have passed for joy at the return of her sister, and the introduction of [Catherine] under her roof, if it had not stayed too long and been so uniform...(p. 227)

At times the language must have seemed quite explicit to Victorian readers. Referring to one particular client's preference for virginal (or near-virginal) partners, one of the sisters remarks with Catherine in mind: "and Lord William offers two hundred pounds you said, if it's quite fresh. That'll do!"¹

We are next introduced to one of the chief clients of 'mother damnable', Carpenter himself. The younger Miss Arthur meets him at his chambers with a view to using him to secure Catherine for her own ends. Carpenter, we are informed, 'was very moral in his estimate of other people. It was his saving clause that he was to get to heaven by' (p. 232). Their conversation, realistically presented in direct speech, is full of excuses and platitudes on the part of Carpenter, and the usual, worn spurious justifications for her 'trade' on Miss Arthur's part. The almost Dickensian invective of the satirical narrator is

¹ Shadows, p. 229. The idea of a woman being treated as nothing more or less than pounds of flesh is reinforced on p. 232.

scarcely necessary to modulate the reader's response. Because each of them is so ready to lie and distort the truth as it suits them, their words ring false, as the following representative passage shows (the emphasis is mine):

'Well, I don't know, Mr. Carpenter; you gentlemen are so kind as to patronise us... We do the thing respectably enough, and it's the demand that makes the trade...and if we didn't do it, somebody else would. We are very kind to our young ladies...it is merry enough while it [lasts].' (p. 232)

Embodied in the words of these two characters are some very potent social criticisms which are all the more effective since they condemn themselves out of their own mouths. The 'way of the world' is such that one should try to 'make what we can out of one another...eat one another if you like it, like the beasts do'. And 'some ways of eating are thought respectable, and others are not, but it is only a question of names'. Miss Arthur continues:

You law gentlemen, for instance, you get fat on the sins, as they are called, of your fellow creatures; the more they sin, the merrier it is with you. (pp. 232-33)

It is a world where everybody tries to shift blame from themselves on to others. As they speak, the commonplace that 'life is what you make it' becomes exposed for the dangerous fallacy it is. It is a world of double standards. A promise 'means nothing, everyone knows that', we are apprised at one point: how could anybody 'be such a fool' as to believe somebody? (p. 238). Miss Arthur describes herself and her sister as 'the friends of the friendless' (p. 233). Moral standards are inverted when they speak. Referring to Carpenter's initial seduction of Catherine, she agrees that he 'did what [he] had quite a right to do, if [he] could, of course (p. 35). The one consummate irony is that Miss Arthur's main tenet, which boils down to the simplification 'society is to blame', is, in fact, truer than she realises, as the narrative will continue to illustrate in the case of Catherine Gray. The outcome of the conversation is that Miss Arthur

blackmails Carpenter into writing Catherine a letter, dictated by herself, which will further her designs on the young girl. He must not even see Catherine again, despite his pledge, or his uncle will get to hear of it and he will be disinherited. The letter asks Catherine to trust in 'my truly excellent friends, the Miss Arthurs' who are 'truly good; they will think for you, and decide for you' (p. 240). Carpenter complies with the instructions. His moral qualms he silences with the reflection

God never would venture to damn a baronet with ten thousand a year, or even the heir of a baronet. It was only a way of speaking. (p. 246)

Froude's biting sarcasm and pointed satire round off this finely written scene in a manner again reminiscent of Dickens:

Indeed, I believe a whole week had passed before he began to regard himself again in his looking-glass with perfect self-contentedness, and pursue his easy meditations on the discovery of truth, (for Carpenter went out as a philosopher,) and his theories of universal philanthropy, and the new reformation. (p. 247)

The inevitable corruption of Catherine ensues and is painted judiciously. It is engineered by Miss Arthur in such a way that Catherine, deceived, drugged and betrayed, can hardly be held responsible for what happens. She wakes up one morning 'bewildered at the hideous devil-web in which she found herself entangled so hopelessly' (p. 249). We are told how 'she surrendered herself in despair to what appeared to be her destiny (p. 250). The path from the brothel to the grave is already known to the reader.

We now move back in time one stage further to Carpenter's seduction of Catherine. We learn about this through reading letters he wrote to a former Oxford friend. His first verbal exchange with Catherine is over a book she is reading: Shelley's poem, The Revolt of Islam, which, according to its author, illustrates 'the growth of progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind' - the irony if not inescapable is undeniable.¹ As Carpenter tells his friend

¹ Shelley, Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (1970), p. 32.

of his love for Catherine the reader is treated to an illustration of dramatic irony in reverse:

Wisdom, truth, beauty, God, duty, - I know them all now!
Verily am I now reborn of the Spirit, the child of love,
whose new life now beginning shall be lovely as the lives
of angels are. O! when I think what I have been. But now
that is past, gone. The old Adam, the old nature. Ah! now
I am free again, once again baptized in fire the heir of
heaven! And Catherine...you, you are the means of grace,
the mighty channel through which God pours this blessed
gift on me... (Froude's ellipsis; p. 261)

These protestations, with his allusions to St Paul's theology, in the light of his financially motivated acquiescence to her destruction later on, are stunning in their undermining effect. For the first time perhaps, the reader begins to get an inkling of Froude's novelistic technique here: for one of the effects of showing the train of events in reverse is to highlight the hollowness of Carpenter's intentions. The narrator's satirical jibe at Carpenter ('It appears our young friend had been getting up Germanesque philosophy') undercuts his avowals further (p. 261).

Carpenter fulminates against man's wickedness, teaching Catherine that 'the forms of society...are but modes of legalized selfishness' (p. 262).

He insists that

Catherine's purity shall now inspire mine. To her, as she is,
I at least feel I can never be untrue. I know myself and I can
trust myself. (p. 265)

'Wretched fool', comments the narrator, 'deceiving and deceived; knowing at his heart his own emptiness, yet dreaming too that he believes what he is saying' (p. 266).

At last, the moral is painted more explicitly for the reader, as Catherine is seduced:

She, simple and untaught, having lost at the hour of need the hand which should have led her the way that she should go...
Love holds her heart, and his tongue has bewildered her un-
educated conscience. She cannot choose but believe him, as
he sweeps her on to perdition; she has never known a teacher...
(my emphasis)¹

¹ Shadows, pp. 266-67. Froude slips in the quotation from Proverbs 22:6 to underscore his point.

Catherine's ignorance, her lack of education, the fact that she never had a good family upbringing because of the death of her parents, and Carpenter's false promises: these are the causes (we know now) of her ruin. She can not be regarded as blameworthy, for she had no real freedom of will. Her conscience is uninformed: she knows no better. Indeed, so conditioned is she by such factors, the question of moral guilt hardly seems to arise. When the narrator asks the genie whether she has sinned, he replies in the negative for 'when circumstances compel, there is no guilt' (p. 268).

There follows the sketch of her father, Lieutenant Gray and his wife who dies at giving birth to Catherine, together with a picture of her childhood until she is orphaned. A girl of some thirteen years, she is 'adopted' as a servant by Carpenter's aunt. Several years later, Carpenter meets her and seduces her. Thus we are brought fully up to date. The genie asks the narrator if he can tell where 'sin came in' and when 'she began to deserve what fell upon her'; he then poses some rhetorical questions:

Is not...the idea of "deserving" but a dream? and does not one thing follow another as it cannot choose but follow, as the grass grows where the rain falls, and withers and parches under drought? (p. 281)

The questions of course, go unanswered.

The genie has one final scene to show the narrator. This scene is an alternative ending. (We are not told which ending is true.) The scene, which takes place on a beautiful day in the churchyard, shows Catherine, a happily married woman with a young child, talking to the local clergyman. We learn that her father lived for another five years, dying just a week after his grandchild was born. 'What a chance these things turn upon!' comments her husband (p. 285). The implications are clear: if circumstances had been different, those events narrated

in the main body of the text would never have happened. Thus, if the nature of one's entire life depends to a large extent on 'luck' how accountable can one be held to be for one's actions? Can moral guilt ever be safely attributed to any individual (even the Miss Arthurs and Henry Carpenters of this world)? The questions this story (or, rather, these stories) raise, and the manner in which they are raised are indeed 'subversive', to use one critic's words, for they challenge the most fundamental premises of any system of morality.¹

Remarkable as both these novels are, they have received little in the way of serious attention from literary critics. Herbert Paul, Froude's first biographer, mentions The Lieutenant's Daughter only in passing ('it has been long and deservedly forgotten') while its companion he regards as merely 'a valuable piece of autobiography' and 'without literary merit'.² Froude's later biographer, Dunn, similarly ignores the former and sees the rapid composition of The Spirit's Trials 'as a purgation of [Froude's] emotions', which indeed it is, in part, but as we have seen it is also much more than that.³ Other critics such as Susanne Howe or Eric Trudgill evidence the novels in illustration of a particular point (in the latter's view, The Lieutenant's Daughter exemplifies the not uncommon admixture of sentimentality and sordid detail which characterised many 'fallen women' novels⁴). John R. Reed sees it as quite simply a 'sympathetic and candid treatment of a prostitute heroine', with Scott or Dickens for its antecedents.⁵ The novel's few contemporary reviewers at least treated them a little more fully. The writer in The Athenaeum, while criticising

¹ Cockshut, Man and Woman, p. 104.

² Paul, p. 37. In fact, Paul refers mistakenly to The Spirit's Trials as Shadows of the Clouds, an error made by at least one other critic.

³ Dunn I, 104.

⁴ Eric Trudgill, Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes (1976), p. 285.

⁵ John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (Athens, Ohio, 1975), p. 61.

the experimental framework of the second novel, praises the 'power' of the author's sketches of human life and suffering'.¹ Another critic, recognising that this novel illustrates 'the influence of circumstance on character' remarks that it 'touches a very sore spot in the English conscience', and regrets that prostitutes are given so little help to 'recover' themselves. He praises Froude's 'descriptive eloquence', his 'insight into human minds, and...his perception of natural beauty'; he is a writer of 'great literary ability'.²

Such comments, percipient as some of them are, fail to do justice to Froude's real achievement in these two novels. Viewed quite simply as two unambitious pieces designed to communicate, as effectively as possible, the modified determinism he had learned from Spinoza, together with its moral implications, the novels must, at the very least, be accounted partly successful. His chosen theme ('circumstances alter cases') is, however, explored in the novels in two very different ways. In The Spirit's Trials its statement is weaker; we are 'told' more than we are 'shown' and the reader reaches the end of the novel unsure of the extent to which the narrator's continual assertion of his views is fully borne out by the story he has been following. This is partly due to the fact that the assertions by this most intrusive, most moralising of heavy-handed narrators, emphatic as they are, are no substitute for proof. The loss of focus towards the end also contributes to the reader's confusion, I would suggest. In The Lieutenant's Daughter, however, there is no such confusion. The statement of the theme is much stronger. It is a starker, more dramatic, less discursive work, and its overall economy of presentation also pays dividends. The narrative, from its beginning to the

¹ The Athenaeum, No. 1025 (19 June 1847), 644.

² Prospective Review, 5 (December, 1849), 163-83.

two endings, illustrates Froude's point perfectly. This is largely owing to the curious structure Froude gave his story. The reversed narration increases 'the reader's sense of inevitability' as A.O.J. Cockshut points out.¹ And this sense of one's lack of total control in the face of determining circumstances is exactly what Froude was trying to convey. Because the form of The Lieutenant's Daughter is so well adapted to its theme (thus ensuring that the philosophical ideas are nicely foregrounded) it succeeds as a novel. Certainly, both works are flawed, as I noted earlier, The Spirit's Trials rather more so than The Lieutenant's Daughter, the latter's two unusual technical features redeeming it from mediocrity. But it would be wrong to let such imperfections vitiate our appreciation of Froude's modest but by no means negligible achievement in the two works.

What Froude has achieved, in fact, is to take those ideas which Spinoza treated 'geometrically' in his rather dry, difficult, and entirely abstract Ethics, and illustrate their application in the human context.² The novel, as Froude handles it, is well geared to an exploration of those complex moral questions which life continues to pose. The finest nuances are captured, the most elaborate consequences traced in this most 'human' of literary genres. Froude sensed this and resolved to harness fiction to this end. The resulting two novels, once the necessary qualifications have been made, are evidence that he succeeded. In his next novel, we shall see him harnessing the trappings of fiction for somewhat different ends.

¹ Cockshut, Man and Woman, p. 105.

² In a letter to his friend, Cowley Powles, in which he refers to the 'dreams' which will become Shadows, Froude writes that he has been 'teaching myself to forget to "think abstract"' - a telling remark (Dunn I, 104).

CHAPTER 3

'MALPRACTICE OF HEART AND ILLEGITIMATE PROCESS':

THE NEMESIS OF FAITH

The Nemesis of Faith (1849) is without question Froude's best known novel. Indeed, it is the only fictional work of his which has been quoted and referred to on anything like the same scale as the Carlyle biography, his History of England and the essays comprising his Short Studies on Great Subjects. By comparison Shadows of the Clouds is virtually unknown. The Nemesis is commonly regarded as the best example of the early Victorian novel of faith and doubt. Yet since its publication critics have differed quite considerably in their interpretation of the novel. The standard of critical discussion has not always been very high: the novel has frequently been misunderstood and, in some instances, distorted as a result.

In this chapter I shall offer a fresh interpretation of the novel which is based on a closer reading of the text. I shall also evaluate the significance of the Nemesis as a work of art and, more importantly, as a documentary.

First, I shall look at a selection of contemporary reviews as well as more recent criticism on the novel. What were the initial reactions of Victorian readers to the Nemesis? What were the factors which precipitated such a controversial response? How have later critics approached the novel?

In the course of the critical survey, it will become evident that the Nemesis, considered as prose fiction, received scant attention. But while it is clearly a somewhat flawed work of a distinctly minor order in terms of its art, its curious structure together with its synthesis of different fictional traditions afford sufficient interest to justify my consideration of it as a literary artefact.

The main body of the chapter, however, will be devoted to considering the Nemesis as a novel of ideas, for the insights it provides 'into the most intimate recesses of thought and faith' in the Victorian

age.¹ In this third section I shall trace in some detail the 'phases of faith' of the 'hero', Markham Sutherland, concentrating in particular on the role of John Henry Newman (and his fictional alias, Frederick Mornington), which, as I shall argue, is of the utmost importance if we are to understand how the novel works. In the light of this examination, I shall argue that while there are several themes running through the Nemesis there is only one 'moral' which is clearly justified by a careful, critical reading of the text itself.

In conclusion, I shall look at the Nemesis, with all its strengths and weaknesses, in the light of the preceding analysis, as a complex psychological matrix of faith and doubt. The significance of the Nemesis for the student of literature will be seen to be in direct proportion to the success with which it 'bodies forth' some of the ideas and beliefs which informed the Victorian religious sensibility.

The Nemesis and its critics

i. Contemporary reviews

The Nemesis was first published on 21 February 1849. Unlike the pseudonymous Shadows of two years earlier, it bore Froude's name and position (as a fellow of Exeter College, Oxford) on its title page. Whereas the Shadows stirred up a hornet's nest within Froude's family circle, the Nemesis gave rise to a controversy which took the University of Oxford by storm. The book was piously burnt during a lecture in Exeter College hall, by the Sub-Rector, William Sewell - perhaps the only book to be so treated in the nineteenth century - and the result, as might be expected, was that the novel achieved a certain notoriety and was successful enough to warrant a second edition within months of the first. Monckton Milnes wrote in a letter to a friend at that time:

A bomb has fallen into the midst of the religious world in the shape of a book called The Nemesis of Faith by a brother of Froude,

¹ Mrs Humphry Ward, Robert Elsmere (1888), Ch. 25.

the dead Puseyite. It is a sort of religious, anti-religious Wilhelm Meister, and balances itself between fact and fiction in an uncomfortable manner, though with great ability...

The practical outcome of all this for Froude was not so satisfactory: he was forced to resign his fellowship and was later prevented from taking up an appointment as a schoolmaster, because of the scandal his book had caused. The novel was vilified in most of the respectable journals. People of various shades of belief (and of no belief at all) habitually cited the novel in their favour while conducting the nigh interminable religious wrangles which proliferated in the mid-nineteenth century.

The most representative type of response can be illustrated by quoting briefly from the memoirs of an Anglican bishop; his view was that the novel advocated

not only speculative infidelity, and, by consequence, atheism, but the worst of immorality...sensuality, under the mask of tender feeling and refinement of intellectual perception and sentiment. I have been much disgusted with it.

Froude was branded as an 'infidel'; his scepticism was viewed as 'pollution'.

The views of Markham Sutherland, the protagonist of the novel, were taken to be Froude's own by several reviewers: Sutherland was regarded as a mere mouthpiece for Froude's own vicious, heretical sentiments. The sectarian spirit which prompted different parties to appropriate or revile the book for their own ends meant that the novel was all too often seen in simplistic, reductionist terms.

The revulsion at the book's apparent immorality is perhaps difficult for the modern reader to comprehend. Nowhere, for example, is there any suggestion that anything untoward in a sexual sense took place in the course of the novel. The hero's speculative views are nowhere explicitly condoned by the author: on the contrary, one could argue that in the end

¹ James Pope - Hennessy, Monckton Milnes: The Years of Promise 1809-1851 (1949), pp. 297-98.

² Some Memorials of Renn Dickson Hampden, Bishop of Hereford, ed. Henriette Hampden (1871), p. 177.

Sutherland receives his just deserts, for he dies in miserable circumstances, with nobody to 'mourn over the day which brought life to Markham Sutherland' (p. 227). What, then, prompted the uncompromisingly stern wave of moral outrage against the novel? First, it must be understood that in the eyes of many orthodox Christians, the very act of doubting was sinful: and Sutherland's many doubts were quite far-reaching in their implications. Secondly, Sutherland attacks two institutions which were held sacrosanct by most practising Anglicans: the Bible and the established church. He questioned the literal inspiration of the former and the spiritual and moral efficacy of the latter. Thirdly, in denying the existence of free will, he dismisses the whole notion of morality: sin is a mere 'chimera' for him. This naturally paves the way for the 'illicit' relationship between Sutherland and Helen Leonard, a married woman, who up to the time of her death refuses to acknowledge that her sin lay in her liaison with Sutherland, but rather in having married a man whom she did not love in the first place. Most Victorians would have been even more horrified at this, I think, than at Sutherland's many provocative statements and actions - including his avowal that the God of the Old Testament is a 'fiend', and his eventual conversion to Romanism.¹

The moral revulsion of the reviewers was to be found even in the more progressive magazines such as Fraser's, which Froude was later to edit. There, the anonymous reviewer follows the usual pattern of providing a plot synopsis interspersed with lengthy quotations, and is extremely lavish in his praise for the author's style.² He regards the

¹ At one point, Arthur (Sutherland's correspondent) comments: 'Fearfully mysterious as it is, yet even love which should never be does not lose its nobleness' (Nemesis, p. 184). This would have shocked many readers, pace Chaucer, Malory, et al..

² Fraser's Magazine, 39 (May, 1849), 545-60. Froude himself identified the reviewer as J.M. Ludlow, the Christian Socialist.

Nemesis as autobiographical and censures the author for having written such a 'wholly negative' book. Its publication is to be regretted (it constitutes a 'sin') though there is a degree of sympathy for the 'doubter'.¹ The review is perhaps untypical in spending so much time discussing Froude's style and literary prowess and in not forcing a moral interpretation of the novel. A more typical response is that of the reviewer who finds parts of the novel 'too profane for transcription', and links Froude's name with those of Gibbon and Strauss, castigating all three. The value of the novel, he maintains, is that it depicts the process whereby an educated man can so easily become an infidel.² The only substantially positive review in a national journal was by Geraldine Jewsbury, the author of Zoe, in the Westminster Review.³ She discerns the influence of Carlyle ('the first man in England who dared to declare that a sincere doubt was as much entitled to respect as a sincere belief') and goes on to praise the book as

a very powerful picture of the struggles of a religiously-disposed sceptic; the language is eloquent and powerful, and goes to the heart of the matter.⁴

Also enthusiastic was Mary Ann Evans who reviewed the book in the Coventry Herald and Examiner: she declared it 'a true product of genius'.⁵ After 1850, the Nemesis was not discussed in print until after Froude's death, and the appearance of a new edition in 1903.⁶ The older Froude, it seems, was reluctant to see the novel republished in his lifetime.⁷ It

¹ According to N.C. Masterman, John Malcolm Ludlow: the Builder of Christian Socialism (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 81-82, the review of the Nemesis, heavily influenced by Fourier and Proudhon, reflected Ludlow's experience at having tried (without success) to convert Froude 'back' to his (Ludlow's) sort of Christianity.

² The Christian Observer, N.S. No. 145 (January, 1850), 16-35.

³ 'Religious Faith and Modern Scepticism', Westminster Review, 52 (September, 1850), 379-407.

⁴ op. cit., p. 404.

⁵ In the issue of 16 March 1849: cf. Dunn I, 235-36. Froude had sent her a copy of his novel inscribed 'To the translator of Strauss'.

⁶ With an introduction by Moncure D. Conway. There had been an edition published in America in 1879.

⁷ Cf. Skelton, p. 164.

is only when we leave the heavily didactic Victorian reviews behind and turn to more modern assessments that a more balanced picture of the novel begins to emerge.

ii. Some modern viewpoints

While there can scarcely be a single book on the intellectual background to the Victorian age which fails to make a passing reference to the Nemesis in a footnote or, less usually, in a short paragraph, there are few works of literary criticism which contain more than a chapter or a few pages on the novel, and hardly any articles.¹ Much that has been written on it is uninformed, biased, derivative and erroneous.² The tendency to classify the novel, and hence dismiss it in a word, is much in evidence.³ Some critics, writing on Froude, surprisingly fail to mention the novel at all,⁴ or else do so only to add that they have never in fact read the work.⁵ Most of the fundamental misinterpretations of what the main theme or 'moral' of

¹ Thus, a typically concise if rather dismissive reference describes the Nemesis as 'a painful study of spiritual wreckage set in the framework of a sentimental novel': William Henry Hudson, A Short History of English Literature in the Nineteenth Century (1918), p. 204. Andrew Lang, on the other hand described the novel as 'one of the best, if one of the least read, romances of theological scepticism': New & Old Letters to Dead Authors (1907), p. 189.

² No fewer than five books, for example, give the date of the Nemesis as 1848.

³ Thus the novel is: 'anti-Catholic' - Joseph Ellis Baker, The Novel and the Oxford Movement (Princeton, 1932), p. 79; 'a mistake' - Algernon Cecil, Six Oxford Thinkers (1909), p. 159; 'autobiographical' - A.L. Rowse, The English Spirit (1944), p. 220; 'not literature' - A. Stanton Whitfield, 'James Anthony Froude: historian and man of letters' (Walsall, 1919), p. 7; and so on.

⁴ See, for example, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Victorian Minds. Essays on Nineteenth Century Intellectuals (1968): in her 12-page essay on Froude as a representative 'mind' of his age, she does not even mention the Nemesis.

⁵ Rev. Astley Cooper, James Anthony Froude (1908), p. 17.

the Nemesis is derive from emphasising some parts of the novel to the exclusion of others. Cecil sees the novel as teaching that 'without religion morality will waste away' and that 'infidelity led to immorality'.¹ The highly selective nature of Mortimer Proctor's quotation from the novel leads him to conclude that the novel's main lesson for its readers is that

[Sutherland] had never adequately distinguished between the outmoded acceptance of the Bible as divine writ and the more reasonable views of the latitudinarians, [so that] faith became his nemesis instead of his salvation.²

This is misleading in any case, but especially since such an interpretation, based as it is on the first part of the novel, ignores the all-important section entitled 'Confessions of a Sceptic' as well as the crucial concluding narrative in which Sutherland becomes a Roman Catholic.

Along with the plainly inadequate there are the frankly hostile reactions, which still persisted well into this century. Thus, Herbert Paul, Froude's first biographer, regards the novel as 'unwholesome' and 'both in substance and style quite unworthy of Froude'.³ Another writer denied the Nemesis was a novel: it was merely a 'terribly candid revelation by a morbid soul of all its self-created difficulties'.⁴ And another described it as 'the dullest apologia which was ever written'.⁵ Some critics, while acknowledging the very real glimpses the novel affords into the workings of a 'second-rate sensitive mind' in the nineteenth century, devote an unseemly amount of space to pointing out the book's manifest weaknesses, citing its 'faulty construction', improbability, melodrama and sentimentalism - faults, which, after all, are exemplified in the works of greater novelists than Froude.⁶ Burrow cites the novel

¹ Six Oxford Thinkers, pp. 159, 162.

² Mortimer R. Proctor, The English University Novel (Berkeley, 1957), p. 93.

³ Paul, pp. 45-46.

⁴ John Spencer Bassett, 'The Personality of Froude', SAQ, 5 (April, 1906), 116.

⁵ B.C.A. Windle, 'The Froude Family. Not Peace But a Sword', CW, 122 (February, 1926), 637.

⁶ The novels of both Dickens and Hardy are occasionally marred by such faults.

only to support his view that the influence of neology and evolutionary theory as doubt-inducing has been much exaggerated, and that the persuasiveness of moral arguments against such doctrines as original sin and the atonement should be stressed more than they have been hitherto.¹

On the whole, most of the critics mislead through a failure to realise the complexity of the faith-doubt process as documented by Froude in this novel. Wolff, for example, citing F.D. Maurice, points out that the Tractarians taught 'a religion about God' and what Sutherland needed was a 'belief in God'; 'it was as simple as that' he comments.² Yet, nowhere in the Nemesis does Sutherland either deny or doubt the existence of God. The temptation to over-simplify is an understandable one, particularly for the psychological critic who sees the Nemesis as little more than disguised autobiography, but it is nevertheless a temptation which must be emphatically resisted if justice is to be done to the novel. As Basil Willey points out, the 'meaning of the book, its main drift, is very hard to isolate'.³ McCraw is one critic who does seem to be aware of the book's complexity, identifying no less than three possible 'morals'. But the one he inclines towards as being the most attractive (namely, that fundamentalism and one's childhood faith are emotionally appealing but intellectually untenable) is unsatisfactory because Froude is concerned with these concepts only at specific points early on in the novel. Elsewhere, especially later, the novelist has other, more important concerns, as we shall see.⁴ In an article peppered with errors of fact and judgement, Murphy commits the same sort of mistake in over-emphasising

¹ See Laurence Lerner (ed.), The Victorians (1978), pp. 153-73.

² Wolff, Gains and Losses, pp. 269-70.

³ Willey, More Nineteenth Century Studies, ed. cit., p. 121.

⁴ Harry Wells McCraw, 'Two Novelists of Despair: James Anthony Froude and William Hale White', SQ, 13 (October, 1974), 21-51.

the anti-hell diatribe of Sutherland in one of the early letters of the novel.¹ A.O.J. Cockshut, while recognising that the Nemesis is 'an unjustly neglected book' which should be read not so much 'as a work of art, but as a case book' provides a psychological reading of the novel, stressing Sutherland's doubts about the Old Testament rather than his experience of Tractarianism at Oxford - a somewhat peculiar reading which lends prominence, like McCraw's, to the early part of the novel.²

Of all the critics I have read on the Nemesis only two come close to presenting a view of the Nemesis which really squares with the text. Dennis recognises the anti-heroic nature of Sutherland's character and identifies two theses in the novel: that doubt and immorality are the inevitable consequences of each other, and that to surrender reason is not to settle one's doubts.³ The first of these is a commonplace and had been identified by earlier critics. While such an interpretation is not contradicted by the text, it is not given the prominence some writers have implied. The second thesis is important and is bound up with what I shall argue is the novel's central concern. Dennis's exposition of how the novel illustrates this thesis is, however, inadequate because incomplete: it is incomplete because it ignores the all-important place of Newman in the novel. Chadwick seems to have grasped Newman's importance, but his account is inevitably brief and does not involve a close reading of the text, which is so evidently essential for his assertions to be borne out and fully illustrated.⁴

¹ Howard R. Murphy, 'The ethical revolt against Christian Orthodoxy in early Victorian England', AHR, 60 (July, 1955), 800-17.

² A.O.J. Cockshut, The Unbelievers: English Agnostic Thought 1840-1890 (1964), pp. 177-21.

³ B.L. Dennis, Religious Doubt in the Novel 1840-1900, B.Litt Diss., (Oxford, 1970), ch. 1 passim.

⁴ Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, 2 vols, 3rd ed. (1971), I, 533-39. Chadwick is writing, strictly speaking, in his capacity as an historian however, and as such is most concerned to sketch the broader context.

Newman's influence pervades this novel, whether considered as a religious document or, to a lesser extent, as a work of art. Before moving on to discuss the nature and extent of Newman's influence, it is clearly desirable that some time be spent putting the novel in its fictional context, if the ensuing discussion is not to be meaningless. What kind of work is the Nemesis?

The Nemesis as fiction

Anybody coming to the Nemesis for the first time, and expecting to read a novel resembling in appearance, at least, those of Scott or Dickens, would surely be surprised. By all accounts the Nemesis is a strangely constructed work. The first eighty pages or so consist of ten letters written by Sutherland to his friend Arthur who, we later learn, is both the editor of Sutherland's letters and papers, and the narrator of the final part of the story. Arthur interrupts the letters briefly, at one point, to comment on the year which elapses between letters VIII and IX. He intervenes again before introducing the various fragments of manuscript written by Sutherland at an unspecified date. He comments twice more, the second time to introduce a long, unfinished manuscript entitled 'Confessions of a Sceptic', written by Sutherland while in Italy, after the events related in the letters. The 'Confessions' is an autobiographical account of Sutherland's beliefs and opinions, spanning some twenty years, taking the reader to the time just before the first letter. Then, about seventy pages before the end of the novel, the manuscript breaks off and from then on Arthur relates all that happened to Sutherland while living in Como, until his death.

We may view the novel, then, as split into three parts: the opening, epistolary section, the 'Confessions', and the concluding narrative. As with The Lieutenant's Daughter in Shadows, the organisation of the narrative is non-chronological. This seemingly haphazard

arrangement is not the result of a hurried, frenetic writing process. The organisation of the time-scheme is, on the contrary, entirely appropriate. It is a technical device of considerable thematic importance, if we bear in mind what Froude is doing in this novel. Froude has undertaken to show his readers the gradual unfolding of Sutherland's progress from faith to doubt. The first part of the novel thus reveals his state of mind and what his doubts and misgivings about the faith consist of: it ends with Sutherland resigning his living as a Church of England clergyman. The second part sketches his upbringing as a child and his experience at Oxford, thereby providing the reader with all the information he needs to understand how Sutherland came to hold such views. The third part traces what happened to him after having left the church, and relates one further stage in his spiritual journey: his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and the consequences of the step for him. In part two, the figure of Newman is absolutely crucial; in part three, Mornington (Newman fictionalised) is likewise of key importance. The device thus lends prominence to certain influences on Sutherland's mind, to the antecedent causes of his belief and unbelief, rather than to the actual doubts and beliefs themselves. It is thus the process whereby Sutherland lost his faith that is important, not the individual doubts he ends by embracing. And since Newman is easily the most influential factor in this process, it is clear that the novel is deliberately organised in such a way as to highlight his part in the process. So much for the novel's structure and organisation. But what of the 'novel' itself? What sort of work are we dealing with?

As we have seen, it starts off in the epistolary tradition of Samuel Richardson. This device has two functions. First, it provides the reader with a direct glimpse into a mind plagued with doubt and irresolution. Plunged as we are in medias res, the letters have a forcefulness and an immediacy which is psychologically convincing. The absence of the

novelist's disquisition in the way of scene-setting and character-sketching, so often found at the beginning of novels, is thus advantageous. Secondly, it is a device making for realism: these could be actual letters written from one person to another. This pretence at realism is carried over into the next section, where another convention is present: that of the edited manuscript. This approach to the subject matter has the ring of 'historical research' to it; one senses that the author is presenting the carefully edited extracts of Sutherland's writing to the reader in the same way as an historian (or, better still, a psychiatrist) might present a case-history. If the letters brought one close to Sutherland as a living, breathing person, the manuscripts seem to afford more 'objective' insights into this person's soul. The technique was not, of course, a new one. Carlyle had used it before in Sartor Resartus (1833-34) - a work Froude had certainly read by 1849. It will be recollected that Froude used the same technique himself in The Spirit's Trials in Shadows, and was in fact to use the same method - this time for real - in his History, years later. The connection between history and literature was a particularly close and fruitful one for Froude, as we shall see when we come to look at The Two Chiefs of Dunboy. In the 'Confessions of a Sceptic' which follows, there are several traditions present. There is the obvious 'confessional' strand, indicated by the title. And it is surely no coincidence that here and elsewhere in the novel there are references to and quotations from Rousseau, whose Confessions Froude had almost certainly read. Then there is the bildungsroman tradition running through this section, as Sutherland recalls his early life up until his time at university. The first person autobiography serves almost as a commentary on both the preceding letters and the ensuing narrative: chapter and verse for where the reader must turn to look for an explanation of Sutherland's state of mind, is given in this all-important section. At times, such as when Sutherland discusses

in some detail the arguments for and against the Catholic position, the novel is more akin to one of the Tracts for the Times than a work of fiction. Elsewhere in the Nemesis, in the passages on the plight of the poor and the necessity of bringing Christ and his teaching to them, with the concomitant attacks on materialism and laissez-faire capitalism (in the best tradition of the social-problem novel) it is hard not to think of the Nemesis as a thesis-novel.¹ There is little of the overt sermonising found in so many of the novels of religious controversy published during the same period, but it possesses a didactic timbre, nonetheless. Finally, in the last part of the novel, we revert to what many people have come to expect of the novel as the major Victorian practitioners conceived it in some of their lesser works: straightforward third person narrative, at times melodramatic, often sentimental and prolix, on occasion highly improbable, frequently morbid, 'romantic' and sensational, with an intrusive, insistent narrator.²

Described in this way, the Nemesis must seem something of a hotchpotch, a conglomeration of different fictional and non-fictional modes stuck together and labelled a novel. I would not, however, regard this admittedly rather elaborate synthesis as a literary mistake. The exploration of certain theological, philosophical and psychological ideas does not ring false as it does in so many other minor religious novels, where the characters are scarcely portrayed at all except insofar as they are of one party or another and where the extensive passages of dialogue are nothing more than unlikely set-pieces, where the merits and demerits of opposing doctrines may be argued over ad infinitum.³ By employing different fictional techniques, Froude seems to cater for the many-sided nature of his subject: for the theologico-philosophical aspects we have the essay-

¹ See the Nemesis, pp. 7-8, 18-19, 46-47.

² Annie's death is a good example: Nemesis, pp. 190-98.

³ See, for example, [Elizabeth Furlong Shipton Harris,] From Oxford to Rome: and how it fared with some who lately made the journey by A Companion Traveller (1847). This sort of novel is pilloried in Newman's own novel, Loss and Gain (1848).

like digressions in 'Confessions' and the manuscript fragments; for the socio-psychological approach to the subject we have the vignettes of the letters and the autobiographical part of 'Confessions'; for the more emotional, experiential side we have the narrative proper, where we see some of the ideas in their human garb. The transitions from one section to another are not unsightly and, as we shall see, the strong thematic orientation of the novel ensures there is no consequent lack of unity in the novel despite such architectonic subtleties. The synthesis is largely a successful one, then, and it is Froude's own, but to make it so he has drawn from different traditions and borrowed from various authors. The result is a very dense novel, highly allusive in both its form and its subject matter. It is some of those sources and analogues we must now consider if the Nemesis is not to be seen in isolation from its literary context.

There are three chief areas of indebtedness we may identify in the Nemesis. First there is Froude's debt to Newman, for whom he had tremendous admiration and affection.¹ With Carlyle, he was 'one of two [...] greatly gifted men 'who had influenced him.'² The debt in this novel is two-fold: intellectual and stylistic. The intellectual debt (and Sutherland's in particular) is discussed in detail, later in the chapter.³ Froude's name has often been linked with Newman's in matters of style: Froude's later style in its simplicity, lucidity and conciseness certainly owes much to Newman.⁴ But in the Nemesis, as we might expect from the co-existence of diverse sub-genres, the influence is sporadic. It is mostly in evidence

¹ Cf. 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation' in Short Studies IV, 270-93 and the autobiographical fragment in Dunn I, passim.

² Nemesis, p. 156.

³ One example in the Nemesis which serves to illustrate how close in their thinking they were, is the striking way in which the heart v. head motif anticipates Newman's own distinction between real and notional assent in his Grammar of Assent (1870).

⁴ Paul (p. 61) refers to Froude as 'an apt pupil of Newman' in his style.

in that part of the 'Confessions' where he is analysing certain theological ideas.¹

Next there is the debt to Carlyle, for whom Froude also came to have great respect; in later years, he was Carlyle's trusted friend and literary executor and biographer.² Although the novel owes less to Carlyle than to Newman, the former's influence is not difficult to detect. Froude occasionally imitates Carlyle's style in the novel, but never again in later writings. This may be thought surprising given his rejection of Newman's ideas for those of Carlyle, who was to be his mentor. Carlylean echoes resound at intervals through these pages, usually coinciding with his expositions of Carlyle's ideas.³ Carlyle's Wotton Reinfred has been compared to the Nemesis, and the former work does indeed tell the (unfinished) story of a young doubter, but Froude would not, of course, have read this piece of prose fiction by 1849.⁴ Carlyle's influence is also in evidence in a more indirect way: it was through him that Froude read Goethë and other German romantics. Froude himself referred to the Nemesis as 'a sort of Theological Werther's Leiden'.⁵ Goethë's Sorrows of Young Werther, a novel of the sturm und drang school, does indeed bear certain resemblances: the first part, for example, is in the form of letters, and the second part, related in third person narrative, ends with the hero's suicide. Goethë's influence is discernible

¹ See, e.g., Nemesis, pp. 147 ff. Kenneth Allott notices how towards the melodramatic end of the novel, the prose structure has become modified by the strength of the emotions portrayed, so that the effect is something more like second-rate Dickens than John Henry Newman: Kenneth and Miriam Allott (eds), Victorian Prose, 1830-1880 (Harmondsworth, 1956), p. xxvi.

² How different Carlyle and Newman were is brought out by the former's total lack of understanding of the latter in a famous remark; see Froude's Thomas Carlyle: a history of his life in London (1902) II, 267: Carlyle said of Newman that he 'had not the intellect of a rabbit'.

³ See the Nemesis, pp. 124-25, 99-100, 152-57, 161-63.

⁴ Dunn I, 237.

⁵ Bodleian MS Eng. Lett. c.190, fols 261-62.

also through the hero's echoing of Carlyle's views: for Carlyle himself was much influenced by this writer (the 'gospel of work' is a case in point). More difficult to assess, is the influence of other Continental writers Froude might also have read via Carlyle, but who are not alluded to specifically in the course of the novel. We have noted Rousseau's influence. A case has been made for George Sand's influence on the third section of the Nemesis.¹ The sensationalist strain of this part of the novel (and in particular Helen's attitude to her marriage) is certainly to be found in Sand's novels, but I hesitate to identify a case of influence: the evidence is insufficient.

Finally, there is Froude's debt to the few earlier novels which touch on the theme of religious doubt. Here we can more definitely relate the Nemesis to a tradition, drawing on and drawn upon by other writers. Thus, John Sterling's Arthur Coningsby (1833) similarly presents the reader with damaged manuscripts full of lacunae, as does F.D. Maurice in his Eustace Conway (1834), where the hero also becomes acquainted with Hume and other sceptical authors while at university and becomes unsettled in his faith as a result. Geraldine Jewsbury's Zoe (1845) more clearly evinces the influence of Sand than the Nemesis, as it relates how a Catholic priest comes to lose his faith. Some passages prefigure the Nemesis remarkably. Everard, the hero, regrets the effect that studying theology has had on his personal faith:

Four years of theological study have changed its aspect. From being a sacred and mysterious object of belief, it has come to be a collection of doctrines to be disputed, to be stated and proved by premises...A habit of metaphysical subtlety has for ever stripped off the bloom of reverence and awe with which I formerly regarded religion, and it can never come back to me.²

¹ Patricia Thomson, George Sand and the Victorians (1977), pp. 147-48.

² Zoe, 3 vols (1845), I, 244.

One is reminded of many similar passages in the Nemesis: one example is where Sutherland writes that 'the heart spurns metaphysics, and one good honest feeling tears the shrivelled spider webs to atoms' (p. 17). There is also an episode set in Como, later in Zoe. Elsewhere the book frequently reads like an early Nemesis. Emma Newton's The Modern Unbeliever (1847) is more overtly didactic, but covers much of the same ground as the Nemesis, though from a more strictly orthodox position. Robert Armitage's Ernest Singleton (1848), like Froude's novel, is at times a collage of allusions to Swedenborg, Hume, Pusey, Newman, Carlyle, and Thomas Arnold, but it is chaotic, not evincing the same degree of organisation we noted in the Nemesis.

With the possible exception of Zoe, I am not pointing to any of the above novels as sources for the Nemesis, so much as sketching the early tradition of the religious novel from which Froude so obviously draws in his novel. It would be very difficult to establish a case of direct influence by most of these, but the parallels are, at times, very close indeed. The same could be said of novels published after the Nemesis. Mrs Craik's Olive (1850) is similar in many respects: the doubting cleric utters sentiments which could easily have been voiced by Sutherland, who is likewise opposed to the 'thorny rampart of old, worn-out forms'.¹ Similar in approach to the middle section of the Nemesis, is Henry Rogers's The Eclipse of Faith (1852), but it is so disjointed that its author, perhaps in a futile attempt to disarm criticism in advance, remarks in his preface that his 'novel' might 'have been properly entitled "Theological Fragments"'. In W.D. Arnold's Oakfield (1853) we meet the hero, who has just gone down from Oxford 'because I had a vague feeling that I was going to the devil there' -

¹ Olive, Macmillan ed. (1903), p. 256. Compare even the ending of this novel, commencing with the words 'Strange contrast...' (pp. 425 ff) with the Nemesis, p. 226.

and the reference is not to dissipation, but to doubts!¹ The later, classic accounts of an individual's loss of faith such as those novels by William Hale White and Mrs Humphry Ward provide further interesting points of comparison with Froude's novel. It would be outside the scope of this chapter to survey the limited, though not altogether negligible, influence the Nemesis had on later generations. And fascinating as its fictional characteristics are, its real interest for us today surely resides more in the insights it affords and the ideas it embodies: this is what raises it above the tradition in which I have located it. It is the account we are given of Sutherland's loss of faith in the Nemesis, to which we must now turn.

The Nemesis as documentary

i. Loss of faith in the Nemesis

The process whereby Sutherland comes to lose his faith is intricate and complex. To understand the nature of this process fully, it is necessary to turn first to that part of 'Confessions' which is taken up with Sutherland's history of the formation of his beliefs from childhood up to (and including) his time at Oxford. In this section (pp. 108-63), Sutherland looks back with a fond, though one suspects unrealistic, nostalgia, at his simple, childhood faith - a fairly thoroughgoing 'rigid Protestantism' which vigorously maintained that the Pope was 'the unquestionable Antichrist' (p. 121) and where 'religion, with us, was to do our duty' (p. 109). This state of affairs was but a temporary one for a few pages later we are told how his family 'fell under a strong Catholicising influence'. He continues:

Transubstantiation was talked of before me as more than possible; celibacy of the clergy and fasting on the fast days were not only not wrong, but the very thing most needful.., (pp. 122-23; Froude's ellipsis)

¹ Cf. Oakfield, 2 vols (1853), I, 1-35.

This sudden, bewildering switch in religious emphasis which meant that Sutherland had to 'unlearn' much that he had previously taken for granted was something of a turning point, for it was the 'first disturbance my mind experienced, and...I never recovered it' (p. 123). It is not long after this that Sutherland goes up to Oxford, and here he falls directly under Newman's influence. After a preliminary discourse on the 'plastic nature' of a young man's mind and his consequent susceptibility to 'the influence of persons whom we love and venerate' (p. 125), Sutherland slowly begins to unravel for us the tangled knot of his changing beliefs:

So a strange process began to form; for, while it was in reality their own great persons which were drawing us all towards them, they unwillingly deceived us into believing it was not their influence, but the body's power; and, while in fact we were only Newmanites, we fancied we were becoming Catholics. (p. 126)

From the moment Sutherland mentions Newman by name, two points are quite clear. On the one hand, he speaks of him with great awe, affection and admiration: Newman is Sutherland's hero. On the other hand, he feels let down, even betrayed in some way, since it is Newman's personal qualities that really attract him, and not Newman's very Catholic beliefs and arguments. This realisation must lie at the heart of our understanding of Sutherland's movement from a Protestant faith through Tractarianism (and Catholicism proper) to scepticism. And since the figure of Newman is so important in this transition, it is perhaps worth while pausing here to consider in greater detail what Sutherland says of him before tracing the precise effect Newman had on his religious development.

Newman, from the outset, is portrayed as a person with two distinct aspects to his personality. He is a magnetic, god-like figure: Sutherland has 'deep faith' in this 'one great man', in this morally good man of

genius around whom several lesser minds 'gravitate[d]'.¹ He has a remarkable 'power of insight' into each individual's 'buried life' - so much so that he could stand unashamedly alongside the most omniscient of Victorian novelists:

I believe no young man ever heard him preach without fancying that someone had been betraying his own history, and the sermon was aimed specially at him. (p. 144)

In short, Newman's personality was such that Sutherland's creed at Oxford was 'Credo in Newmannum'.² But there was another, more insidious side to Newman. More like the serpent in the Garden of Eden than a god, he exercised his 'subtle reasonings with which he drew away from under us the supports upon which Protestant Christianity had been content to rest its weight'. He is possessed of a logic that is at once so rigorous that he can dismiss the natural theology of Paley as 'futile' and 'examine the logic of unbelief with a kind of pleasure' (p. 126). Sutherland views Newman, then, as embodying a potent combination of formidable qualities: a warm, charismatic personality which won over Sutherland's heart, together with great intelligence and powers of reasoning which appealed to Sutherland's intellect. It is interesting to note that it is not Newman's arguments themselves which attract Sutherland; he is mesmerised, at least

¹ Nemesis, pp. 125-26, 135. The word 'magnetic' is used occasionally when speaking of Newman's influence (e.g. Nemesis, pp. 134-36). It would seem to fit in well with the Spinozan belief in determinism, which Sutherland would appear to give credence to (see Nemesis, pp. 90-96). This explains his attitude to sin. Interestingly, it would imply that he had no choice in being influenced by Newman, here. See my discussion of Froude on Spinoza in relation to Shadows, in chapter 2. Vernon F. Storr noted: 'The teaching of [the Nemesis] may be described as a defence of determinism on the one hand, and of the claim of reason against authority on the other. Froude appears to have been led to determinism by the study of Spinoza...' - The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century: 1800-1860 (1913), p. 373.

² The phrase is Froude's from 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', Short Studies IV, 283.

for the time being, by Newman the man. It is Newman's passionate regard for Truth rather than the individual truths he enumerates which exacts Sutherland's reverential fealty. A key paragraph, containing a fascinating portrait of Newman reads thus:

There is genius, with its pale face, and worn dress, and torn friendships, and bleeding heart...strong only in struggling; counting all loss but truth and the love of God; rewarded, as men court reward, perhaps by an after apotheosis, yet never seeking this reward or that reward, save only its own good conscience steady to its aim; promising nothing; least of all peace - only struggles which are to end but with the grave. (p. 140)

The alternative to Newman's profound dedication to the truth is 'respectability, with its sweet smiling home, and loving friends, and happy family...' (p. 140). Sutherland acknowledges that one must choose between them: it is a choice, it would appear, between the conflicting ideals of Newman and the world:

What a sight must this age of ours have been to an earnest believing man like Newman, who had an eye to see it, and an ear to hear its voices? (p. 152)

The ensuing paragraphs so nearly represent Newman's views that they almost pre-empt the wonderful section in the Apologia where Newman writes of his most fundamental beliefs:

Starting then with the being of a God, (which...is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence...) I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself.¹

But the choice between following Newman and refusing to do so was not so simple for Sutherland. As he outlines the many factors which swayed him against following Newman, one becomes aware of the complexity of the

¹ John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, Fount paperback ed. (1977), pp. 277 ff.

process - for process it properly was: there was no single, sudden, irrevocable deconversion, but instead a gradual shift in sympathy over a prolonged period.

What prompted Sutherland's movement away from Newman's influence? First, Sutherland points to what he regards as an inherent contradiction in Newman's position: namely, that while the latter advises against following 'private judgement' (one should rather submit to the authority of the church) he does not hesitate to exercise that forbidden right himself (pp. 135-36). Secondly, he objects to Newman's dictum of the surrender of the reason on the grounds that 'reason could only be surrendered by an act of reason' (p. 157). The importance of this point could hardly be exaggerated. Sutherland cites a sermon of Newman's in the course of which he pointed to the discrepancy between scripture and science on the motion of the earth when he said 'we shall never know [whether it is the earth or the sun which moves] till we know what motion is'. This statement, remarks Sutherland, 'finally destroyed the faith I had in Newman, after "Tract 90" had shaken it'.¹ Sutherland obviously detects in both cases a note of sophistry, and this he is not prepared to accept. Moreover, Sutherland fears that Newman, in emphasising the role of the heart in faith, is paving the way for credulity rather than real belief, and 'deepest credulity and deepest scepticism have been commonly believed to be near neighbours' -

¹ Nemesis, p. 158. Like others who had been up at Oxford while Newman was at St Mary's (such as Matthew Arnold) Froude had fond memories of Newman the preacher. But at least one scholar questions the accuracy of Froude's memories. In 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', Short Studies IV, 286-93, Froude recollects a sermon of Newman's in which he commends the logical soundness of Hume's argument on miracles. One writer, having looked up the relevant passage in the published version, makes out a case for Froude's incorrectness here. See 'Mr. Froude on Cardinal Newman', The Month, N.S. 22 (April, 1881), 584-87. On the same subject, cf. J. Derek Holmes, 'Newman, Froude and Pattison: Some Aspects of their relations', JRH, 4 (June, 1966), 28-38.

ironic, prophetic words (p. 159). In other words, if one fails to submit any aspect of one's faith to the test of reason one is merely delaying the day of 'enlightenment' with potentially disastrous consequences, for a totally unreasoned, unexamined faith is but a poor, weak, doomed thing - indeed, no real faith at all.¹ Sutherland's heart can go along with Newman, but his head can not. Thirdly, Sutherland was not convinced of the 'terrible reality' of sin as Newman was. One remembers Sutherland's earlier statement that 'sin, therefore, as commonly understood, is a chimera' (p. 92), whereas 'sin with Newman was real' and 'if there be any such thing as sin', continues Sutherland, 'in proportion to the depth with which men feel it, they will gravitate towards Rome' - again, prophetic words (p. 160). Newman indeed gravitated, comments Sutherland, 'to the haven where sooner or later it was now clear he must anchor at last' (p. 159). He regarded Newman's secession as the following through of the logic of his position as a 'Cassandra prophet' (p. 155). No doubt it would have marked the end of Sutherland's discipleship had not this been interrupted earlier. This interruption was occasioned in part by his reading of other 'prophets', with whom his head (if not his heart) had more sympathy: among them, as we have seen, were Spinoza and, especially, Thomas Carlyle. Something in the nature of a reaction to Newman and the Oxford Movement had gradually taken place: Sutherland's 'eyes were opening slowly' (p. 162). His position at the end of 'Confessions' however is not that of a Carlyle devotee but essentially sceptical, agnostic, negative. To the question as to whether God ever became man, Sutherland returns the answer 'I know not. I answered nothing' (p. 162). Newman, at least for the present, has 'failed' Sutherland.

¹ It seems only fair to point out here that in the light of Newman's later writings, 'Sutherland's' understanding of these ideas constitutes a fundamental misreading of Newman's position.

The 'Confessions' leave off approximately where the letters begin. Sutherland has left Oxford and is deliberating over whether to become a clergyman in the Church of England or to pursue a career such as that of a writer. The reaction we observed against Newman with his all-or-nothing approach, has led Sutherland to reflect more carefully on the nature and viability of Christianity itself. The reaction to Newman and the issues he raised at Oxford has, in fact, triggered off a whole series of questions which Sutherland determines to answer before deciding on his course of action. In this he is typically 'Victorian': he is as earnest and serious about such matters in doubt as well as in faith. As in the 'Confessions' one senses very much that he dearly wants to believe but his devotion to the 'truth' will not let him. So suffused is his intellect with the critical zeitgeist, that a 'simple' faith has been rendered unattainable unless he separates his 'heart' from his 'head' altogether, thereby provoking a state of acute spiritual schizophrenia and losing his sanity in the process. This would seem to be the crux of Newman's legacy, as Sutherland views it at this stage. The only apparent alternative (apart from atheism) is the reasoned latitudinarian compromise, but this disgusts his scrupulous sense of the importance of acting authentically. Sutherland continues to read avidly and ponder over the central tenets of the Christian faith.

The chief difficulties Sutherland is faced with can be divided into two areas: problems connected with the Bible and reservations about the present state of the Church of England. The problems he feels in relation to the Bible derive only in part from his reading of the biblical critics. While he does turn over in his mind the question of to what extent the Bible is divinely inspired, even going so far as to compare it with other 'holy writs' (a very modern approach) the burden of his debt to Strauss and others is evident in the way Sutherland stresses the importance of the human qualities of the Bible over and above the divine qualities, and in his

regret that what was poetic 'metaphor' in the gospels has become 'petrified into a doctrine'.¹ He further inveighs against the Bible having been built pretentiously into an 'idol', thus obscuring the book's 'real splendour' (pp. 21-22). But his main objections to the Bible spring from his passionate moral idealism. This idealism supplies the ammunition for his most bitter attacks. He feels a moral repugnance at the God of the Old Testament. The concept of the fall of man, the doctrine of original sin, and the existence of evil in the world - all predestined by God - he finds abhorrent:

He! He! to have created mankind liable to fall - to have laid them in the way of a temptation under which He knew they would fall, and then curse them and all who were to come of them, and all the world, for their sakes: jealous, passionate, capricious, revengeful, punishing children for their fathers' sins, tempting men, or at least permitting them to be tempted into blindness and folly, and then destroying them. Of, Arthur, Arthur! this is not a Being to whom I could teach poor man to look up to out of his sufferings in love and hope. (p. 11)

He takes a Mauricean exception to the doctrine of hell which finds sanction in the Bible. Speaking of those souls who are 'to be tortured for ever and ever in unspeakable agonies' he comments:

My God! and for what? They are thrown out into life, into an atmosphere impregnated with temptation, with characters unformed, with imperfect natures out of which to form them, under necessity of a thousand false steps, and yet with every one scored down for vengeance; and laying up for themselves a retribution so infinitely dreadful that our whole soul shrinks horror-struck before the very imagination of it; and this under the decree of an all-just, all-bountiful God - the God of love and mercy. (p. 15)

Elsewhere he comments that 'I could never fear a God who kept a hell prison-house' (p. 17). 'No, Arthur, this is not God. This is a fiend' he cries at one point (p. 12). Later on he reveals similar moral qualms about the notion of the atonement:

That the guilty should suffer the measure of penalty which their guilt has incurred is justice...That the consequence of

¹ Nemesis, p. 24; cf. pp. 13-14.

of his guilt should be transferred to one who is innocent (although that innocent one be himself willing to accept it), whatever else it be, is not justice. (pp. 69-70)

It is hardly surprising that with such reservations, which relate to central aspects of the Christian faith, Sutherland was having second thoughts about entering the church as a minister.

His doubts about the present state of the Church of England revolve around the conflict between ideology and praxis. He attacks the hypocrisy of those clergymen who treat the church as a profession, as 'a road to get on upon, to succeed in life upon' (p. 6). This vein of anti-clericalism, like his biblical doubts, also springs from his moral idealism. Indeed, his exclusive preoccupation whilst at Oxford with 'metaphysical' subtleties (caught partly from Newman) is now beginning to exact its due.

He yearns for a simpler, childlike faith:

I would gladly give away all I am, and all I ever may become, all the years, every one of them, which may be given me to live, but for one week of my old child's faith, to go back to calm and peace again, and then to die in hope...(pp. 27-28)

He resents the institutionalisation of belief so that 'the religion of Christ' has now become 'the Christian religion' (pp. 18-19). His reaction against Newman's intellectualising about the faith, complementing his desire for a child-like faith, deepens into a mistrust of books generally (they 'nauseate' him) until, encouraged by his father and his uncle, the dean, it is transformed into that characteristic vein of dogmatic anti-intellectualism which so many Victorians exhibited in their writings:

Yet God is my witness, nothing which I ever believed has parted from me, but it has been torn up by the roots bleeding out of my heart. Oh! that tree of knowledge, that death in life. Why, why are we compelled to know anything, when each step gained in knowledge is but one more nerve summoned out into consciousness of pain? (p. 26)

At times, as when he elevates 'action' above 'speculation', Sutherland is reminiscent of Carlyle. But this is but one stance among so many often contradictory attitudes and opinions. He acknowledges his need of support by the very system he is criticising. He echoes Carlyle's views only to issue the following indictment of him pages later:

Carlyle! Carlyle only raises questions he cannot answer, and seems best contented, if he can make the rest of us as discontented as himself.¹

He finds the claims to authority of both the Bible and the Church unconvincing. At one moment he is passionately committed to bringing Christ's message of salvation to the poor, and in his next letter, musing on 'mutability' he undercuts his previous statements by viewing Christianity as just another myth, a cult which, phenomenologically understood, will wither away in the course of time (pp. 29-34). Even as he pours his scorn on intellectual sophistry and excessive subtlety of thought, he is indulging in the same thing himself. And how are we to reconcile his Spinozan belief in determinism with his moral revulsion at parts of the Bible? In the end we are left with the picture of a confused 'second-rate sensitive mind'. Once Puseyite, now almost Evangelical; here Broad Church, there of no church at all; in one instance a disciple of Carlyle, in another instance an implacable opponent of his views. The letters read like a dreary chaos of multifarious influences and tendencies, every one of which vies for dominance: Carlyle, Swedenborg, orthodox Christianity, the Bible, Puseyism, the German critics...No single influence seems uppermost; each has been scrutinised and found wanting. Inevitably one finds oneself wondering how such a confused state of mind came about. Having examined the 'Confessions' we already have a good idea. Sutherland, following the advice of others, becomes ordained, only for the doubts to resurface later, in a more virulent form than before - 'he had but silenced himself, not replied to himself' (p. 53)-with disastrous results. He resigns his living and travels to Como, to recover.

¹ Nemesis, p. 35. Perhaps this explains Carlyle's adverse reaction to this novel. He said that Froude 'ought to burn [his] own smoke, and not trouble other people's nostrils with it': Thomas Carlyle: a history of his life in London (ed. cit.) I, 492.

But his spiritual odyssey is not over yet. There is one further development yet to take place, and it is appropriate that Newman (this time thinly veiled in the best of roman à clef traditions as Father Mornington) should appear once more to complete the process for which he has, to a great extent, been responsible.¹

The concluding narrative where we meet Mornington, takes up the story a short while after the last of the letters. That it is Newman and not simply a typical Roman Catholic priest we may deduce from several clues we are given in the text, apart from the fact that more than one contemporary reviewer positively identified the character as Newman without question.² Thus, the priest is an Englishman who is spending some time in Italy 'washing off, in a purer air, the taint of the inheritance of heresy' (p. 217). He knows Sutherland from of old, and the very words used to describe Sutherland's reaction as he sees Mornington remind one of the former's reminiscences of Newman preaching at St Mary's, Oxford, in 'Confessions':

How often in old college years he had hung upon those lips; that voice so keen, so preternaturally sweet, whose very whisper used to thrill through crowded churches, when every breath was held to hear; that calm grey eye; those features, so stern, and yet so gentle! (p. 216)

And as if this is not enough, he is even made to echo quite explicitly sentiments Sutherland had earlier attributed to Newman when Mornington declaims:

'Your philosophy...taught you to doubt whether sin was not a dream; you feel it now; it is no dream, it is a real, a horrible power; and you see whither you have been led in following blindly a guide which is but a child of the spirit of evil.' (p. 220)

This puts beyond all reasonable doubt that Mornington is, in fact, Newman in fictional guise, yet we must be wary of assuming too readily that Mornington is all Newman: after all, Froude is quite capable of mingling fact with fiction as we know from his 'self-portrait' in Sutherland. But given

¹ The novel is very much concerned with 'process', with 'growth' rather than fixed states of mind: hence the proliferation of organic 'plant' metaphors.

² J.M. Ludlow (op. cit.) was one such.

this cautionary note, I think we can proceed to say something of Mornington's (and hence of Newman's) significance here.

Mornington appears at a crucial point in the novel. After a disastrous 'affair' with a married woman, Sutherland is contemplating committing suicide. As he is about to raise the cup of poison to his lips, Mornington arrives and admonishes him for his damnable despair. Sutherland is greatly moved by Mornington's providential appearance: 'once again' he feels the compelling force of the latter's personality and obeys his instructions without question:

Partly it was the reviving of the power with which, in earlier years, this singular person had fascinated him; partly it was his guilt-subdued conscience, which felt that it had forfeited the right to its own self-control. (p. 218)

Sutherland confesses his waywardness, his scepticism, his 'feeble purpose and vacillating creed'. Mornington, like the Newman of the 'Confessions', listens so sympathetically that 'he seemed himself to have passed through each one of Markham's difficulties, so surely he understood them' (p. 219). Then Mornington asks Sutherland whether his conscience has 'found a way at last where you thought that there was none, and whether you are prepared to follow it?' (p.219). Sutherland, in the heat of the moment, assents:

But there was no such hesitating now. The overpowering acuteness of his feeling unnerved what little intellect was left unshaken, and the gentleness and fascination of Mr. Mornington held him like a magnetic stream. (p. 221)

Following this he is duly received into the Roman Catholic Church and retires to a monastery. But his new-found faith is short-lived. His doubts revive and again his creed is 'shattered', and he dies, full of remorse and despair (pp. 226-27). What are we to make of Mornington's role in this deathly process? From one point of view the author seems to be pointing to him as a man both morally impeccable and secure in his faith who saves Sutherland from suicide. From another point of view however (and more significantly) Mornington is portrayed as a papist who

brings Sutherland to a fate tantamount to if not actually worse than the suicide hitherto contemplated: to Rome and, ultimately, to despair and an unnamed death (suicide?). At this juncture, it will be fairly plain why Froude chose to disguise Newman as Mornington: to suggest that to adopt a romish, superstitious faith is intellectually suicidal for one of Sutherland's mental propensities is one thing; to cast Newman, still very much a living figure, in the role of unwitting executioner, is another matter altogether.

ii. The meaning of the *Nemesis*

Such is the history of Sutherland's loss of faith as described in the novel. But what are we to make of all this? What is the 'moral' of the *Nemesis*, if any, and where does Newman fit into intellectual, moral and fictional scheme? In his preface to the second edition, Froude almost seems to resent the fact that certain critics have looked for a moral at all:

I do not think this book would have seemed so obscure as it appears to have seemed, if it had not been over readily assumed that religious fiction must be didactic. (p. iii)

The critics, nevertheless, continued to draw their own conclusions, and as we saw earlier, one of the most common reactions was that the novel seemed to be preaching scepticism and/or Puseyism and/or immorality.¹ Other more percipient critics, who avoided the mistake of supposing that the author was condoning Sutherland's views and behaviour, tended to draw two main conclusions. The first was that scepticism leads to immorality and vice-versa: they are, or can be, concomitants. The second derives from the first: there can be no morality without religion. Neither of these conclusions is satisfactory, I feel, for neither really squares with the text. The principal reason they ultimately fail to convince is that neither view takes account of the place of Newman in the novel. The

¹ Thus, Alfred William Benntakes the view that the novel is really quite simply to do 'with believing the wrong things'. See The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century, 2 vols (1906), II, 42-46.

real moral of the Nemesis is suggested by the title - The Nemesis of Faith.

Had the novel been called 'The Nemesis of Doubt' then such conventional readings of the novel might have appeared more plausible. But just as in In Memoriam it is 'the quality of its doubt' which matters,¹ so with the Nemesis it is 'the quality of its faith' which we must scrutinise.

And no scrutiny of this would be adequate without looking carefully at Newman's contribution. The novel is not so much opposed to doubt per se,

as opposed to Newman's concept of faith, with all that implies.

For according to Sutherland, Newman's idea of faith is more akin to credulity, since reason makes its abject surrender so that when problems arise (as they are bound to) the 'faith' cracks wide open. The surrender of reason and private judgement and the adoption of the Catholic faith, far from pre-empting or settling doubts have, in the end, exacerbated them. Newman's concept of faith, in other words, attractive as it may at first seem, will exact its revenge, sooner or later. It is thus a treacherous rather than a 'saving' faith since it leads to scepticism and immorality more surely than a reasoned faith would have done. But for Newman and the Oxford Movement, Sutherland seems to be saying, scepticism, with all its consequences in general and in particular (in the case of Sutherland himself) might never have arisen. This interpretation would seem to find sanction in the preface when Froude writes that 'faith ought to have been Sutherland's salvation - it was his Nemesis - it destroyed him' (p. xiv). And since Newman was largely responsible for the shaping of Sutherland's faith, it is he himself and his credo ultimately which have their nemesis on the anti-hero, Sutherland.

Is then the Nemesis simply a criticism of Newman, an anti-Puseyite polemic? I do not think so. There are several problems with such a reductionist view. First, it ignores the essential complexity of the Newman/Mornington-Sutherland relationship. Sutherland is not deceived

¹ Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, ed. Frank Kermode (1957), p. 245.

in his high regard for Newman: the latter, far from being portrayed as a Machievellian figure with a diabolic intellect is portrayed, on the contrary, as a saintly genius with complementary, engaging human qualities. Sutherland's regard for him, bordering as it does on the adulatory at times, is nowhere explicitly criticised. And although Sutherland reacted against Newman's fundamental ideas, one senses that it is not always these ideas in themselves which are being criticised so much as Sutherland's weak will and lack of moral fibre which permits him to be swayed so easily by Newman/Mornington. To some extent, Sutherland is a victim of the 'anxiety of influence' syndrome¹ - something Froude himself vividly experienced if we are to accept Mozley's account of Froude's need for self-assertion,² and Froude's own comment in a letter while writing his essay on Newman:

I had and have a personal affection for Newman which will never leave me. I am conscious of it even when he is manifestly wrong.³

Part of the intractable problem in Sutherland's case is that his head is with thinkers of the ilk of the anti-superstitious Spinoza and Carlyle, while his heart is divided between Newman and the simple faith of his

¹ This 'Freudian' phrase is taken from Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, a theory of poetry (New York, 1973).

² Rev. T[homas] Mozley, M.A., Reminiscences, chiefly of Oriel and the Oxford Movement, 2 vols, 2nd ed. (1882), II, 28 ff. According to Dunn (I, 83) Froude read this and saw nothing to disagree with in it.

³ Dunn II, 504.

childhood.¹ Moreover, one should be cautious of casting Newman in the role of devil's advocate to Sutherland if only because Newman is a complex re-creation and, curiously, may be said in one sense to refute the supposed thesis of the Nemesis - namely, that a Catholic faith of necessity paves the way to suicide via scepticism and immorality. What is particularly true for Sutherland need not be generally true for everybody else - an important qualification.

As Froude himself stressed, the Nemesis, at least in some respects 'was a mood, not a treatise'.² In isolating the single, clear 'moral' which the text reiterates in so many ways - not least in its very organisation - and which the majority of critics seem to have ignored completely, I would not like to give the impression that there is but one theme in the novel. Such a view would be manifestly false for it does not do justice to Froude's delineation of a complex subject. Froude was also concerned in the novel to impress on his readers some sense of the spirit of the age which was so conducive to holding certain opinions, as the following

¹ The heart v. head motif is ubiquitous in this novel: a word count would be interesting. At one point, Arthur exclaims 'Save us from our own hearts!' (Nemesis, p. 181). The curious, worrying aspect of Sutherland's submission to Mornington, in which his heart is the betrayer and vanquisher, is summed up rather nicely in a phrase from Clough's poem, Amours de Voyage, 'malpractice of heart and illegitimate process': The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. F.L. Mulhauser, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1974), p. 111. W.E. Gladstone, reviewing Robert Elsmere wrote: 'The work may be summed up in this way: it represents a battle between intellect and emotion. Of right, intellect wins - Robert Elsmere and the Battles of Belief', Nineteenth Century, 23 (May, 1888), 768. But at the moment of crisis in the Nemesis it is of course 'emotion' which wins the battle of belief, reflecting perhaps Froude's turbulent psychological state as he wrote the novel. The emotion/intellect dichotomy, appears elsewhere in Froude's writings. Two quotations from a much later article by Froude, 'Science and Theology: Ancient and Modern' in Theological Unrest: discussions in science and religion (New York, 1880) could be regarded as a commentary on this aspect of the Nemesis: 'Intellect we know is not omniscient. Emotion has a voice in the matter which is always on the side of faith...' (p. 9). '[T]here is an insight of emotion which the intellect can not explain, but which nevertheless does and will exercise an influence which can not be ignored...' (p. 29).

² Dunn I, 149.

extract from a hitherto unpublished MS letter shows:

The *Nemesis* of Faith I intended simply and only as a Tragedy. The Hero is evidently from his very first Introduction a weak, if amiable man[,] and I wished to paint such a man struggling in the elements of scepticism which (however older men may be ignorant of it) is, since Carlyle has written, the element in which all growing[?] men have moved in.¹

How successful he was in painting the picture we may infer from a letter of A.H. Clough to the Provost of Oriel, Dr. Hawkins, where, speaking of the *Nemesis*, he says it 'contains a good deal of what I imagine pervades the young world in general',² and from the many reviews of the book when it appeared, some of which we have considered earlier. In this work, more than in anything else he ever wrote, with the possible exception of his *Life of Carlyle*, Froude did indeed catch the new 'atmosphere of unrest and paradox hanging around many of our ablest young men of the present day'.³ Carlyle's description of the Victorian age as 'at once destitute of faith and terrified at scepticism' finds its illustration and proof in this novel.⁴

Several years later, writing on 'Fiction and its uses', Froude attacks overtly didactic fiction and apologues in the mould of the 'temperance prize-tales' which present to the reader a picture such as one depicting

the joy that comes upon a parish (and especially upon one young female parishioner) from the presence of an evangelical curate. We know these novels-of-purpose at a glance; we are indignant with the man who would entice us into listening to his homily under pretence of amusing us; we see the sulphur in that treacle, pah! and will none of it. We have begun to doubt the reality of these stories that wind finely up with the orthodox piece of poetical justice...We know the end beforehand. Naughty Harry will infallibly be torn by the lion, and the amiable brother will feast on cakes and apples...We will not have lives manufactured to order.⁵

¹ From an Exeter College MS (uncatalogued).

² *The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. Frederick L. Mulhauser, 2 vols (Oxford, 1957), I, 248-49. Cf. also a remark by John Duke, Lord Coleridge, that the *Nemesis* 'shows what a lot of young men are about just now': Ernest Hartley Coleridge, *Life & Correspondence of John Duke, Lord Coleridge*, 2 vols (1904), I, 191.

³ From a letter of Thomas Arnold in Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D.*, Ward, Lock & Co. ed. [n.d.], p. 336.

⁴ Quoted by Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-70* (New Haven, 1957), p. 97.

⁵ *Fraser's Magazine*, 72 (December, 1865), 759.

Clearly the Nemesis while in certain respects belonging to and evincing some of the characteristic traits of the religious novel which Froude is criticising, rises above the tradition in the complexity of its thought, it not in its fictional technique. Artistically, as we have noted, it has certain merits both structural and stylistic. But its chief value, especially for the student of Victorian ideas, lies in the many insights it offers into the tortuous ways of a soul struggling to come to terms with the Christian faith in the context of intellectual change. Not only does the novel shed much light on various theological controversies (such as the eschatological debate, for example), it also reveals much of the broader intellectual climate of the mid-nineteenth century. In particular it informs our understanding of the role of Newman and the Tractarians in the religio-psychological shaping of so many young minds - among them those of Froude himself, Clough, Pattison and Arnold, to name but a few - who were at Oxford during this turbulent period. Many critics and historians have pointed to the German biblical exegetes, the positivism of Comte, and the impact of discoveries in the fields of geology and evolutionary theory as factors which tended to bring about an individual's loss of faith. The Nemesis tells a different story. It is the clearest and most suggestive account of how the Oxford Movement, and Newman in particular, was an unsettling force. In forcing people to question the nature of their faith (Catholic or Protestant?) it inevitably prompted some to ask themselves still more basic questions which, unanswered, sapped their faith. Thus, ironically, Newman and his supporters in some respects unwittingly provoked the very infidelity they were seeking to combat.

To determine just how accurate Froude's assessment of the impact of Newman on his contemporaries was, we have only to turn to the letters of Clough and the memoirs of Pattison for confirmation.¹ Later on

¹ F.L. Mulhauser, ed. cit., and Mark Pattison, Memoirs (1885), pp. 182-215. See also C.S. Emden, 'Mark Pattison and James Anthony Froude, an appropriate friendship', Oriel Papers (Oxford, 1948).

Mrs Humphry Ward, reviewing Pater's Marius the Epicurean, was to remark that it was books like Sartor Resartus, The Nemesis of Faith, Alton Locke and Marius the Epicurean which would in the years ahead reveal to students of the nineteenth century, 'what [was] deepest, most intimate, and most real in its personal experience'.¹ The fictitious experience of Markham Sutherland, when one has made the necessary allowances for his moral weakness, is not far from being representative. The Nemesis, for all its artistic imperfections, captures the many subtle nuances in the traumatic process from faith to doubt. Better than any essay, tract or sermon, the novel provides us with insights both profound and worrying into the religious temper of the age. In this sense, it should be seen alongside Tennyson's In Memoriam, Clough's Dipsychus, and Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere. In terms of art its achievement may be adjudged slight, but its unquestionable historical value should not be overlooked.

¹ Macmillan's Magazine, 52 (June, 1885), 134. Cited in U.C. Knoepfelmacher, Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler (Princeton, 1965), p. 11.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY INTO FICTION: THE TWO CHIEFS OF DUNBOY

Forty busy years separate The Nemesis of Faith and Froude's next substantial venture into fiction. The Two Chiefs of Dunboy (1889) is Froude's longest novel; it is also his last. The apparent neglect of a genre favoured early in his career is not difficult to explain, for throughout his career Froude thought of himself as primarily an historian and (later) biographer. Indeed The Two Chiefs has for its genesis an episode in Froude's historical work, The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (1872-74). It is, in fact, an historical novel in the tradition of Scott, with pronounced political overtones, as its early reviewers were quick to point out. 'There are several scenes which for brilliancy and vividness of touch and colouring equal those of our best historical novels', wrote the reviewer in The Guardian.¹ Another reviewer set the novel alongside those of Scott, Charles Kingsley, Fenimore Cooper and Marryat.² Ernest Baker referred to The Two Chiefs as 'an historian's essay in fiction'.³ Such comments inevitably prompt the question, 'Why did Froude write a novel on a subject he had already dealt with as an historian?' Phyllis Grosskurth's suggestion that it was little more than a 'relaxing project'⁴ is not convincing, for in a letter to his friend, John Skelton, Froude comments that 'I had so bothered myself over the book that I could not tell whether it was good or bad...'⁵ Clearly, Froude was trying to achieve something in this novel which he felt he had not been able to achieve in his purely historical study of Ireland. But what?

¹ Cited in the publisher's advertisement in the Edinburgh Review, 170 (July, 1889), 26.

² loc. cit.

³ Ernest A. Baker, A Guide to Historical Fiction (1914), p. 121.

⁴ Phyllis Grosskurth, 'James Anthony Froude as Historical Novelist, UTQ 40 (Spring, 1971), 266-75 (p. 266).

⁵ Dunn II, 558.

This question is more complex than it at first sight appears. Certainly no single reading of the text will suffice to answer it. The text must not be seen in isolation but as a significant part of Froude's entire corpus of writings, historical and non-historical: it is best approached after having first examined Froude's own philosophy of history, for his view of history furnishes the reader of The Two Chiefs with important clues as to how the novel might be read. Without such knowledge it would be all too easy to fail to appreciate what Froude was really trying to achieve. So the first part of this chapter is devoted to a consideration of Froude's view of history. This is followed by an exposition of Froude's political views on Ireland and the Irish problem, a subject which lies at the heart of the novel. In my discussion of the novel proper, I also discuss the episode from Froude's English in Ireland on which it is based, before looking at the novel's ideas and their literary treatment. In conclusion I return to the question I posed earlier, to the nature of The Two Chiefs as a text and to some further questions it raises as to the relation between history and fiction in the context of Froude's writings and more generally.

Froude's view of history

Froude spent nearly twenty years of his life researching and writing his History of England (1856-70). His study of Ireland in the eighteenth century emerged directly from this, which in turn, gave rise to the composition of The Two Chiefs. Although Froude thought of himself as a professional historian, it is interesting that after his English in Ireland he produced no comparable major historical work: for the last twenty years of his life he wrote mostly travel accounts and biographies, as we saw in chapter one. The transition from history to biography is not a surprising one. Carlyle himself wrote that '[h]istory is the essence of innumerable Biographies'.¹ And, even more than his popular History

¹ 'On History', Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, 7 vols, People's ed. (1872), II, 255. And 'Universal History' is mankind's 'Autobiography': see 'On History Again', Critical and Miscellaneous Essays IV, 217.

Froude thought it would be his biography of Carlyle which would survive. The borderline between history and biography may have been a thin one, then, for Froude, but what of their relation to prose fiction? A novel like the Nemesis, except insofar as it is a 'spiritual autobiography' of historical value to modern students, purporting in part to consist of actual manuscripts, would seem to bear little relation to such genres. But The Two Chiefs is a different case for three reasons. First, it is 'narrative' in the same way as histories and biographies are (whereas the Nemesis is only partly narrative). Secondly, it largely consists of two imaginatively reconstructed 'biographies': the lives of the 'Two Chiefs' of the title - Morty O'Sullivan and Colonel Goring, both of whom were historical personages (Goring's real name was Puxley). Thirdly, it is an extension, a 'filling-out' of the details (with only minor alterations) of an actual historical episode. Moreover, much of the information we are given in the novel by way of background is historically sound. Both in terms of its subject matter and treatment, therefore, we might reasonably expect The Two Chiefs to exhibit some of the characteristics of Froude's historical writings, thereby reflecting his conception of history. How did Froude think of history?

Froude's view of history finds its chief expression in three articles he wrote. The first, 'History: its use and meaning',¹ was occasioned by a new edition of Carlyle's Past and Present, and although Froude does not actually discuss Carlyle's work in the article, he does echo some of Carlyle's own views on history. Carlyle's influence is also evident in two further addresses Froude delivered, 'The Science of History' and 'Scientific Method applied to History', both of which were reprinted in Froude's Short Studies on Great Subjects.²

In the first article, Froude begins by openly doubting the objectivity

¹ Westminster Review, N.S.6 (October, 1854), 420-48.

² In the 1st and 2nd series respectively.

of much of what passes for history:

In the history of mankind, more than in any other class of phenomena, 'the eye, 'as Mr. Carlyle says, 'sees only what it brings with it .' Catholics, Protestants, Freethinkers... alike refer us to history, all for the confirmation of their own opinions: all, that is, to history written from their own point of view...¹

History, in short, can mean whatever one may want it to mean. One may marshal and arrange the facts as one chooses: it thus becomes a tool, a vehicle for a specific message. Froude seems suspicious of, if not positively hostile towards, didacticism in history. In the last chapter we saw him take up a similar position with regard to overtly didactic novels, in his essay 'Fiction and its Uses'.² It would be easy to misconstrue his meaning here. In theory, he seems to be inveighing against morally insistent historical and fictional works. But in practice, it may be urged, is not Froude guilty of perpetrating such errors himself? Thus his History of England, it could be argued, is a defence of Henry VIII and the English Reformation, while The Lieutenant's Daughter illustrates its author's belief in determinism. Might not the English in Ireland and The Two Chiefs be merely two modes (one historical, one fictional) of exemplifying a similarly biased view - in this case, of the Irish problem? Such an argument would, however, constitute a misunderstanding of Froude's theory and practice of history. Froude is stating his opposition to the student of history bringing with him preconceived ideas to his research; he is also opposed to the writing of history from a narrow, uninformed viewpoint; he is further opposed to the forcing of interpretations upon the facts and resents the use of history to prove simplistic moral lessons. And Froude's practice does not contradict his theoretical views. Froude spent many laborious

¹ 'History: its use and meaning', p. 420.

² Froude makes a similar point with reference to the novels of Maria Edgeworth (which he did not like) in 'Goëthe [sic]; Faust', Oxford and Cambridge Review, 2 (January, 1846), 4.

years patiently poring over thousands of manuscripts in order to glean 'first-hand' information about Europe in the sixteenth century. He relied little on secondary sources for these he mistrusted. His aim was to arrive at as truthful a picture as possible of England and her people in her relations with the Church and other countries, and then to bring this picture to the attention of his readers in as lively and readable a fashion as possible. Froude's very Protestant picture of the times was the result (not the cause) of his research. His notorious portrait of Henry VIII, for example, Froude sincerely believed to be realistic. And although, it is a fairly thoroughgoing rehabilitation, Henry is sometimes criticised. Froude obviously felt obliged to dwell rather more than was judicious on the difficulties Henry faced and his successes, in order to modify the popular view of the monarch as something of a monster, while in bringing Henry to life he clearly entered a little too sympathetically into Henry's character. But be true to the facts, Froude seems to urge, and if in faithfully re-creating past events some 'truths' emerge, then this is allowable: one may, indeed one must, learn from the experiences of others. But never distort the facts; do not set out to prove.

The idea of history teaching in the same way as experience does (by precept) is again taken from Carlyle.¹ It was Carlyle who declared that 'all History...is an inarticulate Bible'.² Like the Bible, history is a form of divine revelation but, comments Froude, 'the lesson will not lie on the surface; it will yield itself only to meditation and a patient calmness of insight which the mass of persons will be unable to command'.³ There are lessons inherent in the nature of mankind's experience, then, which the historian can tease out, but this is really incidental, a side-effect:

¹ Carlyle borrowed the idea from Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke (see his On the Study of History, letter 2), who in turn was borrowing it from Dionysius of Halicarnassus' Ars Rhetorica and Dionysius himself was paraphrasing Thucydides.

² Latter-day Pamphlets, People's ed. (1872), p. 276.

³ 'History: its use and meaning', p. 433.

history should not be idealised for controversial purposes; it must not be written merely to instruct. 'As a means of moral instruction,' comments Froude, 'fiction answers infinitely better' - a revealing remark, as we shall see.¹

What then is the use of history? Its values, Froude avers, lie in its capacity for 'toning and nerving the heart to noble emotions', in making people 'love what is good'; it helps people to see and weigh human actions 'at their just and real value'.² For Froude, Carlyle is the only modern historian who writes history from this all-important viewpoint. Gibbon and Macaulay ultimately fail because they present a 'picture of human things without God in them, without even the proper dignity of humanity in them'.³

So much for what history is - or what it should be. In the next two essays Froude develops more fully an idea he only touched on in the first essay: the historian as a poet or dramatist. In 'The Science of History' Froude expounds and then proceeds to refute Buckle's view of history which involves the discovery of certain 'laws' (and, extrapolating from them, making predictions about the future) like any science.⁴ Froude is not opposed to the quasi-scientific, objective method per se but to the 'mechanistic' spirit in which the subject is approached. The model for the historian should be literary rather than scientific:

'Macbeth,' were it literally true, would be perfect history; and so far as the historian can approach to that kind of model, so far as he can let his story tell itself in the deeds and words of those who act it out, so far is he most successful.⁵

The historian should not spend his time trying to derive certain rules, or in attempting to illustrate certain tendencies of the human mind in a

¹ op. cit., p. 434.

² op. cit., p. 440.

³ loc. cit.

⁴ Cf. a letter of Ruskin to Froude, quoted in Robert L. Caserio, Plot, Story, and the Novel (Princeton, 1979), p. 49.

⁵ Short Studies I, 35.

general sketch of the 'spirit of the age'. Rather, he should be true to the facts and true to life. To this end the historian, like the dramatist, should bring past characters to life through a vivid but faithful re-creation in the manner of Shakespeare. His essay, 'Scientific ~~Method applied to~~ History', again emphasises this point: 'the most perfect English history which exists is to be found, in my opinion, in the historical plays of Shakespeare'.¹ W.E.H. Lecky, a severe critic of Froude's view of the Irish question as expressed in his English in Ireland, remarked of Froude's historical method that '[he] has invested so many of the most barren periods of history with the colour of romance'.² Like Carlyle, Froude did not hesitate to use dramatic and novelistic techniques in his history. In his one historical novel therefore we should not be altogether surprised if we find the novelist investing his 'romance' with historical depth. Froude's conception of history paves the way for a blurring of the lines between the two narrative genres where other writers had previously drawn sharp distinctions.

Froude on Ireland

Froude's pronouncements on the Irish question are many and various. Ever since he had tutored there as a young man he had been fond of the people and the country, often returning to Kerry (where he made his second home) to spend his holidays. His love of Ireland is evident in The Two Chiefs as well as in many essays. His intellectual interest in Ireland's history finds its chief expression in his English in Ireland. As with so many of his other writings, this work gave rise to much controversy, as did his tour of the United States in which he set out to explain and defend his view of the Irish issue to American audiences. Froude's attitude to the relationship between England and Ireland is easily misunderstood:

¹ Short Studies II, 596.

² W.E.H. Lecky reviewed Froude's English in Ireland in Macmillan's Magazine, 27 (January, 1873), 246-64 and 30 (June, 1874), 166-84. This quotation is from p. 264.

both his biographers, for example, give different accounts of it.¹

The common but somewhat simplistic view of Froude's opinion on Ireland is, quite simply, that his was the attitude of a typical English Protestant, who defended vigorously England's past policies, and who was bitterly opposed to the establishment of a free, democratic and self-governing Catholic Ireland. Such a view, while it is substantially true, needs to be modified. In one of the addresses he gave in America, in which he is answering charges of unfairness made against him by a Father T.N. Burke, O.P., he specifically denies a pro-England attitude where Ireland is concerned; nor, he goes on to say, has he any hatred for her religion, Catholicism, as such: 'I do not hate the Catholic religion...But I do hate the Spirit which the Church displayed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries...'² In an essay, Froude considers the 'Irish atrocities' and is highly critical of England's past record. During Elizabeth's reign, he writes, 'the murder of women and children appears to have been the every day occupation of the English police in Ireland'; and 'there had been times when [the English] thought it simpler to exterminate than to govern'.³ The English, it seems, have much to answer for. That they are at least partly to blame for Ireland's sorry condition in the nineteenth century is indeed one of the main theses, if not the main thesis, of his English in Ireland. And when one considers that so notorious a figure as Charles Stuart Parnell declared this work of Froude's to be his favourite book (he said it made him a Home Ruler, 'because it exposed the iniquities of the English Government')⁴ and that Gladstone, whose views on Home Rule Froude had frequently attacked, quoted from the book in the House of Commons, speaking of the 'truth and honour' of its author, one is forced to concede, at least, that

¹ Dunn II, ch. 25; Paul, ch. 6.

² Fraser's Magazine, N.S.7 (January, 1873), 5.

³ 'How Ireland was Governed in the Sixteenth Century', Fraser's Magazine, 71 (March, 1865), 312-15.

⁴ Paul, p. 241.

Irish spirit, Froude wrote that it was characterised by:

an impatience of control, a deliberate preference for disorder, a determination in each individual man to go his own way, whether it was a good way or a bad, and a reckless hatred of industry. The result was the inevitable one - oppression, misery and wrong...For such a country, therefore, but one form of government could succeed - an efficient military despotism...¹

The government must however be wise and benevolent as well as firm:

The Irish have many faults: they have one predominant virtue. There is no race in the world whose character responds more admirably to government, or suffers more injury from the absence of it...[The Irishman] is the worst of leaders, but the truest and most loyal of followers...Govern him firmly and justly - make him feel that you mean to be his master, not for your sake, but for his, that you may save him from himself, and you need have no more anxiety about him.²

This inevitably prompts the question if the Irish have a natural propensity to be governed, and the English a natural ability to govern, why has England's rule in Ireland been such a troubled one? Froude would have pointed to three reasons: the difference in religion between the two countries since the Reformation in England; the temperamental incompatibility between the governed and the governors; and, most important of all, the continuous, if sometimes muted, and nearly always ineffectual, resistance of Irish patriots (often aided and abetted by foreign powers such as the Catholic Church or France) to their authoritarian, paternalistic English oppressors.

Froude develops and synthesises his political views on this subject in the section entitled 'Conditions of National Independence' which opens the first volume of his English in Ireland. Carlyle's influence here (as with Froude's philosophy of history) is marked. There is a 'natural right' of superior beings to govern just as there is a 'natural right' of 'inferior' beings to be governed. And the test of superiority or inferiority? Froude explains:

¹ History of England II, ch. 8.

² 'A Fortnight in Kerry', Part Two, Short Studies II, 307. Reading Froude's very attractive account of a holiday in Ireland, Ruskin observed in a letter to him: 'The Fortnights in Kerry make me feel that you could have written a better Modern Painters than I.' Viljoen, op. cit., p. 132.

a rude but adequate test of superiority and inferiority is provided in the relative strength of the different orders of human beings... Among wild beasts and savages might constitutes right. Among reasonable beings right is for ever tending to create might... The better sort of men submit willingly to be governed by those who are nobler and wiser than themselves; organisation creates superiority of force; and the ignorant and the selfish may be and are justly compelled for their own¹ advantage to obey a rule which rescues them from their natural weakness.

Strength is thus closely related to merit; or, as Froude later comments, 'the right of a people to self-government consists and can consist in nothing but their power to defend themselves. No other definition is possible'.² Ireland's lack of success in her struggle against England is thus but further confirmation (if any be deemed necessary) that she is unfit to govern herself. The Carlylean 'might is right' doctrine Froude saw historically incarnated in the person of Oliver Cromwell: he understood better than any ruler of Ireland before or since the importance of strong, just government:

The worst means of governing the Irish is to give them their own way. In concession they see only fear, and those that fear them they hate and despise. Coercion succeeds better: they respect a master hand, though it be a hard and cruel one. But let authority be just as well as strong; give an Irishman a just master, and he will follow him to the world's end. Cromwell alone, of all Irish governors, understood this central principle of Irish management.³

Since Cromwell the responsibility for the 'mismanagement' of Ireland, Froude comments, 'must be divided equally between England and the Irish colony'.⁴

As with so many of his other publications, The English in Ireland provided much controversy. Reviewing it, Lecky thought it 'one of the most uncompromising defences of religious persecution' he had ever read.⁵ For Lecky, historian and Irish patriot, it was, despite the skill of exposition it exhibited, too selective, unbalanced and exaggerated. Froude later admitted: 'Perhaps I have spoken too harshly. My book on Ireland cost me many good friends whom I was sorry to lose... I wrote what I believed to be true'.⁶

¹ English in Ireland I, 2.

² op. cit., I, 3.

³ op. cit., I, 138.

⁴ op. cit., I, 395.

⁵ Lecky, op. cit., p. 247.

⁶ Reprinted in William C. Bonaparte-Wyse (ed.), Vox Clamantis (1880), p. 5. For Carlyle's view, see Paul, pp. 228-29.

Herbert Paul thought that Froude was 'never consciously unfair', but 'he could not help speaking out the whole truth as it appeared to him, without regard for time, place, or expediency'.¹ 'The whole truth' as it appeared to Froude was to find a somewhat different expression fifteen years later in what has been called his 'one mature and serious attempt at a novel'.² To that novel I now turn.

The Two Chiefs of Dunboy

i. Genesis

In a letter to John Skelton from Kerry, on Boxing Day 1867, Froude wrote:

The likenesses and unlikenesses to Scotland will not fail to strike you; also the remains of the Anglo-Franco-Scoto-Hispano-Hibernico private establishments which swarmed on those coasts in the sixteenth century. What a subject for a novel!³

Nothing, however, came of it for the time being. Three years later Froude, having published the last volumes in his foreshortened History of England, found himself busily at work on a study of Ireland in the eighteenth century. One particular story, which he relates fairly briefly in the study, especially fascinated him: it was the story of Morty O'Sullivan. And it is on this episode that The Two Chiefs some fifteen years later was based.⁴

The episode is to be found in the section entitled 'The Smugglers'. This section explains how, during the years 1719-54 England tried to defend her home industry through legislating to restrict the Irish wool trade. Patriotic Irish merchants reacted by smuggling wool to France: thereby not only fetching a higher price, but at the same time 'fighting back' at their English oppressors. The coastline of South-west Ireland was such that smuggling was particularly easy. One of the chief clans in

¹ Paul, pp. 202, 210.

² Paul, p. 365.

³ Dunn II, 330.

⁴ The English in Ireland I, 452 ff. Froude does weave another story into the novel: that of Sylvester O'Sullivan, but it is not given the attention of the Morty story.

this district was that of the O'Sullivans. Morty, their latest and most eminent representative (he was formerly a distinguished officer in the Austrian army), is introduced as a privateer who for more than twenty years trafficked not only in wool but also in guns and soldiers. For such treasonable offences, Morty was outlawed. It was common practice for the revenue officers employed by the government in Dublin to turn a blind eye to the smuggling offences and receive a small percentage of the value of the cargoes smuggled. However, the revenue officer responsible for Bantry Bay, the area in which Morty smuggled, was one Puxley who, though he came from Galway, 'yet was English in character, and had brought with him English notions of duty'.¹ Froude relates how this conscientious officer 'sent an account of Morty to Dublin Castle, and suggested means by which both he and his brigantine could be captured'.² Puxley, it is pointed out, lives in Dunboy Castle, which once belonged to Morty's ancestors. Puxley is continually frustrated in his aim to thwart Morty, largely because of the indifference of the authorities to his schemes. On one occasion, with local help, he attacks Morty and his crew of smugglers: he is but moderately successful, and Morty escapes. Eventually Puxley is waylaid by Morty and two companions and killed. Morty flees to France, but returns some months later. Two of Puxley's nephews, Henry and Walter Fitzsimon, take matters into their own hands, and with a company of soldiers they surprise Morty at his house. The scene is graphically described from the wildness of the weather to the 'utter desolation' of the landscape. 'The house was surrounded' writes Froude, 'and the wolf was trapped.' The barking of the dogs warned Morty that something was amiss:

Morty appeared in his shirt, fired a blunderbuss at the men who were nearest him and retired...One soldier was killed and three others wounded...³

¹ op. cit., I, 456-57.

² op. cit., I, 457.

³ op. cit., I, 461.

The aim was to take Morty alive if possible. Eighteen of Morty's men flee to draw off the troops: each is caught and later released.

Froude continues his gripping narrative:

At last there were but five left in the house. Morty saw that his time was come. He did not choose to be taken, and determined to die like a man...[He then sends his wife and child out who are kindly received.] Morty himself refused to surrender; it was determined to set fire to the thatch...The straw was soaked with the wet, and long refused to catch. At last it blazed up; the flames seized the dry rafters; the roof fell in; and, amidst the burning ruins, Morty and his four remaining companions were seen standing at bay, blunderbuss in hand. He was evidently desperate, and to save life it was necessary to shoot him. The soldiers fired; Morty fell with a ball through his heart...¹

The others were either shot or taken and later executed. The brigantine was sunk. Morty's body was taken to Cork, and his head set on a spike at the South Gaol. Although Puxley clearly bears Froude's stamp of approval, Morty too is sympathetically presented, as the words with which the historian closes the episode bear out:

So ended one of the last heroes of Irish imagination, on whose character the historian, who considers that he and such as he were the natural outgrowth of the legislation to which it was thought wise and just to submit his country, will not comment uncharitably. He had qualities which, had Ireland been nobly governed, might perhaps have reconciled him to its rulers, and opened for him an honourable and illustrious career. At worst he might have continued to serve with his sword a Catholic sovereign, and might have carved his way with it to rank and distinction. He was tempted home by the opportunities of anarchy and the hopes of revenge. In his own adventurous way he levied war to the last against the men and the system under which Ireland was oppressed. When he fell, he fell with a courage which made his crimes forgotten, and the ghost of his name still hovers about the wild shores of the Kenmare river, of which he was for so long the terror and the pride.²

¹ op. cit., I, 462-63.

² op. cit., I, 464.

Froude thus brings to an end an exciting episode. So much is history. Together with other ancilliary material, this episode, varnished and elaborated, and only slightly modified (Puxley appears as Goring; Morty is unmarried; and it is a cousin, a certain Fitzherbert, rather than the Fitzsimon nephews, who exacts revenge) forms the kernel of Froude's historical novel.

ii. The Novel

Is The Two Chiefs simply a fictional embroidery of an incident Froude had earlier related as an historian? Does the novel represent a development in its author's thinking about Ireland and the Irish, or is it more like a crystallisation, a summing-up of his feelings and thoughts on the subject? I think it is fairly clear from the extracts quoted at length above from his historical study, that Froude was an accomplished story-teller. His historical narratives evince the panache one normally associates with great story-tellers such as Stevenson or Rider Haggard. Why, therefore, did Froude write a novel? Why, after forty years as an acclaimed and experienced historian did he decide to take a story he had already related vividly and concisely, and expand this into a full-length novel? Why revert to a genre with which he had had little success as a young man? The Two Chiefs certainly has little in common with very personal Spirit's Trials or with the Nemesis. Indeed it is more like a novel of Scott's, such as Waverley (which had the same motto as The Two Chiefs) or Redgauntlet (which also partly treats of eighteenth-century smuggling) - novels Froude liked and admired.¹

To questions such as these, Froude himself offers no explicit answers. But it is interesting to note that in one of his letters he wrote:

I attach great value to biographies...It is here only that we find the personal traits of the principal actors in history² which put flesh on their bones and blood in their veins...

¹ See an historical article of Froude's in Fraser's Magazine, 48 (August, 1853), 138. Interestingly, he had read Scott's novels while in Ireland.

² Reprinted in Warden Hatton Flood, Notes and Historical Criticisms on Mr. A. Froude's 'English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century' (Torquay, 1874), p. 6.

We have earlier noted the close theoretical correspondence for Froude of history, biography and prose fiction. Clearly, there are differences of emphasis in each genre that make it preferable (where choice is possible) to opt for writing one rather than another. In a work such as Froude's English in Ireland, compendious though it is, Froude could obviously afford to devote only a small amount of space to the Morty episode. There was no space, for example, to give a personal description of either Morty or Puxley: to that extent both characters remained disembodied personae. But in a novel which, as its title suggests, actually consists of two fictional 'biographies', there is greater scope for what Froude calls putting 'flesh on their bones and blood in their veins'. The novel, in other words, gives the would-be narrator more freedom of movement than a history. And the historical novel, perhaps, may be able to combine the advantages which attach to both genres.

Consider for example the episode of Morty's death. If we compare the historical version given above with the version in the novel, the advantages of the latter version become clear.¹ Froude is able to spend at least two pages setting the scene. Both the weather and the countryside are described in more detail than in the historical account: the reader is better able to imagine he is actually there, witnessing the events which are taking place. Froude explains such minor details as why Morty was surprised:

The very elements had conspired to ensure the completeness of the surprise. With the wind behind them, the soldiers moved the quicker; on such a night no human creature would be stirring abroad...Thus unobserved they went on.(pp. 447-48)

Such reasoned conjecture does not seem out of place in the novel. As the tension mounts Froude switches the reader's attention to Morty and company inside the house. Morty is tired, having been working at some

¹ The episode occurs in The Two Chiefs of Dunboy (1906), pp. 446-55.

accounts, is talking to his sister. Their conversation touches not unkindly on Goring among other matters. Suddenly she exclaims, thinking she has seen a banshee. '"She came the night our mother died - and now she comes again. One of us in this room will never see another sunrise"', comments his sister (p. 450). Morty, we are told, 'shuddered, in spite of himself'. He attempts to placate her:

'These tricks of the mind are potent with tired spirits, and our Irish natures feel them more than most. We will to bed now. A few more days, and our native soil will know us no more. The past is gone, a new life will begin for us in happier lands, and that boy of yours shall have a better future than his father.' (p. 450)

The dramatic irony implicit in his words is not lost on the reader. At last, Morty is awoken from sleep by the 'fierce barking of a dozen dogs who were chained in the yard' (p. 451). (Here, as elsewhere in this episode, Froude is faithful to such small historical details as he had at his command.) Morty's reaction is vividly described:

To spring to his feet, seize a blunderbuss and rush to the door, was the work of a moment. Through a slit in the wall he saw that the house was surrounded. Yielding to his first impulse, he fired, but fired wildly, and the shot took no effect...(p. 451)

His men, however, between them shot four of the soldiers, one of whom dies, in keeping with the historical version. As Morty ponders the courses open to him, the reader, with Froude's help, gazes through a window into Morty's mind:

To resist, seemed a wanton sacrifice of life. The house, being thatched, could be easily set on fire. No relief could be looked for from outside; and, if he defied Captain N-, and forced him to storm the place, Morty knew that his poor followers would never desert him, and would all be killed at his side. He had his sister to think for also, and the child...¹

The next few events (the sending out of Morty's sister and child; the 'escape' of eighteen of Morty's men; the firing of the thatch; the fate of his remaining companions) are sketched out fairly closely to the historical text. Morty's death is filled out and altered slightly:

¹ The Two Chiefs, pp. 451-52. In The English in Ireland, Morty is married: it is his wife (not sister) who is sent out.

Morty himself bounded over the flames into the garden; at the end of it was a clump of elder bushes, and beyond the elders there was a steep pitch down into the river. Could he reach the water alive, there was still a chance for him. (p. 453)

The suspense is thus prolonged with the straw at which Morty is bravely but vainly clutching. But the next sentence of the new paragraph reveals his fate to those readers unfamiliar with Froude's earlier Study. Three short concise sentences tell the tale: 'But he never reached it. A dozen muskets rattled out as he sprang through the branches. He feel dead, shot through the heart.' (p. 453). Froude is here in complete control of his material. The graphic but not over-detailed relation of the events; the sympathetic portrayal of Morty's thoughts as they run through his mind; the slow thrilling build-up earlier in the chapter (and indeed in the previous chapter where Morty is betrayed) to the inevitable climax - such techniques, unsurprising in a novel, but out of place in a dispassionate, objective relation of an historical incident, ensure that such characters and events which an author may wish to bring to his reader's attention, are brought convincingly to life. Froude thought this was one of the novelist's most important tasks: he must help the reader to 'acquire the perceptions of sight' as a necessary prelude to sympathising. The episode in his English in Ireland presents the reader quite simply with a 'sight'; the episode in The Two Chiefs with 'insights'. Thus, ironically, the fictitious treatment of historical events, adeptly handled by a novelist, can lead the reader to a truer, richer understanding of what actually happened and why, while at the same time 'entertaining' the reader - something which the historian cannot always do - a point Froude would not have wished a critic to neglect.

Other ways of treating the material to which a novelist (but not an historian) may resort with effect will occur to the reader, and are to be found in The Two Chiefs. In many ways it is easier in a novel to

present a far more 'realistic' sense of a period than in a history book. The inclusion of ancilliary characters, the description of local customs and events (out of place in a national chronicle) and, above all, the careful, studied reproduction of dialogue, all help in this regard. Froude shows himself to be an experienced master-hand at catching the speech patterns of the dialect of the rustic Irish:

'Is it the old times he'd bring back again?' cried a wrinkled, weather-beaten old woman, who sat crooning on the step before the door. 'I mind those times. That was when the Protestant Saxons were here, the Divil mend them, who believed neither in Saint nor Spirit, nor the Blessed Virgin herself....'

'Tis well seen, your honour,' said a decent-looking man, 'that each people in this world likes its own ways...The English, don't we know it...have great ships, and armies, and trade, and manufactures, and such like, and fond they are of what they have got, for they won't allow a taste of it to the poor Irish, any way...We don't want Protestants down here, at all, at all.' (p. 129)

The novel can also render clearer to the reader the complexities of motivation, the conflicting impulses to which every human is subject: this is often lost sight of in a history which deals in grand effects and has to simplify. Thus, in The Two Chiefs we learn that Morty and Goring had previously met on the field of Culloden: unhistorical though such a revelation no doubt is, it serves to highlight aspects of both their characters: both are brave men, devoted to their respective though opposite causes, who have proved their courage and loyalty in the past. Such information also reinforces the sense that their fates are closely related: something no historian would deny, but could hardly dwell upon without seeming a convinced determinist.

Since The Two Chiefs is an historical novel Froude is also at liberty to sketch the historical background to the events he relates as and when necessary. But the method of sketching here, unlike in his history proper, tends to be from within: we are presented, for example, with different vignettes of historical and non-historical personages in public positions in Dublin. A powerful sense of the pragmatic, cynical nature of the

ruling class is conveyed so much better in The Two Chiefs than in his English in Ireland, where Froude the historian could only tell, not show, his readers the truth.¹

Finally, and most important of all, The Two Chiefs, as a novel, is by far a more suitable medium than The English in Ireland for the bodying forth of Froude's ideas in as sympathetic a form as possible. In this novel, as Dunn noted, 'Froude has indeed concentrated all his final conclusions about Ireland and the Irish'.² The Two Chiefs is perhaps as didactic as its parent work. But its didacticism is so much more palatable, so much more persuasive (if unconvincing to modern ears) than the historical study. Herein, I think, lies the clue to why Froude chose to write a novel round a theme he had already treated: the novel can be a so much more effective medium for conveying ideas (political or religious) than a dry historical study - something Froude may have remembered from his early experiences as a novelist. This is so because the novel presents us with living people, people of flesh and blood, to use Froude's metaphor, and insofar as the novelist has re-created such figures in all their humanity, to be embodiments of ideals (rather than mere wooden mouthpieces for hackneyed ideas) then the novel conveys more powerfully and sympathetically than a piece of history whatever the novelist wishes to communicate to his readers. Historical facts, backed up by hard evidence, may be irrefutable, but a sensitively depicted person, animated by the highest ideas yet human withal, may well turn out to be a more attractive proposition. And in Colonel Goring we have just such a figure. He is the real hero of The Two Chiefs. He is scarcely recognisable as the rather lifeless, insipid Puxley about whom we are told so little in The English in Ireland. Goring epitomises the spirit which Froude imagined animated Cromwell and the English Protestant settlers in Ireland in the seventeenth century.

¹ A good example in The Two Chiefs is where Goring meets the Anglican Primate, pp. 265-79.

² Dunn II, 559.

'Under Cromwell,' we are told, 'he would have been the most devoted of the Ironsides.' And to him 'the Pope was anti-Christ' (p. 59). His views on Ireland come as no surprise: 'he was convinced...that Ireland could only be permanently attached to the British Crown if the Protestants were there in strength enough to hold their own ground' (pp. 59-60). But though he is a Dissenter (of Calvinist tendencies) and fiercely patriotic, he is a respected and on the whole well-liked landlord in the eyes of his Irish tenants and in the view of his Protestant compatriots. He exemplifies the spirit of fairness Froude had stressed in his history. We are told that among his tenants Goring 'made no distinction between Catholic or Protestant' (p. 62). On more than one occasion he echoes Froude's own sentiments. Referring to the Irish, he remarks:

There is not a race in the world who would be happier or more loyal if they were governed with a firm and just hand. England has tried every other remedy. This, which is the only one which can succeed, she has never tried, and I fear she never will. (p. 80)

His actions bear out his words. However, he is no mere mouthpiece for Froude's opinions. Brave, sincere, dutiful and resolute, he is nonetheless an appealingly human figure. The scenes with his wife and, more especially, with his tenants show him to be a man of compassion but susceptible to pain and disappointments and liable to fail like any other person.¹

Froude captures in The Two Chiefs many of the finer shades and complexities of the Irish problem. There are characters to represent every sort of opinion and many facets of human nature. The indifferent Speaker of the Dublin Parliament; the hard-headed, materially minded Irish merchant, Patrick Blake; the snivelling, treacherous Sylvester O'Sullivan; the quiet, pleasant, man-of-the-world fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, Fitzherbert...make up a gallery of characters, Irish

¹ Cf. The Two Chiefs, p. 144. We are told that 'in Goring, too, original sin was not wholly eliminated, and Nature will have her way on some occasions even with the wisest'.

and English, and all come in for a mixture of praise and blame. Morty - Goring's opposite number in several senses (their fortunes parallel each other's quite sharply at various points) - remains Froude's great tribute to Irish character at its best. Although he killed Goring, he did so reluctantly in defending a close friend. Before this, when his sister tries to goad him on (Goring was supposed to be indirectly responsible for their mother's death), Morty retorts: "'I would put a ball through Goring's head to-morrow...But it must be in fair fight, man to man; I have no taste for shooting behind hedges'"(p. 371). After he has killed Goring, he regrets it and pays tribute to Goring the man:

'Cowardly Colonel Goring was not...God knows I prayed him to take the pistols and defend himself...My hand fired the shot that killed him; my hand did it; but not I. I would give the best blood in my body that he was alive among us at this moment.' (pp. 427-28)

Morty, moreover, is as critical of the Irish character, as Goring sometimes is of the English. "'The sun will never shine on a free Ireland'", says Morty at one point, "'till she has learnt to face her conquerors with better weapons than the murderer's knife'" (p. 381). And again: "'There never was a plan for a rising in Ireland yet, but what an Irishman was found who would sell the secret of it'" (p. 26). Morty is generally sympathetically presented.¹ The earlier bloodless duel between him and Goring however sees the latter with the upper hand: the situation is Ireland versus England, and England has to win.²

Occasionally Froude's views as a narrator are obtrusive, which detracts from the largely dramatic presentation of the material elsewhere in the novel. Goring, we are told, could 'count on the cowardice of the common Irish'. But elsewhere we are reminded that 'Englishmen are not easily frightened at the sound of danger.'³ Generally, however, the novel is well

¹ Cf. The Two Chiefs, pp. 367-68.

² The Two Chiefs, pp. 135-48.

³ The Two Chiefs, pp. 190, 185. Froude writes this despite the fact that during the nineteenth century, the British Army was heavily Irish-stocked.

written. Episodes which might appear at first to be mere digressions turn out to be oblique commentaries on the novel's themes. Thus, the Turkish Bath episode (one of the few humorous parts of the novel) highlights the ridiculously inept and frivolous attitude of members of the Dublin Parliament.¹ There are some nice touches: the satirical portrait of the Primate and an effective use of anecdote, for example.² A character such as Fitzherbert functions also as a disinterested, Lockwood-like spectator at Goring's home, for the reader's benefit: hitherto we had only Goring's partisan view of his Protestant settlement.³ Froude occasionally makes use of flashbacks (as he had in his early novels) and the effect is sometimes rather pleasing, especially when it coincides with a change of scene: it quite often results in a breaking of tension after a particularly fast-moving episode: a good example is the transition from the eleventh chapter to the twelfth. Froude modulates the pace of what, in less experienced hands, could have developed into little more than a racy yarn. Some scenes, such as the duel scene and the chase at sea, are especially felicitous.⁴ Froude's prose style here exemplifies the best qualities of his writing. As Frederick Harrison once commented, 'Simple, easy and elegant, for all the ends of plain narrative, [Froude's style] can rise, at the need, into a fine glow, or thrill with a splendid scene'.⁵ 'Splendid scenes' abound in The Two Chiefs. The image which remains in one's mind - it occurs more than once in the novel - is an almost Conradian one:

¹ The Two Chiefs, pp. 297 ff. For Goring's reflection, see p. 312.

² The Two Chiefs, pp. 264 ff., 8.

³ The Two Chiefs, pp. 327-28.

⁴ The Two Chiefs, chs. 11, 13-15.

⁵ Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill and other Literary Estimates (1899), p. 239.

To [Goring] it seemed as if the English settled in Ireland were playing over the crust of a sleeping volcano, which they were themselves half aware of and tried to forget in light-heartedness. (p. 239)

The novel concludes on a similar note:

[W]hen the actions of men are measured in the eternal scale, and the sins of those who had undertaken to rule Ireland and had not ruled it are seen in the full blossom of their consequences, the guilt of Morty, the guilt of many another desperate patriot in that ill-fated country, may be found to bear most heavily on those English statesmen whose reckless negligence was the true cause of their crimes. (p. 455)

The wheel has come full circle in at least one sense: in his last novel as in his first, Froude is concerned to locate where real guilt in the sphere of human actions is to be found. In terms of its ideas, both political and, to a lesser extent, religious, this last novel is very insistent. Its didacticism is inescapable: it is at once its raison d'être and its only pervading weakness. As a work of fiction, it is Froude's most sustained, compelling and best written work. As an historico-literary text it raises a number of interesting problems as far as the precarious relationship between history and fiction is concerned: in this regard it is one of the most suggestive of Froude's works.

The Two Chiefs, then, is more than a good tale well told. Two early reviewers almost seem to grasp what Froude was doing in this novel. The reviewer in Blackwood's Magazine remarked that the book 'is something quite different from fiction', going on to say that it is really 'a careful and elaborate historical statement'.¹ Much of what is said in this on the whole unfavourable review, however, is based on false premises: the reviewer seems completely unaware, for instance, of the historical basis of the novel. He thinks Morty and other characters are Froude's creation, even mere symbols. And he misreads the book:

¹ Blackwood's Magazine, 145 (June, 1889), 809-22.

he thinks Froude's solution to the Irish problem would be 'to sweep the Irish off the face of the earth'. In a letter of 2 May 1890 Froude himself had written:

In The Two Chiefs I had no direct political aim. I wanted merely to show dramatically how noble-minded men went inevitably to the ground in the fatal coil in which England from the first has enveloped Ireland. Take up the history where you will you find the same symptoms.¹

Another reviewer at least perceives the link between The English in Ireland and the novel, and managed moreover to reach an accurate apprehension of Froude's view of the Irish problem. But he goes on to commit a different sort of error: he forgets that the novel is not all history, not 'straight' history, and proceeds to criticise the non-historical parts for their historical inaccuracy.² Herbert Paul's view is more positive if rather inflated: 'For distinction of style and beauty of thought it may be compared with the greatest of historical romances' he writes.³ Its lack of popularity (compared with Froude's other works) he attributes to the marked absence of any love-interest. His latest biographer, Dunn, sees the novel as 'a culmination of [Froude's] interest in the Irish people and their problems'. He comments:

Froude evidently felt that he had more to say about the nature of the Irish than he had hitherto said, and that he should⁴ express it in a more intimate way than he had yet been able to do.

Here are Froude's 'final conclusions' about a problem he had studied and considered for many years. 'Those who neglect the book because of its

¹ Quoted by A. Patchett Martin in 'James Anthony Froude. A Personal Reminiscence', National Review, 24 (December, 1894), 488-501 (p. 498).

² Saturday Review, 67 (20 April 1889), 474.

³ Paul, p. 365. Cf. the writer who thought The Two Chiefs 'a clever tour de force': The Athenaeum, No. 3496 (27 October 1894), 569.

⁴ Dunn II, 558-59.

frank didacticism', observes Dunn, 'will deprive themselves of the pleasure of reading some of Froude's very best writing'.¹ Hugh Walker concurs: the novel 'deserves more praise than it has received'.² A.L. Rowse agrees with this view but thinks the book too long: hence his abridged edition.³ In his introduction to the novel he praises Froude's grasp and exposition of the historical background: 'here the historian stood the novelist in good stead; it made a strong combination'.⁴ But for Rowse (himself an historian who has experimented with other literary genres) 'the historian overbore the novelist' in The Two Chiefs - hence its over-discursive nature.⁵ In this he is, I think, wrong. Froude's sketching of the historical background is an integral part of the novel. As Phyllis Grosskurth points out, the omission of such material would leave the reader 'in the uneasy position of being presented with the events somewhat in vacuo'.⁶ Grosskurth's article (the only 'substantial' piece of modern criticism on the novel) is generally excellent. She sees The Two Chiefs as a polemical work of 'articulate communication' in the same mould as Carlyle's 'Shooting Niagara - and After?' or Arnold's Culture and Anarchy. The effect of the mixture of historical verisimilitude and Froude's transcendence of the historical record is to present, on the whole, a more favourable picture of the Irish than was evident in the exclusively historical study. To Grosskurth The Two Chiefs reiterates - but with subtle differences of emphasis - the central thesis of The English in Ireland. And to compare Morty in both works, suggests Grosskurth, 'is to see that Froude apprehended the depths [in The Two Chiefs] that the historical records overlooked'. Such an 'apprehension', out of place in a serious

¹ Dunn II, 559-60.

² Hugh Walker, The Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge, 1910), p. 867.

³ The Two Chiefs of Dunboy, ed. A.L. Rowse (1969).

⁴ Rowse, p. 10.

⁵ Rowse, p. 11.

⁶ Grosskurth, op. cit., p. 272.

history, finds its ideal embodiment in a work of fiction.¹

As an historical novel, The Two Chiefs has perhaps a larger slice of history in it than most: more than, say, Ivanhoe or Henry Esmond. Froude himself almost confirmed this. 'I may say that the Morty of The Two Chiefs is nearer the real article than the Morty of The English in Ireland', he wrote to a friend.² With The Two Chiefs fiction has become history, rather than vice-versa as in Shakespeare's plays where Plutarch and Holinshed, for example, are used very freely. But both in a work like Macbeth as well as in The Two Chiefs, where the subjects have not been invented by the writers, but (to use Froude's words) 'possessed already an independent existence in the minds of the persons whom [the author] is addressing' it is the writer who 'creates the form'.³ The writer's task is not that of a creator: he only half-creates. As an historian, he records; as a creative artist, he embellishes his materials - the characters, the plot, and so on. We have observed such a process taking place in The Two Chiefs. In this admixture, we have what Lukács refers to as 'the specifically historical' alongside an imaginative transcendence of history.⁴ The Two Chiefs illustrates how there need be no incompatibility. Arthur Danto's definition of history as 'a narrative structure imposed on events' could be equally well applied to many novels.⁵ When he had finished reading Middlemarch, Henry James asked, 'if we write novels so, how shall we write history?'⁶ We might point to

¹ Grosskurth, p. 274. Cf. the view of Donal McCartney: 'The novel enabled [Froude] to use an even greater amount of poetic licence in dealing with historical documents than he had allowed himself in his historical narrative': 'James Anthony Froude and Ireland: A Historiographical Controversy of the Nineteenth Century', HS, 8 (1971), 176.

² Dunn II, 559.

³ 'History: its use and meaning', pp. 428-29.

⁴ The Historical Novel, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (1962), p. 19.

⁵ Analytic Philosophy of History (New York, 1965), p. 132.

⁶ Cited in Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy (1979), p. 101.

The Two Chiefs and ask the same question. There is a sense in which all great writers are writers of history, no matter what their subject. Froude in The Two Chiefs presents the reader with his synthesis of history and fiction. More passionate, more entertaining than his English in Ireland, more disciplined and articulate than his early novels, it conveys powerfully Froude's view of a troubled country. The ideas which inform the work are challenging and provocative, as befits a contribution to the stormy debate then raging in English political circles. The artistry of the novel is more quietly impressive.

CHAPTER 5

FROUDE AS AN ESSAYIST, LITERARY CRITIC AND EDITOR
OF FRASER'S MAGAZINE

In this chapter I shall examine Froude's contribution to mid-Victorian literature through a consideration of his non-narrative prose. I shall look in particular at his literary criticism and at his essays, many of which originally appeared in the periodicals of his day, especially Fraser's Magazine which Froude edited for fourteen years, before being reprinted in Short Studies on Great Subjects and in other selections.¹

Even a cursory glance at the forty-eight titles comprising Short Studies reveals Froude's extraordinarily diverse range of interests: the subjects he treats and his manner of treatment reflect the many facets of his cultured mind. Some favourite topics are indeed revisited under various guises but these essays, together with the many articles he wrote which were not later reproduced, represent a formidable body of knowledge on subjects historical, philosophical, theological, political, mythological, geographical and, of course, literary.

Since it would clearly be impossible to deal satisfactorily with more than a handful of essays, the problem of selection is particularly acute. I have solved it as follows. I have confined my discussion of Froude's

¹ Short Studies on Great Subjects was the title Froude gave to four series of essays published during his lifetime in 1867, 1871, 1877 and 1882. My references are to the 'Silver Library' edition of 1898-99. See also The Spanish Story of the Armada and other essays (1892). There have been several selections of Froude's essays published posthumously, the most notable of which is Essays in Literature and History (1906), edited with an introduction by Hilaire Belloc. This selection contains the review of Arnold's poems as well as the original version of the essay, 'The Philosophy of Catholicism', both of which are discussed below. The essay in this selection entitled 'Words about Oxford' is, however, manifestly not by Froude, for the author tells us that he visited Oxford c. 1822 - just three years after Froude was born; Dunn attributes the essay to Cyrus Redding.

essays (with one exception) to those which do not, on the whole, involve a high degree of narrative: thus those essays which contain a sizeable portion of historical or biographical relation, those which are the fruits of Froude's practice of keeping a diary during his travels and those which consist of a brief fictional treatment of his chosen theme are not discussed here. These aspects of Froude's writings have already been briefly considered in chapter one. Furthermore, I have concentrated on those of Froude's writings which might properly be considered as 'essays' - those which first appeared as articles in magazines or reviews (especially Fraser's) including some which Froude thought good enough to reprint in Short Studies. Thus, omitting those writings which were delivered as lectures or addresses, I have tried to examine Froude's contribution to Victorian letters in the context of the English essay tradition, occasionally making comparisons where appropriate with his more illustrious and less well-known contemporaries. I have also tried to indicate the variety of subject matter in the essays which form part of Short Studies as well as including a special section dealing with those on specifically literary topics, so that Froude's point of view as a literary critic may be examined in some detail.¹

In the first section I give an account of Froude in his important role as the editor of Fraser's Magazine. This examination of Froude's editorial policy and practice forms the immediate context for the essays he contributed to this magazine and (indirectly) to certain other periodicals, the natures of which are briefly alluded to.

In the following section I consider Froude as a literary critic, looking particularly at seven essays and reviews dealing with a number of authors of varying merit writing in different countries at different times.

¹ Elsewhere in this thesis, specific essays (on his view of history, on Ireland, on Spinoza, etc.) are discussed in connection with his novels and the biography of Carlyle.

I next look in some detail at three essays which were reprinted in Short Studies. These essays have been chosen in accordance with the principles outlined above and are representative of Froude as an essayist at his best. Both their subject matter - Froude's ideas, beliefs and opinions (for example, his attitude to the Reformation and his imperialism) - and their technique (for example, his mode of argument and his prose style) are considered here.

In conclusion, after looking at contemporary reviews and more modern responses to Froude's essays, I assess the interest and importance of Froude as a prolific contributor to Victorian periodicals over some forty years.

Froude as editor of Fraser's

Froude edited Fraser's from December 1860 to August 1874. Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country (to give its full title) had been founded in 1830 by Hugh Fraser and William Maginn. The latter had previously contributed to Blackwood's Magazine and indeed, Fraser's, although London based, was printed by a Scot (also named Fraser, coincidentally), and tended to be viewed as an imitation of, if not a rival to, its illustrious Tory forbear. In its heyday (the first ten or so years were particularly outstanding) the 128 page monthly came to be associated with many celebrated names. It included much excellent literary and critical material, comprising contributions from Carlyle (Sartor Resartus first saw the light of print here, 1833-34), F.S. Mahoney ('Father Prout'), Thomas Love Peacock, and Thackeray (several of his works were published in the magazine, including Barry Lyndon in 1844) among others. Froude's assumption of the editor's mantle came about through his association with John Parker and his son, who had published the magazine since 1847. Froude was paid a salary of £400 per annum, but demanding as his task was he did not devote all his time and energy to it for he was still busily engaged in writing

his History of England which necessitated occasional visits to the Simancas archives in Spain. His brother-in-law, Charles Kingsley, deputed for him during such absences. Froude, who had been contemplating resigning the editorship for some time (it had been offered to Leslie Stephen and G.W. Dasent, the Norse scholar, but both had refused it), eventually gave it up in 1874, five months after the death of his second wife, partly at Carlyle's instigation¹ and partly because of his forthcoming mission to South Africa on behalf of Lord Carnarvon: he was succeeded by William Allingham, his deputy and a protégé of Carlyle's. The magazine continued until 1882 when it was replaced by Longman's Magazine, the firm of Longman having owned it for nearly twenty years.²

What sort of magazine was it that Froude edited? What was its place among the other periodicals? The nineteenth-century periodical was the fruit of the journalistic seeds sown in the eighteenth century.³ With the decline in patronage and the consequent need for a writer without private means to eke out a living by wielding his pen, the growth of such eighteenth-century periodicals as The Rambler, The Spectator and The Gentleman's Magazine with their short, cheerful, bantering though at times moralistic prose contributions prepared the way for the heterogeneous nineteenth-century press which was to cope with a much larger and wider reading public. And it was through the medium of the great Victorian magazines and reviews that many of the era's renowned writers first gained recognition and popularity: the English 'classics' were becoming accessible to those of the growing reading public who could not afford to buy books (such as the 'three-decker' novel) at exorbitant prices. Also notable

¹ It has been suggested that Carlyle wanted Froude to devote himself to working on his memoirs and biography, but the critic cited later in this chapter (Oscar Maurer, Jr.) thinks this unlikely.

² It was Longman's, Green & Co. which published the great bulk of Froude's own writings in book form.

³ For the basis of the following, very brief account of the rise of the literary periodical in the nineteenth century, I am indebted to Walter Graham's English Literary Periodicals (New York, 1930).

is the growth of the specialist journal during our period: indeed, journals devoted entirely to politics, law, medicine or history became an important feature of the Victorian age, preparing the way for the still more specialist academic journals which thrive today. The quality of the contributions, especially in the better known periodicals, was often very high indeed - higher perhaps than the misleading simplistic classification of magazines according to their political orientations might suggest.

In an article published in Fraser's in 1879 entitled 'Our past and our future',¹ the author is proud of the magazine's erstwhile lack of sectarianism and its breadth of 'intellectual sympathy', steering clear of the Tory bias of the Quarterly, the Whiggish slant of the Edinburgh and the radical, axe-grinding of the Westminster. Fraser's never openly identified with any party in politics (although at various phases in its fifty-year history its changing sympathies could be detected), and the author of this article takes some pride in being able to say as much. In matters religious its position was similarly non-sectarian, unless the approximation of its thinking to what might be loosely termed 'Broad Church' theology may be regarded as partisan. The qualities the author most admires are the variety and vivacity of subject and mood exhibited in its compendium of articles, the honour and respect the magazine showed for religion and its legitimate institutions, its exposure of hypocrisy and formalism, its stance in favour of freedom of opinion, and the values it admired and attempted to enshrine such as good taste, refinement and moderation. It aimed at a wide readership, and although it never approached the high sales of a miscellany like the Cornhill or a weekly such as the Athenaeum it avoided the short-lived ignominy born of pretentiousness and narrowness which was the fate of the Oxford and Cambridge Review. Its contributors, according to the convention of the day, were unsigned - indeed, Froude's

¹ Fraser's Magazine, N.S.20 (July, 1879), 1-12.

name did not appear on the title-page of Fraser's as editor until the last four years of his editorship. It was only in 1865 with the lively Fortnightly Review under G.H. Lewes that the authorship of individual articles began to be openly indicated - a practice followed by the Contemporary Review and other periodicals. Although Fraser's did not attract the galaxy of household names that Blackwood's, the National Review, Macmillan's and the Nineteenth Century all attracted, it did enjoy a considerable measure of support in London, and its articles dealt with contemporary issues and tendencies in a serious spirit of learning and tolerance, as well as offering its thoughtful readers a generally high standard of literary merchandise.

The strong sense an author had of belonging to the same 'community' as his audience which the periodicals engendered no doubt influenced Froude (along with economic considerations) to contribute to Fraser's and other journals. As we shall later note, Froude in his essays is a man speaking to other men, deeply, passionately concerned for their beliefs and moral welfare, and anxious to communicate and, at the same time, reflect upon the validity and the reception of his own views. Froude always has his readers in mind, earnestly trying to acquire and retain their attention, speaking to them much as a lecturer on his podium or a preacher in his pulpit would want to address their listeners, eager to engage in intellectual debate with them, confident of being listened to fairly and relying upon a shared experience and, in many cases, a similar education, for comprehension. Froude contributed to a number of magazines and reviews in his time - some of them quite minor (The Leader, The Eclectic Review, Good Words) but more importantly to three great periodicals. Three of the essays later reprinted in the first series of Short Studies: on the 'Book of Job', on Spinoza's philosophy, and on 'England's Forgotten Worthies', were first published in the Westminster Review. Here, in the

review which numbered among its contributors J.S. Mill, George Eliot, Frederick Harrison, Mark Pattison and Walter Pater, the younger Froude found a welcome forum for his fairly rationalistic, heterodox theological views. Later on in life, Froude contributed at least two articles (on Thomas à Becket and on Alexander of Abonotichus) to The Nineteenth Century, the journal so heavily influenced by the Fortnightly which was patronised by Tennyson, Arnold, Swinburne, Gladstone and J.H. Shorthouse. But at least twenty of Froude's essays originally appeared in Fraser's, the magazine with which he had the closest and most lasting association. About half of the articles were published under his editorship.

What was Froude like as an editor? Miriam Thrall in her book on Fraser's refers to him as 'the monthly's brilliant editor and contributor', but does not elaborate upon such a complimentary epithet.¹ A better idea can be formed by reading Moncure D. Conway's account of 'Working with Froude on Fraser's Magazine',² Skelton's account of his dealings with Froude in his official capacity in his Table-Talk of Shirley,³ and Dunn's biography.⁴ Towards the end of 1863, at Carlyle's suggestion, Conway sent Froude an article for him to consider for publication in Fraser's: they grew to know and like each other for the next eighteen years, and Conway wrote a number of articles about the American civil war which Froude accepted and had published in the magazine.⁵ Conway praises Froude's

¹ Rebellious Fraser's (New York, 1934), p. 6. Thrall deals with the early days of the magazine.

² The Nation, 59 (22, 29 November 1894), 378-79, 401-02.

³ Table Talk of Shirley, pp. 127-42.

⁴ Dunn II, ch. 23 passim.

⁵ It may seem strange that Conway should indicate (by implication) that their friendship did not last beyond c. 1881. The likely explanation, I think, reading between the lines, is that Conway was one of many who took offence at Froude's attitude to Carlyle in writing his biography and publishing his memoirs, and so broke off their friendship.

tolerant, fair-minded approach to the editorship. Even though Conway was a staunch Republican (a position for which Froude had little sympathy) who wrote articles which reflected his partisan position, 'Froude never changed a sentence himself [of what Conway had written], and rarely induced me to alter them; and only in one case...did he print any disclaimer'.¹ Occasionally Froude would give an account of his own views in a letter to Conway 'to restrain my enthusiasm'.² In one letter, Froude told Conway that 'I do not wish to make my own opinion the absolute rule of what is to appear in Fraser' - an indication of Froude's realisation of the serious nature of his duties and responsibilities as an editor of a thriving and influential literary magazine.³ Carlyle (who, according to Conway, was much more reactionary about 'the negro question' than Froude) would encourage Froude to let Conway 'have [his] say in the magazine', and certainly no article of Conway's was ever refused admission. Skelton confirms the interest Froude took in carefully reading the contributions sent to him, and exercising a degree of fairly close supervision without interfering unnecessarily.⁴ In this respect Froude emerges as a more liberal, less authoritarian editor than, say, the Dickens of Household Words, who would frequently interfere unflinchingly even in the pieces by his more eminent contributors such as Mrs Gaskell, blue-pencilling their work quite ruthlessly. Dunn explains how Froude, although always very busy, felt compelled out of a sense of duty to keep abreast of national and international events, so that he could discharge his editorial duties fairly and adequately; 'for him', avers Dunn, 'the work was a parergon'.⁵ Froude would make an effort to

¹ 'Working with Froude on Fraser's Magazine', p. 379.

² loc. cit.

³ loc. cit. For Conway's further recollection of Froude, see his Autobiography: Memories and Experiences, 2 vols (New York, 1904), II, 181-89, 192-97.

⁴ Skelton, pp. 141-42.

⁵ Dunn II, 300, 326.

select articles so that a balance was maintained between subjects topical and subjects timeless.¹ This admixture of the timely and the timeless characterises his own contributions to Fraser's as we shall see.² According to Dunn, Froude certainly enjoyed his editorial duties, taxing as they undoubtedly were: years after relinquishing the post, we find him yearning to resume his duties.³

Oscar Maurer Jr., provides the fullest and most interesting account of Froude's editorship.⁴ This, together with a perusal of the magazine itself under Froude's aegis, gives a fair impression of his approach to the task and the principles underlying his policy decisions. The picture which emerges is of an unobtrusive and (for Froude) relatively non-controversial editorship, during a period which witnessed many controversies. Froude was never identified with Fraser's, Maurer tells us, to the same extent as John Morley was with the Fortnightly or R.H. Hutton with the Spectator. Nevertheless, Froude was far from being an impartial, characterless editor, as Maurer points out:

Froude gave Fraser's its characteristic tone during those years. By his own contributions, by the articles he commissioned and by those of the contributors he enlisted, he informed Fraser's with his own opinions and attitudes: his anticlericalism, his high esteem for the Reformation and all its works, his hatred of current Ritualist and Ultramontane movements and of all dogmatic views, his distrust of democracy, his reluctant but determined 'rationalism'.⁵

¹ Dunn II, 331.

² This is partly owing to his keenly developed sense of history: contemporary developments in Britain's foreign policy or among religious denominations at home, for example, Froude would always locate in their historical context, frequently drawing on his knowledge of other countries in times past for parallels, and always eager to emphasise the eternal values which lay at the heart of many of the debates.

³ Dunn II, 349.

⁴ 'Froude and Fraser's Magazine 1860-1874', TSE, 28 (1949), 213-43. Cf. also Oscar Maurer, '"My Squeamish Public": Some Problems of Victorian Magazine Publishers and Editors', SB, 12 (1959), 21-40.

⁵ 'Froude and Fraser's Magazine 1860-1874', p. 213.

Maurer views Froude as on the whole a successful editor, scrupulously fair and therefore respected by his contributors (he cites a letter of Froude's to Mrs Gaskell) and by his mentor, Carlyle. 'In theory', comments Maurer, 'he upheld the principle of the open forum, where all sides could gain a hearing.'¹ This was, however, rather more difficult than might be expected. Maurer refers us both to cases where Froude upheld the principle in practice and where he failed to do so. Thus Froude published, in 1861, Mill's Utilitarianism, which contained the sort of thinking Carlyle had earlier denigrated as 'pig philosophy',² but, Maurer notes, Fraser's also contained some unfavourable reviews of Mill's other writings, including his essay on the subjection of women. Generally, Froude allowed fairly divergent political views to be aired in the magazine in the 1860s, but in the early 1870s Froude's somewhat lukewarm preference for Disraeli asserted itself, balancing the slightly pro-Gladstone bias in the days before Froude took over. Froude was likewise amenable to including laudatory articles by Skelton on literary figures for whom he had himself little admiration such as Browning, Swinburne and Rossetti - though he drew the line at a review of the notoriously difficult Sordello ('a poem which requires an explanation is no poem at all' he told Skelton).³ Froude's own preferences were for the poetry of Tennyson and (as we shall see) Arnold: in this respect, as in others, he was fairly representative of the age. And Froude needed little urging from Carlyle to start publishing in monthly parts his friend John Ruskin's Munera Pulveris, but in the end Froude had to bow to pressure from his publisher as subscriptions were being cancelled in protest against Ruskin's somewhat radical economic diatribes.⁴ As far as religious matters went, Maurer considers Froude to have been less tolerant of the 'extremes' of Catholicism and High-Church

¹ op. cit., p. 217.

² Cf. 'Sauerteig's' piece in Nos ('Jesuitism') of Latter-day Pamphlets (1850).

³ op. cit., p. 223.

⁴ Earlier, Ruskin's Unto this Last had met a similar fate in the columns of the Cornhill.

Anglicanism on the one hand, and Evangelicalism on the other hand. He did welcome Leslie Stephen's essays, some of which became Free-Thinking and Plain-Speaking, towards the end of his editorship in 1873, but excessively anti-religious pieces (Francis Newman on the allegedly immoral aspects of Jesus' character and teaching, for example) he objected to: the magazine was thus slightly 'left of centre' in this respect, but not as radical as the Westminster. Under Froude the magazine was fairly liberal in its attitude towards developments in science, eugenics and comparative religion.¹ Maurer concludes that despite Froude's 'attempts at eclecticism' Fraser's, 'was on the whole the reflection of his own prejudices and opinions'.² And Froude, as the editor of 'an advanced journal', writes Maurer, 'seems to have felt no compulsion to make it popular and entertaining'.³ But Froude did encourage younger up-and-coming writers to contribute, such as Edmund Gosse and Andrew Lang, and he did introduce art criticism to its readers by printing articles by W.M. Rossetti and Bell Scott. Froude was strict about the literary standard of items submitted for inclusion in Fraser's: he particularly hated waffle and diffuse writing. And while little fiction of any note was published under him, the magazine did cover a fairly wide range of subjects (as Froude's own contributions illustrate); without being very catholic or markedly doctrinaire, Fraser's did enjoy a good literary reputation. In conclusion, Maurer's note that under Froude the magazine was a fair 'index for the observation of Victorian currents of thought',⁴ will be seen to have relevance not only to Froude the editor, but also to Froude a literary critic and (more especially) as an essayist.

¹ Maurer traces the magazine's interest in science to Kingsley's influence.

² 'Froude and Fraser's Magazine', p. 225.

³ op. cit., p. 228.

⁴ op. cit., p. 242.

Froude as a literary critic

Froude was not a prolific writer of literary criticism: a large number of his literary pronouncements emerge incidentally in his writings and letters and in his autobiographical sketch as he writes about his early, avid reading,¹ not to mention those of his works of a specifically biographical-literary nature - his books on Bunyan, Disraeli and Carlyle, for example. There are seven or so purely literary essays and reviews which he wrote for periodicals which are of particular interest as they reveal something of Froude's characteristic taste and critical attitudes.

Only two of these articles, both of which first appeared in Fraser's were to be later reprinted in Short Studies: and, typically, both of them deal with classical subjects. Froude's initiation as a child into the joys of the great Greek and Latin authors was rapid - if not quite so alarmingly swift as that of the young J.S. Mill - with the unfortunate result that although he was able to translate all of Homer by the age of eleven, he later lost interest in the classics: it was only in later life, as Froude returned to these authors to see if he could recover his enjoyment of them and appreciate them at their true worth, that they became his favourite recreational reading. This is entirely true, for example, of 'Sea Studies', in which essay Froude laments the neglect of Euripides at school and now, in his late fifties, discovers in the plays much to feast his mind upon.²

Much earlier than this, however, is his essay, 'Homer', originally entitled 'Homer and the Homeric Life'.³ In this essay Froude takes as his starting-point recent unfavourable critical asseverations on the Iliad and the Odyssey which contained the notion that not only are they

¹ Reprinted nearly in full in Dunn I, passim.

² It first appeared in Fraser's Magazine, N.S. 11 (May, 1875), 541-60; Short Studies III, 207-59.

³ Short Studies I, 502-44. This first appeared in Fraser's Magazine, 44 (July, 1851), 76-92.

not the work of a single poet, but both poems may be compilations of more than one writer. Like Gladstone in his study of Homer, Froude is keen 'to promote and extend the fruitful study of the immortal poems 'of the greatest Greek poet.¹ After reflecting upon the relation between literature (especially poetry) and history, Froude, almost echoing the neo-classical view of Homer as expressed in Pope's Essay on Criticism,² draws the reader's attention to the solidity of detail and the earthy realism of the two poems (I, 506). Indeed, it is for this strong sense of his life and times that Froude, the future historian whose own writings were characterised by a vivid recreation of past events and characters in their settings, commends Homer as a poet to his readers. He sees the poet's true place alongside Shakespeare. He cites a number of passages from the Odyssey which illustrate how worthwhile it is to look at Homer's poems for 'something beyond fine poetry, or exciting adventures or battle-scenes, or material for scholarship', to look, in fact, for

the story of real living men - set to pilgrimize
in the old way on the same old earth - men such as
we are, children of one family, with the same work
to do, to live the best life they could, and to save
their souls - with the same trials, the same passions,
the same difficulties, if with weaker means of meeting
them. (I, 511)

Although the times which Homer describes are historically remote, Froude detects that in the many casually dropped hints the poet, often unconsciously, reveals much of his age and the cultivated society in which he lived: and the people he describes, and the ultimate questions which they have to face in working out their destiny are truly human and of universal significance. Such are the qualities Froude deems to be of the greatest value and of surprising relevance to his age. He spends a little time discussing what we learn from Homer of religion, morality and the daily life of so many of the poet's contemporaries. In an early tribute to Carlyle (after having

¹ Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age, 3 vols (Oxford, 1858), I, 1.

² The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt (1968), pp. 147-48.

allowed Markham Sutherland to pour scorn on him, as we saw, two years earlier in the Nemesis) Froude commends the attitude of Homer's society towards work as a holy, sacred activity: Homer is not simply a poet of war (and certainly not a poet of violence) he reminds us (I, 522-23). As we read on we realise how very personal an essay by Froude this is, his own experience colouring his criticism of Homer's poetry, which he so manifestly enjoys. He is perhaps rather keen to derive moral lessons from his material as in the course of a very perceptive, succinct examination of the characters of Hector and Achilles (I, 516 ff). There is little literary criticism proper, as we know it, in this essay, apart from the discussions of Homer's appreciation of landscape, Homer's similes (with incidental comparisons with 'Nikolas Lenau' and Byron) and of the authorship questions. If at times Froude's point of view seems somewhat ingenuous - he rather glibly trots out the sentiment that life was happier then at one point (I, 533) - his appreciation of the poem is, on the whole, refreshingly sincere, characteristically lively and highly intelligent.

The essay already cited, called 'Sea Studies', is concerned mainly with the plays of Euripides. Froude sets the scene for his six-week sea voyage to South Africa with his customary grace, his very prose matching the gentle air of tranquillity which he breathed on board ship. After some disparaging remarks upon the popular novel (his distaste for such works - the great novels, including his favourite, Don Quixote, excepted - almost equaling the contempt voiced by Carlyle towards them) he discusses the appeal of serious literature, especially the classics (works which have stood the test of time), to minds which have already seen middle-age and in which the tastes for romance and caricature have long disappeared. On this occasion Froude selects the plays of 'the third great Athenian tragedian, whom at college we had been taught to despise', for his reading (III, 212). Froude concurs heartily with the admiration Goethe felt for Euripides!

artistic merits, especially with regard to the poet's diction and metre. But the attraction Froude really feels for Euripides owes itself to the dramatist's poetic bodying forth of those particular aspects of the Greek mind Froude thought relevant to the Victorian consciousness: the nature of belief when confronted with the more sombre and perhaps ultimately ineluctable side of the human condition - the problem of innocent people suffering as difficult to reconcile with the existence of an all-powerful, benevolent God. Euripides' thinking here is closer, more immediate than that of, say, Aeschylus, for the former in Froude's view having written of what 'oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed' as he explores the confusion which apparently exists at the heart of so many human destinies (III, 214) emerges as a sort of Greek Thomas Hardy (Froude does not, of course, make the comparison between the two fatalists), and his pessimism, one suspects, Froude found not uncongenial. Froude is especially perceptive when reflecting upon the relationship between scepticism and creativity, in the context of a discussion about belief and mythology. 'Creative genius', comments Froude, 'is tamed as effectively by scepticism as a bird by a broken wing' (III, 216): an observation all the more valid, one feels, because based in all probability on Froude's experience as the author of the Nemesis. A further insight: that the wise sceptic will be reluctant to destroy in a work of art the moral superstructure of a discredited dogmatic faith (III, 219), further partly explains why the Victorians, including George Eliot (her most eminent qualifications notwithstanding) failed to produce the great Victorian novel of doubt. Froude moves on to discuss, in varying detail, ten of Euripides' plays including The Bacchae and Ion, making them come alive before his readers' eyes. He relates the plays to the beliefs and practices of Greek society and, for the less well known plays, provides a synopsis of the plots as a prelude to his commentary. Time and again Froude suggests or implies correspondences with the Victorian age: at one

point, for example, as he tries to convey the nature of Pentheus' character in The Bacchae, Froude draws an analogy with 'an intelligent Home Secretary who is determined to repress rogues and protect public morals'(III, 223). Occasionally his own political views emerge in asides,¹ but when he expounds his intensely personal moral vision of the place of duty and self-sacrifice in human character (III, 238 ff.), it is offered as a way into the plays of Euripides which are themselves concerned with such concepts. Froude's main thesis that 'Euripides was travelling in the direction of secular intelligence' (III, 236) is argued cogently and illustrated amply by his exposition of the plays backed up by quotations in the original Greek and, for longer passages, by English translations (presumably by Froude himself), by his examination of the role of the chorus, and by tracing the implications of the lack of catharsis in the plays. Throughout this finely written essay there is a pervasive sense of a sound critical intelligence making the strongest of cases for his educated contemporaries to read and reread the plays of the ancient Greek dramatist.

Froude's essay on Cervantes and Don Quixote is actually a review of a new translation of the Spanish novel and of a biography of its author, both by a Mr Ormsby.² Here again Froude's main aim is to draw his readers' attention to a great literary work and to enkindle in them an enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the novel similar to his own in kind if not in degree. And again it is 'the human interest' that he stresses,³ for very Spanish as the novel is, it transcends its national characteristics and possesses the universal significance which is the sine qua non of every great work of literary art: in fact, Froude thinks that Don Quixote possesses an

¹ See Short Studies III, 208, 227 for two examples.

² 'Mr. Ormsby's Don Quixote', Quarterly Review, 162 (January, 1886), 43-49.

³ op. cit., p. 45.

even wider appeal than Shakespeare's plays, and goes on to point out how it has certainly weathered the ages better than its English verse counterpart, Samuel Butler's Hudibras. The translation by Ormsby Froude welcomes as 'clear and spirited', praising the fact that Ormsby has learned from the examples of strong, unaffected, appropriately idiomatic language of past translations, and criticising those writers who attempt a wholly original translation for originality's sake.¹ In Froude's view the main quality needed to translate Cervantes well, apart from the necessary command of both English and Spanish, is a sense of humour in order to appreciate and convey satisfactorily the author's (frequently satirical) essential humorousness. Froude runs through many instances of phrases and passages awkward to translate, correcting errors, giving his own versions and making helpful suggestions. The review is however generally favourable, Froude regarding the translation as the best in English to date, although he is less enthusiastic about the essay accompanying the translation. He compliments the biography, providing a potted summary of Cervantes's life for the reader. Throughout the article, Froude demonstrates his fondness for and knowledge of the novel, and indeed his acquaintance with different historical and critical theories about it. His interpretation of the novel (he has very definite ideas about the two main characters) whilst not strikingly original is sensible and convincingly argued.

Froude's two essays on German literature may be taken together. The first, treating of Goeth  's Faust is the earlier.² It is ostensibly a review of a new translation by John Anstey, though about the translation per se Froude says very little. The young Froude takes the opportunity to comment, however, on Faust itself. He takes issue with Anstey's extreme and curiously antipathetic view of the tragedy (Anstey sees it as a 'poison').

¹ op. cit., p. 47.

² 'Go  the [sic]; Faust', Oxford and Cambridge Review, 2 (January, 1846), 1-23.

For Froude, Goethë was the most remarkable philosophical teacher since Shakespeare, both having seen more deeply into the human heart than any other poet.¹ He objects to the notion of reading a work for its 'moral': 'all art is imitation', he warns and the thing imitated - life - is infinitely more complex than any didactic poem with a simple moral might suggest.² Froude admired Faust hugely, thinking it remarkable for the extent to which it reveals Goethë's very exceptional spiritual history - a pointer, perhaps, to Froude's own rationale in writing The Spirit's Trials and The Nemesis of Faith in the next three years. This is the criticism of conviction: Froude's commentary is from the heart (there are few comments on stylistic matters), and one senses that he identified partly with Goethë and himself lived through in some way the experience embodied in the poem, notwithstanding his admonition to the reader to gaze only and not taste the poem's fruit. The next article, 'German Love', a review of a confessional autobiography by an anonymous nineteenth-century German romantic poet, also dwells upon the need some minds (Goethë, Rousseau, Wordsworth) impelled perhaps by genius, feel, to reveal themselves through a literary medium, and 'make mankind [their] confessor'.³ The work comes in for qualified praise from Froude: the comment that it is 'the work of an uncommon man who has sought relief for some inward sorrow by throwing it into a narrative' could almost be a description of the Nemesis. But even the best novel, Froude reminds the reader, is but a 'counterfeit' experience. Froude translates excerpts and summarises the book's contents to give his readers the drift of this rather melodramatic work, and ends his review by questioning the advisability of cultivating the negative, morbid habit of dwelling on past sorrows, for such an attitude could indeed

¹ He had not yet met Carlyle personally: his future master's own veneration and friendship with the German poet bordered on the adulatory.

² op. cit., p. 4.

³ Fraser's Magazine, 55 (April, 1857), 396-99.

work like 'poison' in the veins - thus a more mature Froude, no doubt reflecting on his own past experience.

Just a year earlier than the last article Froude was reviewing a very different book indeed: Poems by Edward Capern (a near-blind, unlettered, rural postman of Bideford, Devon) if we may judge by the review itself, and the selections quoted could hardly form a greater contrast to the German book.¹ Froude's kind intention here is to draw the public's attention to this little-known amateur poet, who has had some of his poems published by subscription. And though Froude does make out a case for the poems' merit, finding in them a genuine reflection of experience (Froude's all-important criterion to which he ever returns), a variety of subject matter and emotional range, purity of diction and grace of expression, he is prepared to let his readers judge for themselves (hence the selections) as to whether he has perhaps overestimated Capern's literary abilities or his detailed observation of the countryside through the changing seasons. 'His poems are never the mere outpouring of subjective emotion,' writes Froude, anticipating the thought that here perhaps is a third-rate, sentimentalised imitation of Burns or Wordsworth, 'but the wide variety of simple objects with which in his daily walks he has made himself familiar, have become at once the language of his feelings, and occasions in themselves of true imaginative interest.'² Froude comments on the odd weak line and criticises the few poems where Capern has written beyond his experience (about the Crimean War, for example), but on the whole, Froude manages to mingle generosity with honesty in writing on this most minor of minor poets.

Froude's article on successive volumes of the poetry of Matthew Arnold, the most detailed, serious and purely 'critical' of his essays, and the

¹ Fraser's Magazine, 53 (April, 1856), 489-95.

² op. cit., p. 491.

only one dealing with a contemporary writer of distinction, is of much greater interest.¹ Froude had known Arnold for some time (presumably since his days at Oxford with their mutual friend, Arthur Hugh Clough) though their friendship was perhaps more important to Arnold than to Froude. Lowry, quoting from Froude's letters to Clough, points out that 'Froude gave Arnold much encouragement through the years of his poetical apprenticeship'.² H.W. Garrod goes further, pointing out how Arnold, in the early 1850s, 'relied a good deal...on the sympathy and judgment of Froude' with whom he was in close touch, and 'whose every suggestion he valued' especially about this time when Clough's influence, it seems, was 'weakened'. Garrod attributes another article on Arnold's poems to Froude: one which appeared in Fraser's Magazine, 49 (February, 1854), 140-49 (though he mistakenly gives the month as May). He cites as evidence the fact that in this article the critic notices the repetition of the word 'tent' in the opening section of 'Sohrab and Rustum' as does Froude in a letter to Clough.³ But it seems to me highly likely that any critic would notice such an obvious (and demonstrably ugly) feature of the poem's opening. And is it really likely (Garrod seems to think so) that Froude would refer in this article, if by him, to the Westminster Review article (certainly by him) as one of only two reviews which have done justice to Arnold? Moreover there is no mention of this review in any letters between Froude, Arnold and Clough (as there is of the Westminster Review article) and the exclamatory style, the unusual allusions, and some of the remarks made about Homer in this article, are wholly uncharacteristic of Froude: all of which suggests that Froude was not, in fact, the author of this piece at all. Many of the interesting remarks Garrod goes on to make about Froude's attitude to Arnold's poems are thus to some degree invalid, although

¹ 'Arnold's Poems', Westminster Review, N.S.5 (January, 1854), 146-59. My references are to its reprint in Essays in Literature and History (1906), pp. 1-19.

² Howard Foster Lowry (ed.), The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough (Oxford, 1932), p. 127 (n. 3). Cf. pp. 126, 136, 137 (n. 3), 139-41, 146. See also Michael Thorpe, Matthew Arnold (1969), p. 26.

³ H.W. Garrod, 'Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface', RES, 17 (1941), 310-21. Cf. Sidney M.B. Coulling, 'Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface: its Origin and Aftermath', VS, 7 (March, 1964), 233-63.

⁴ Lowry, p. 127 (n. 3).

with regard to Froude's opposition to Arnold's idea of writing a preface and his preference for classical or Teutonic subjects (which admittedly the author of the other article also commends) treated in the Homeric manner, as against the overtly romantic, Keatsian 'Scholar Gypsy', he is, I think, right.

To return to the one article which certainly is by Froude: with reference to the volume of poems 'The Strayed Reveller' and other poems, Froude remarks upon the poet's apparent inability to realise 'when he was doing well and when he was failing' - hence a certain striking inequality of merit both in substance and style is here to be found.¹ Froude praises the 'deep and searching' poem 'Stagyrus', and the 'unaffected natural feeling, expressed sweetly and musically' of 'The Sick King of Bokhara' as well as the diction, metre, story and general polish of 'The Forsaken Merman'.² The title poem, on the other hand, Froude regards as hardly a poem at all in the usual sense of the word and to illustrate his point he prints a section of it, arranging it to form a prose paragraph: it may be imaginative, even 'poetical', but 'it is the poetry of well written, elegant prose' he comments, almost as if he foresaw where Arnold's real genius as a writer resided.³ The other faults Froude notes are Arnold's seeming indifference to the intellectual struggles of men (probably a personal point this),⁴ the liberties he takes with the rules of poetry, and 'an elaborate obscurity, one of the worst faults which poetry can have'.⁵ He thinks Arnold is at his best when he has a story to work with and he cites 'Myserinus'.⁶ In this first volume, Froude finds rather more promise than performance. Of the

¹ Essays on Literature and History, p. 1.

² op. cit., p. 2.

³ op. cit., p. 5.

⁴ See Lowry, p. 127 (n. 3).

⁵ op. cit., p. 2.

⁶ op. cit., p. 3.

volume 'Empedocles on Etna' and other poems, despite the fact that uniformity of excellence seems to have been sacrificed to uniformity of character in his view, Froude finds the promise largely fulfilled:

Not only is the advance in art remarkable, in greater clearness of effect, and in the mechanical handling of words,¹ but far more in simplicity and healthfulness of moral feeling...

Gone is the obscurity he had earlier condemned: instead he now detects a pure, noble and lofty mind bent on cultivating the higher things (the good, the right, the true) but without affectation. And the poet avoids making the fatal error of mistaking the voluptuous for the beautiful. Froude continues:

There is an absence, perhaps, of colour; it is natural that it should be so in the earlier poems of a writer who proposes aims such as these to himself; his poetry is addressed to the intellectual,² and not to the animal emotions...

Froude's central criterion for what constitutes good poetry is again the 'truth to life' ideal: is the poem 'a true representation of true human feeling'? Froude praises (at times rather vaguely) several of the poems in turn and predicts recognition in the long term for the poet. Froude is happy however with neither the subject matter (the unheroic nihilism of the doubting protagonist) nor the treatment (the suicide is presented unrealistically; there is no catharsis) of the volume's title poem, his frank criticisms here reflecting a wider disagreement with the Arnold of the 1853 'Preface' about what the proper subject matter of poetry should be. Froude much prefers 'Sohrab and Rustum' which is good where 'Empedocles on Etna' is deficient. The notion that Arnold, although writing frequently on classical and mythological subjects, was a romantic poet against his will, is in a sense supported by Froude's conventional exposition of neo-classical poetic standards. It is right that a poet should aim high and follow the best models, he comments, and the best models are of course

¹ op. cit., p. 6.

² op. cit., p. 7.

the classics (though Froude adds that Shakespeare, Dante and others should be considered among them): the poet should follow these, and not crave for originality. Look at life, in the past, at the good, the terrible and the pathetic in different nations - including the Teutonic races, whose myths have been neglected as poetic subjects.¹ And, echoing Johnson on Paradise Lost, Froude again urges Arnold to look at what is truly human and make this his touchstone for his poetry.²

George Saintsbury in his History of English Criticism suggests in passing that Froude's criticism manifests 'a certain want of interest in literature as literature'.³ If by this statement Saintsbury means that Froude in his critical essays was less interested in assessing literary works using the tools of a professional or academic critic, then he is probably correct. But as we have seen, Froude - a not untypical product of a classical education - was indeed passionately concerned about literature in the same sense as Aristotle: good literature both entertains and instructs. This was the yardstick by which he evaluated novels and (especially) poems, and it was the controlling factor in his policy on literary reviewing as editor of Fraser's. A great work of art, Froude insisted, is characterised by the presence of a 'human interest' so that the reader is enabled to see more deeply into the complex workings of the individual human heart, and into the corporate life of a society at a particular point in time: this is what makes any literary work enjoyable to read, instructive, and so worthy of our attention. Writing only about works he himself enjoyed (for such reasons) Froude brings to his task as a literary critic (and the role, it has to be conceded was always a

¹ Garrod, pp. 319-20, suggests that it was Froude's influence which led to Arnold writing 'Balder Dead' and that at one time Arnold had contemplated writing about the myths of the Ring of the Nibelungs.

² Essays in Literature and History, pp. 18-19.

³ History of English Criticism (Edinburgh, 1911), p. 492.

minor one, to Froude) honesty, intelligence, enthusiasm, sympathy and a soundness of literary judgement which is lacking, in some ways, in the more 'original', greater critics of English: this makes him both refreshing and stimulating to read.¹ And as we read his critical essays not only do we learn something about the works under discussion, we also learn much incidentally about Froude's own personal, somewhat conservative tastes, which goes some way to explaining how he himself approached the task of writing.

Froude as an essayist

i. The English essay and some Victorian exponents of the form

The vagueness of the sundry attempts which have been made to define what an 'essay' is, is rivalled only by the variety of the very general definitions of romanticism which have been made in the past. W.E. Williams, in his introduction to a book of English essays he edited, commented:

The English Essay has a multitude of forms and manners, and scarcely any rules and regulations. A minimum definition would be today that the Essay is a piece of prose, usually on the short side, which is not devoted to narrative.²

He lists the essay's other qualities: a tendency to describe characters and relate anecdotes which exemplify the author's opinions; the predominance of a serious, moral purpose over entertainment, and the essayist's proclivity for discussing topical news items. J.A. Cudden, who sketches the development of the genre from Montaigne's Essais, also stresses the essay's flexibility and adaptability, as it embraces such diverse works as Pope's Essay on Criticism and Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding as well as the more common sort of essay as practised by Bacon,

¹ One thinks of Johnson who disparaged the metaphysical poets, 'Lycidas' and Gray's poetry; T.S. Eliot who was so dismissive of Milton and the romantics; and F.R. Leavis whose 'great tradition' implied a number of critical blindspots.

² A Book of English Essays (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 11.

Addison, Lamb and Chesterton.¹ Froude's essays do not conform readily to any single definition: always in prose, almost always wholly serious in tone and purpose, but seldom on the short side (he averages between forty and fifty pages) and not infrequently containing at least some narrative material, Froude's essays, it might be argued, do not really belong to the English essay-writing tradition. One thinks of the very concise, aphoristic essays of Bacon with their neat, balanced sentences and attic prose; or the series of light extempore reflections on the most mundane of topics by Addison, couched in glorious rolling periods, but exuding the familiarity of a close friend; or the pithy, frivolous assertions which proceeded from the pen of Leigh Hunt. Indeed, the only earlier essayist with whom Froude bears comparison is Oliver Goldsmith whose carefully written essays with their well-marshalled arguments, a marked use of metaphor and more than a sprinkling of rhetorical devices, resemble Froude's in certain respects.

Froude's essays, in style, organisation and content, relate much more closely to those of his contemporaries who found in the medium of the periodical a viable secular alternative to the pulpit. This attitude tended to produce on the one hand the run-of-the-mill, prudishly moralistic, simple-minded essay with the vague, ponderous expressions and pretentious tone that one associates with dated, superficial journalism - such, for example, were the ephemeral essays of Frances Power Cobbe.² On the other hand, the essay in the control of a master like John Morley³ or Augustine

¹ A Dictionary of Literary Terms, rev. ed. (1979), pp. 244-47. Lamb was Froude's 'own favourite' among prose writers, although Froude also acknowledged his admiration of Newman and Arnold for their lucidity and irony and Ruskin for his powers of description. See A. Patchett Martin, 'James Anthony Froude. A Personal Reminiscence', National Review, 24 (December, 1894), 488-501.

² Studies new and old of ethical and social subjects (1865). Several of these essays first appeared in Fraser's Magazine, though not under Froude's editorship. For a weightier, more intelligent but somewhat pedestrian and academic version of Cobbe, compare the Essays of George Brimley (Cambridge, 1858).

³ Critical Miscellanies, 3 vols (1888): Morley writes on a variety of subjects including Eliot, Mill, Pattison, Comte and Emerson.

Birrell¹ became a lively and effective means for communicating their ideas clearly, directly, intelligently and judiciously. The lucid, occasionally ironical, biting and entirely readable prose of Leslie Stephen's essays,² for example, was the perfect vehicle for transmitting his hard-hitting, controversial, agnostic ideas. It is likely that Froude learnt from and in turn taught something to his fellow contributors to the great literary magazines and reviews, such as Stephen or Walter Bagehot: the latter in particular wrote a very fresh personable prose in a very down-to-earth manner and, like Froude, always seemed to be well in touch with his readership.³ Froude managed to avoid imitating both the tedious, tortuous prose of Hutton in his essays, with its high degree of subordination (the sentences jerking and stumbling across the page)⁴ and the ornate rhetorical flourishes of Macaulay's essays.⁵ And much as he was influenced by Carlyle in the ideas and beliefs which form his essays' subject-matter, his style owes nothing to his mentor.

¹ Miscellanies (1901). Birrell writes a very limpid prose and his essays are more impressionistic than most others. There is a profound sense of much reading and thought carefully distilled into the few pages of his essays. In a perceptive essay on Froude (published in 1895) he points out that while he was at Cambridge in the early 1870s the most discussed figures were Newman, Froude, Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Browning and Matthew Arnold - Swinburne and Meredith not being well enough known at that time (p. 157).

² Essays on Free-Thinking and Plain-Speaking (1893): a collection reprinted from Fraser's Magazine (under Froude) and the Fortnightly Review. The rationalistic apologetics of Stephen lead straight to the Christian apologetics of Chesterton and C.S. Lewis in the twentieth century.

³ Q.v. Literary Studies, 2 vols (1911).

⁴ Literary Essays (1871).

⁵ Critical and Historical Essays, 3 vols (1843).

ii. Short Studies on Great Subjects

Froude selected at intervals nearly fifty essays to include in Short Studies on Great Subjects. The title is something of a misnomer, as Froude realised, for not all the subjects are great and some of the studies are long enough to pass as short books. The variety of both subject matter and treatment is marked, but Froude himself pointed out that there was a certain 'unity of purpose which is present throughout' in these essays which 'contain my thoughts cast in various forms, on the problems with which the present generation has been perplexed. He proceeds to elaborate:

We have lived through a period of change - change spiritual, change moral, social, and political. The foundations of our most serious convictions have been broken up; and the disintegration of opinion is so rapid that wise men and foolish are equally ignorant where the close of this waning century will find us. We are embarked in a current which bears us forward independent of our own wills, and indifferent whether we submit or resist; but each of us is sailing in a boat of his own, which, as he is hurried on, he can guide or leave to drift. The observations and experiences of a single voyager who is drawing near the end of his own journey may have an interest for others who are floating down the same river, and are alike unable to conjecture whither they are bound.¹

Thus, Froude, with a favourite metaphor, upon his rationale in bringing together the essays written over some thirty years, most of which had made their first appearance in Fraser's Magazine and other periodicals. Froude had revised these essays, altering some quite drastically (as in the first example considered below), while others he improved only in their minor details or perhaps not at all. The three essays I have chosen for special consideration are, in their different ways, characteristic of Froude as an essayist and contributor to Victorian periodical literature.

¹ 'Preface' to Short Studies IV, v-vi. For one view of how influential Short Studies was, see Algernon Cecil, Six Oxford Thinkers (1909), pp. 201-08.

'The Philosophy of Catholicism'

The first essay, 'The Philosophy of Catholicism'¹ originally appeared under the title 'The Philosophy of Christianity' in The Leader in 1851.² It is an early and quite short essay which he revised significantly for inclusion in Short Studies in 1867. The earlier version has a translated epigraph from Goethë which reads: 'We should do our utmost to encourage the Beautiful, for the Useful encourages itself.' The opening paragraph (also omitted in Short Studies) contains an anecdote, the burden of which is that the Protestant should never disown or disparage his spiritual roots, distasteful as his Catholic origin may be to him. The essay then proceeds much as in the later version (although there are some minor revisions concerning punctuation and paragraphing) except for a sentence towards the end of the essay where Froude, summing up, remarks: 'And such, I believe, to have been the central idea of the beautiful creed which, for 1800 years, has tuned the heart and formed the mind of the noblest of mankind.' In the second version, the first two commas and the words 'And' and 'has' were omitted and '1800 years' was changed to '1500 years'.³ The final change is in the ending. The revised version omits the last three sentences of the earlier version. They read:

Such is the Philosophy of Christianity. It was worn and old when Luther found it. Our posterity will care less to respect Luther for rending it in pieces, when it has learnt to despise the miserable fabric which he stitched together out of its tatters.⁴

¹ Short Studies I, 188-201.

² This version is reprinted in Essays in Literature and History (1906), pp. 184-94.

³ Essays in Literature and History, p. 192; Short Studies I, 200.

⁴ Essays in Literature and History, p. 194.

It is not difficult to see why the changes were made. The original essay was written within two years of the Nemesis and reflected the attraction Froude still partly felt towards Catholicism, the more than Pateresque beauty of which he had learned from Newman whilst at Oxford. The later Froude, the fiercely Protestant defender of the English Reformation and the disciple of Carlyle, although still able to value the admirable account he provides in the earlier essay of the central beliefs of Catholicism, cannot in all conscience admit that it is the Christianity in which he now believes, that he had been describing; nor could he honestly or consistently permit the critical remarks upon one of his and Carlyle's great heroes, Luther (upon whom he had written so eloquently in the very same volume of Short Studies¹) ,to stand: hence the excision. A more graphic illustration of Froude's changing religious beliefs it would be difficult to imagine.

What we have in the Short Studies version, therefore, is a summary of what Catholicism is. Froude's introduction reminds his readers to be aware of the precise extent and nature of their debt to the past, especially where their religious beliefs are concerned. He then traces very concisely the pagan, Hebrew, Persian and Greek roots of the amalgam which was to become Catholicism. He points out how the problem of evil is to be explained by the twin concepts of the devil and original sin. He further explains how Christ as God and Man in his life, death and resurrection redeemed man from sin, and how since that time, through the Church and particularly through the 'carnal sacraments' the redemptive, salvific work continues. And this, comments Froude, is the essence of the Catholic creed. All in all it is a remarkable condensation and there are some passages of exposition-cum-summary which are beautifully expressed.

¹ 'Times of Erasmus and Luther', Short Studies I, 39-153.

Here is Froude attesting to the belief in Christ's divinity:

The being who accomplished a work so vast - a work compared to which the first creation appears but a trifling difficulty - what could He be but God? God Himself! Who but God could have wrested his prize from a power which half the thinking world believed to be his coequal and coeternal adversary? He was God. He was man also, for He was the second Adam - the second starting-point of human growth. He was virgin born, that no original impurity might infect the substance which He assumed; and being Himself sinless, He showed, in the nature of His person, after his resurrection, what the material body would have been in all of us except for sin, and what it will be when, after feeding on its purity, the bodies of each of us are transfigured after its likeness. (I, 199)

From the startling, and very effective, opening sentences of the essay (which are syntactically perfect) Froude appears to be in complete control of his material. That he fully understands and even sympathises with the central elements of the creed he is describing there can be no doubt. That this understanding is transmitted in the most lucid and readable of manners to his readers is equally certain. Froude learnt early on the rhetorical device, perfected by Matthew Arnold in Culture and Anarchy (1869), of seizing your opponent's words and repeating them (with subtle variations) in such a way that what he was saying seems worse than useless. Froude's 'friend' had said that Christianity was 'absurd': a few lines later, Froude starts to comment: 'If a mere absurdity could make its way out of a village in Galilee, and spread through the whole civilised world...' (I, 188). Froude always chooses his words carefully; few are wasted. When he refers to the 'extravagant hypothesis' of his friend, he is damning him not once but twice. He is quick to switch from first person singular to first person plural at one point, thereby discreetly soliciting his readers' agreement, lending to his words an authority they might not otherwise have possessed.¹ The metaphors he uses, occasionally stark to startle his readers² and always effective (especially his favourite figure of

¹ Short Studies I, 190. Oliver Elton noted that 'Froude has the art of making everything he says appear self-evident, until it is examined, and when he is right, it is the truth which becomes self evident [sic] clothed in impeccable form'. A Survey of English Literature, 1830-1880, 2 vols (1927), I, 143.

² Short Studies I, 190 ('The promised...birds').

growing plants or trees, which occurs many times in his writings);¹ his echoing of the words of Christ or St. Paul; his allusive but not ponderously learned tone; his ability to simplify quite complex ideas and illustrate their implications graphically: all these characteristics of Froude's style play their part here.²

There are occasional lapses of style: in a rare, complex 'sentence' a verb is missing, and Froude makes the grammatical mistake of not making his verbs agree in number.³ On another occasion he begs the question.⁴ It might also be urged that in one place he attempts to over-compress information, so that the result is a preponderance of labels which are not really explained.⁵ But generally Froude telescopes his exposition well, writing coherently, feelingly and with insight. He had a particularly fine ear for cadence: the natural-sounding rhythms of his variously structured sentences seldom grate:

In the Natural History of Religions, certain broad phenomena perpetually repeat themselves; they rise in the highest thought extant at the time of their origin; the conclusions of philosophy settle into a creed; art ornaments it, devotion consecrates it, time elaborates it.⁶

¹ Short Studies I, 191.

² In an interview with John Churton Collins, Froude remarked on style that 'its first aim should be to be simple and forcible: he said that for his part he wrote what he had to write just as if he was writing a letter'. Froude would revise the style of a piece at least twice, but not too much lest it become too self-conscious: L.C. Collins, Life & Memoirs of John Churton Collins (1912), p. 85. For another view of how Froude revised his prose style see the obituary of Froude in the Edinburgh Review, 181 (January, 1895), 173-205 (p. 178).

³ Short Studies I, 188 ('So little...contented.' 'Have' not 'has' is, of course, correct).

⁴ Short Studies I, 189: the end of the paragraph.

⁵ Short Studies I, 194.

⁶ Short Studies I, 190-91. Froude preferred the simple sentence, with the subject-verb-object structure as a rule, especially when narrating or explaining something. But his complex sentences - even those with an unusually high degree of subordination - are very seldom difficult to follow: the convoluted syntax and consequent ambiguities of the later Henry James are nowhere to be found in Froude.

'Nicely put' one finds oneself constantly murmuring, reading the essay. It is a deftly controlled, carefully poised prose: not the prose of conversation (although Froude was reputedly an excellent conversationalist) so much as a prose animated by ideas and values in which he was interested and to which he felt committed. And it was his commitment to the truth as he saw it which impelled him to write the transparent prose so splendidly adapted to the clear transmission of those ideas and values.

'England's Forgotten Worthies'

The next essay, 'England's Forgotten Worthies', first appeared in the Westminster Review a year later.¹ It is a much longer, entirely characteristic essay, already more trenchantly Protestant and thoroughly English in its militant patriotism. The characteristic keynote of Froude's thinking is struck straight away in the first two words of the essay: 'The Reformation '. As he was to remind his readers later in English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century (1895): 'The English sea power was the legitimate child of the Reformation'.² This is at once the all-important link between his Protestant beliefs and the 'forgotten worthies' of the title - the Elizabethan Sailors he admired so much - and the justification for writing about them. Here we have the prose of Froude's unshakeable conviction: very different indeed from the measured exposition of the philosophy of Catholicism we have just considered. Froude writes easily with zest and an infectious enthusiasm here: how infectious we may easily judge, for Kingsley was inspired by this essay to write Westward Ho! (1855) and Tennyson drew upon the brief account of Sir Richard Grenville and the 'Revenge' for his poem, 'The Revenge' (1878).³ The essay's structure is

¹ Westminster Review, N.S.2 (July, 1852), 32-67; Short Studies I, 443-501.

² English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century, Silver Library ed. (1919), p. 4.

³ See the notes to this poem in The Poems of Tennyson, ed. Christopher Ricks (1968), pp. 1251ff. How far Tennyson was influenced by Froude's essay has been the subject of a correspondence in TLS between C.W. Brodribb (15 October, 17 December 1931) and Geoffrey Callender (22 October 1931, 21 January 1932). Another instance of Tennyson's debt to Froude (this time to his History of England) is well set out by Phyllis Grosskurth in 'Tennyson, Froude, and Queen Mary', TRB, 2 (November, 1973), 44-54.

straightforward. The first couple of pages stress the importance of the Reformation as both a spiritual and a socio-economic event in England's national history. Froude then proceeds to sketch out for the reader the state of Catholic Christianity before the Reformation: this is the Elizabethans' inheritance. But what was England really like during Elizabeth's reign? It was of course a time of enterprise and adventure, and one of that time's most interesting records is to be found in Richard Hakluyt's writings. Froude mentions the recent foundation of a Hakluyt Society, one of the aims of which was to republish and so make accessible those of Hakluyt's works which had gone out of print. Froude reviews the editions so far produced: he is very critical of the editors' policies, for he considers them to have been too selective, and it is in order to remedy their deficiencies that he is writing this essay. There then follows Froude's account, as an historian, of the religious and political background to the voyages of the great sixteenth century sailors whose exploits Hakluyt celebrated. The stage is set. The theme is England and Protestantism versus Spain and Catholicism.¹ Froude proceeds to fill in the details on the broad canvas of history, justifying England's role, as he does so, partly by giving an account of the Spanish atrocities in South America. This makes a vivid contrast with the humane, large-hearted treatment of the continent's indigenous population by the English sailors whose exploits Froude then relates, with the aid of quotations from Hakluyt. He focuses on three tales: Sir Humfrey Gilbert's voyage, the expedition of John Davis, and the exploits of Lord Thomas Howard and Sir Richard Grenville off the coast of Florez.

¹ Birrell wrote of Froude's Protestantism: 'It is always the same nail he is hammering on the head': Miscellanies (1901), p. 162.

Froude approaches his subject very much in his capacity as an historian:

The high nature of these men, and the high objects which they pursued, will only rise out and become visible to us as we can throw ourselves back into their times and teach our hearts to feel as they felt. (I, 460)

Froude's view of his task, here and elsewhere, is to imaginatively reconstruct the beliefs, characters and events of a past age, so that as they come to life on the page, his readers will be better equipped to understand them despite the gulf separating their two ages. Hakluyt's narratives Froude reverences as 'the Prose Epic of the modern English nation', all the more so because, unlike the epics of the classical poets, they are 'plain broad narratives of substantial facts' (I, 446-47). Froude's taste for the concrete - a very English empiricism - complements his profound belief in the spiritual tenets of Protestantism. What he admires most about his heroes is that they were ordinary 'men of the people' who really believed in God and their religion and were prepared to prove their faith through acting courageously on behalf of England - the champion of the Reformed faith.¹ In this Froude was following the Carlyle of Past and Present who venerated an earlier age in which faith was real, and whose ideal of the hero as a man of action Froude was familiar with. But unlike Carlyle, Froude found something especially attractive in the lives of these sailors and explorers probably because of his Devonian origins which they shared. And part of the reason for relating individual exploits towards the end is that Froude deemed that earlier historians had neglected their rightful reputations (and in some cases even denigrated them), so Froude sets out to rehabilitate Raleigh, Drake and the others, becoming their advocate and spirited obituarist.² But

¹ See Short Studies I, 444, 447-48, 458, 478, 486-87, 492.

² See Short Studies I, 474-75, 490-94 for examples.

although Froude is partisan, he is avowedly so, and if he colours his 'factual' descriptions with personal feelings, he at least avoids undue sentimentality.¹ He does, moreover, temper his somewhat idealistic vision of the past with realism in places, and frequently makes concessions. Thus although he speaks with affection of Elizabeth when referring to how highly she was regarded by 'the common people' (even pointedly applying to the 'Virgin Queen' epithets usually reserved for the Virgin Mary) he does not hesitate to point out her deficiencies at the same time.² And while he writes proudly of England as a budding colonial power he does concede that the sea-going defenders of the Protestant tradition he has been eulogising did also have selfish, mercantile motives in acting as they did: that exploitation went hand in hand with exploration he admits.³ And Froude is honest enough to preface his description of the Spanish atrocities with the admission that

It would be as ungenerous as it would be untrue, to charge upon their religion the greivous actions of men who called themselves the armed missionaries of Catholicism, when the Catholic priests and bishops were the loudest in the indignation with which they denounced them. (I, 461)

In another instance Froude so far forgets himself that he fails to apply the Carlylean notion that 'might is right' to which he adhered elsewhere rigorously (especially, as we have seen, in the case of Ireland) and observes of the Spanish oppression of the Indians that 'the nobler but weaker nature was crushed under a malignant force which was stronger and yet meaner than itself' (I, 464). Thus there are chinks, some of which Froude was aware, in the armour of the crusading Protestant historian-essayist.

¹ See, for example, Short Studies I, 491.

² See Short Studies I, 454-55. Cf. pp. 457, 460-61.

³ Short Studies I, 455-59, 472.

The essay is well written, Froude employing a serviceable if unobtrusive prose style not dissimilar to Trollope's. Towards the end, lacing the Hakluyt extracts, it takes on a particularly vivid and colourful hue, as Froude paints the adventures of Howard and Grenville. There are some fine touches reminiscent of a later, vintage Froude, such as his half-serious, half-ironic statement about the Englishman's attitude to the devil;¹ his excellent epitaph on Sir Humfrey Gilbert;² and his explanation to those readers uninitiated in the art of seamanship (he himself was a good sailor) of what tackling a sea-voyage in a ten ton frigate involved.³ It is difficult to convey by quotation and reference the extremely readable nature of this essay written with such skill and gusto. Nor would an analysis of the essayist's prose style be especially helpful in conveying how Froude achieves his effects. For the success of this and other essays depends to a surprising extent on his ability to capture the imagination and the hearts of his patriotic, Protestant contemporaries. It is this ability which lends to many of his essays a representative quality which is lacking in the productions of more individualistic geniuses and original thinkers such as Carlyle, Newman and Mill.

'England and her Colonies'

The third essay, 'England and her Colonies', Froude contributed to Fraser's while he was still editor.⁴ It is one of his essays which deal with political and (to a lesser extent) economic issues, and as such it may be taken as typical of his political views, particularly on the subject of imperialism.⁵ His main argument is made clear from the start: Britain

¹ Short Studies I, 490, Cf. pp. 484-85.

² Short Studies I, 486-87.

³ Short Studies I, 482.

⁴ Fraser's Magazine, N.S.1 (January, 1870), 1-16; Short Studies II, 180-216.

⁵ Cf. 'Reciprocal Duties of State and Subject', 'On Progress', 'The Colonies Once More', 'England's War' (Short Studies II); 'Party Politics' (Short Studies III).

should hold on to her colonies, provided they concur, and encourage part of her population to emigrate to them as a means of solving her economic problems. This argument he proceeds to develop, elaborate and illustrate in the body of the essay. As a polemical - though, as we shall see, hardly partisan - contribution to the formation of public opinion, its thinking owes much to Carlyle, and in particular to his essay, 'Chartism' (1839), where he proposed the 'remedy' of emigration. This solution enjoyed a certain popular currency as reflected by those authors who ended some of their fictional works by sending certain characters overseas: one thinks of Clough's Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich (1848) or Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848) and Dickens's David Copperfield (1849-50). But it was Froude who linked this 'economic' prescription with the larger political question of the nature of the British Empire.

He begins the essay factually by stating that in the last twenty-five years nearly four million British subjects have become fairly prosperous citizens of the United States of America.¹ Granted that, given the present condition of British industry and a growing population, emigration will become an increasingly urgent remedy, it should be a matter of course that British emigrants should settle elsewhere in the Empire; but instead they choose to settle in the United States which has thus 'been made stronger' and the British Empire 'weaker'.² Why is this? Froude sets out his ideal:

England...possesses dependencies of her own, not less extensive than the United States, not less rich in natural resources, not less able to provide for these expatriated swarms, where they would remain attached to her Crown, where their well-being would be our well-being, their brains and

¹ Short Studies II, 180.

² loc. cit.

arms our brains and arms, every acre which they could reclaim from the wilderness, so much added to English soil, and themselves and their families fresh additions to our national stability. (II, 181)

The responsibility for the direction emigrants have been taking is not America's (against which nation Froude assures the reader he has no grudge): on the contrary, the responsibility rests at home - it is the British politicians who are largely to blame for the weakening of the Empire. Those politicians who insist 'that the direction of our emigration is not of the slightest consequence to us'; the politicians who argue 'that our colonies are a burden to us, and that the sooner they are cut adrift from us the better': it is the callous indifference or antipathy of such politicians towards would-be emigrants and to the colonies themselves, argues Froude, which has caused the resentment that has resulted in a weaker Empire.

Who were the politicians voicing such sentiments? Almost imperceptibly Froude switches from talking about 'politicians' to speaking of 'an attitude of a Government' (II, 182), and since Froude wrote this essay in 1870, just two years after the formation of Gladstone's great reform ministry, it is fairly clear that it is chiefly Liberal politicians to whom he has been referring. This is confirmed much later on in the essay when, having launched a bitter anti-Liberal tirade against laissez-faire, he mentions the indifference of Gladstone, Lord Granville and the Colonial Office, and appeals to 'Mr. Disraeli' (II, 215). But although Froude disagreed radically with Gladstone's policies (specially on the Irish question) and although, like Carlyle, he was bitterly opposed to his economic policies (as we shall see), he was by no means a convinced Tory, despite his sympathies in that direction. He was ambivalent in his attitude to 'Dizzy', as his short biography illustrates. And his essay, 'Party Politics', which appeared four years later, was more anti-Liberal than pro-Tory and had for its motto 'A plague of both your houses!'¹ The

¹ Fraser's Magazine, N.S. 10 (July, 1874), 1-18; Short Studies III, 429-76.

question of the colonies 'is no party question' - or at least, it need not, should not, be - Froude insists in this essay (II, 215).

He contrasts the attitude of the Government with that of the colonies:

They are, or have been, demonstratively loyal. They are proud of their origin, conscious of the value to themselves of being part of a great empire, and willing and eager to find a home for every industrious family that we can spare. (II, 182)

The attitude of the Government not only jars against Froude's idealistic vision of the Empire as a large happy family or international community, it also makes little economic sense to Froude who, like Carlyle, was a severe critic of the so-called 'science' of political economy, and, furthermore, it is even difficult to understand historically. Here Froude takes up his mantle as historian and looks at different nations past and present with colonial dependencies (taking in the Irish question en route), only to find that the tight hold they retained on their colonies and the concomitant drive for unity among them make a strange and inexplicable contrast with the attitude of the British Government.

But, as Froude realises, blaming the weakening of the Empire on the Government's attitude is only going half-way towards diagnosing the real cause of the illness. For a full diagnosis of what is wrong with the ailing Empire one must seek to understand why the Government thinks as it does. Froude lists a number of factors influencing the Government's thinking. A government which espouses a laissez-faire economic philosophy will not want to interfere with emigration, because 'emigration, like wages, prices, and profits, must be left to settle itself' according to the laws of the 'free' market (II, 186). Then there is the 'certain vague cosmopolitanism growing up among us', so that '[p]atriotism is no longer recognised as the supreme virtue which once it was believed to be' (II, 187-88). There are the related notions that we are self-sufficient, that the colonies are troublesome and a potential source of

embarrassment in that the existence of Canada, for example, could lead to a quarrel, or even a war, with the United States. Nor must we leave out of our consideration, comments Froude, 'the constitution of the Colonial Office' which has meant that the colonies have been consistently mismanaged.

But the two main factors underlying the above, and alienating public opinion from the colonies, creating 'that general apathy of which the attitude of statesmen is but a symbol' are as follows. The first concerns the attitudes of some of the colonies towards Britain. Britain exploited their resources, shipped slaves there, transported criminals there and taxed them. When the colonies began to object and demand self-government, Britain surrendered most of her privileges, and provided them with a transplanted parliamentary constitution and military protection from hostile neighbours, so that the 'advantage now was all on their side'. Thus they became 'a weight on the English taxpayer' and in some quarters it was suggested that we might now relinquish all interest in them so that they would no longer be a burden (II, 190-91). Froude concedes that 'there is much in this way of putting the case which is *prima facie* reasonable', and admits that if we review the relations between Britain, her colonies and other nations (especially America) 'the right is seldom wholly on one side'. But he stresses that '[i]nterest...is not the only bond by which nations are held together'. There is such a thing as 'Patriotism' which, even if it is sentimental, 'is a sentimentalism nevertheless which lies at the root of every powerful nationality, and has been the principle of its coherence and its growth'.¹

The second factor is how England thinks of herself and her future.

¹ Short Studies II, 191-93. Froude is echoing on a larger scale, Carlyle's criticism of the 'cash nexus' relationship between people in Past and Present (1843): Bk. I, ch. 6; Bk. III, ch. 2.

Here 'the sanguine Liberal statesmen' who imagine that Britain will be 'the emporium of the world's trade, and an enormous workshop for all mankind' see the colonies as at best a source of trade or an irrelevancy or (worse still) a brake, holding back this country's growth. Froude now proceeds to argue along pragmatic lines, on his opponents' ground, accepting (for the purposes of argument) that self-interest is a valid criterion and economic growth a desirable thing. Forgotten, for the moment, are the idealistic arguments about patriotism. Froude concludes that the confidence of the Liberals is unjustified: there are too many problems to be faced which have not been considered. What effect will the trades' unions have? Will Britain's reputation as a reliable manufacturer and trader remain intact in the face of recent scandals about adulteration of goods? Perhaps trade will not expand indefinitely after all. But even granted that Britain as a nation becomes prosperous would this be a desirable development? Not all 'growth' is beneficial, not all change is progress, Froude argues, shifting his ground again. A country which has Mammon for God is surely doomed. One is reminded of Pugin's Contrasts (1846) as Froude pictures Lancashire as 'a universal workshop - a hundred thousand chimneys, the church spires of the commercial creed, vomiting their smoke into the new black heaven' (II, 198). Following Carlyle and Dickens, he pictures the vagrants in the workhouses and 'the small householder in Whitechapel...struggling manfully for independence on the verge of beggary' (II, 200). 'For the great merchants, great bankers, great shopkeepers, great manufacturers, whose business is to make money', he comments, 'whose whole thoughts are set on making money and enjoying the luxuries which money can command - no doubt, it would be a very fine world' (II, 199). But for the mass of the British people things would be otherwise. And 'if men are sacrificed to money, the money will not be long in following them' (II, 200).

As the industrial cities with their polluted, unhealthy conditions grow; as machinery 'supersede[s] human hands'; as the peasantry is lost, Britain will surely decline. 'The country will be the luxury of the rich,' he comments, and all the while '[w]e shall be breeding up a nation of tailors.' Britain will become two nations, he warns, each knowing nothing of the other (II, 202-05). As he describes the habits, afflictions and outlook of the working classes in the cities (their dire poverty, ill-health, drunkenness and 'eat, drink and be merry' philosophy) in his apocalyptic vision of a Liberal Britain, Froude shows himself to be knowledgeable about the lives of ordinary people although not to the extent that Engels or Mayhew were. Here Froude is at his most vivid, his most sombre, and his most persuasive. What he has been describing, he maintains, will be the inevitable consequence of pursuing the goals of the laissez-faire economists, as the country is 'whirled along in the breathless race of competition' (II, 206).

Froude recapitulates his main arguments neatly and succinctly. The Government errs in this: the one time in Britain's history when we need the colonies most is the very time when, out of obedience to a dangerous economic philosophy, we choose to have as little as possible to do with them. For Froude, the 'illness' was dire, the diagnosis sound, the solution simple, but the Government's attitude ludicrous and inept. Froude considers the possible objections which might be urged against the course of action he has outlined (that emigration is impractical, for example) and proceeds to refute them: of course it will cost money initially, he agrees, 'but so do wars; and for a great object ['the indefinite and magnificent expansion of the English Empire'] we do not shrink from fighting' (II, 211-12). Froude ends by warning that colonial relations are such that they must 'be modified in one direction or another' and appeals to Disraeli, as a last hope, to do something when next he has the opportunity.

With the benefit of hindsight it would no doubt be easy to criticise several of Froude's statements. His prediction, for example, that if we neglect Australia and New Zealand, they might 'apply for admittance into the American Union' seems especially strange (II, 213). It might be urged that his commonsensical economic analysis was superficial; that his dream of a thriving and united Empire was wholly idealistic. There is an idealism running through the essay, certainly, and though complemented here (as elsewhere) by a realistic analysis of the problems which existed in the British economy, the strain does indeed characterise Froude's imperialist thinking generally. Thus, he is not the sort of imperialist who advocates further exploitation of the colonies, or a politically-motivated unilateral military interventionism. It is important not to misunderstand the nature of Froude's influential brand of imperialism.¹

The essay does reveal Froude as an accomplished debater. And much as he despised oratory, he was unafraid to use such devices as the rhetorical question² or the barbed taunt.³ As usual, Froude is extremely lucid, even when expounding his opponents' case: and his use of the simplest of sentence structures - 'we have land, we have capital, we have labour' (II, 187) - lends a coherence to the fine skein of argument which he develops tellingly throughout. Froude's sincere sympathy for, and very real depiction of the condition of the poor, and his warnings about the worship of money have the ring of conviction about them and in this respect we may think of his essay as something of a minor prose equivalent of Dickens's imaginative treatment of the same theme in novels like Dombey and Son (1846-48) and Hard Times (1854). Froude's essay is all the more effective for not being couched in the exotic, flamboyant language of Carlyle, who also wrote on such matters in 'Signs of the Times' (1829). Froude himself realised the value of an unobtrusive style when he wrote: 'A

¹ Phyllis Grosskurth, in the essay on The Two Chiefs already cited, suggests that much work could be usefully done on Froude's influence on late nineteenth-century imperialism (op. cit., p. 274).

² Short Studies II, 183, 207.

³ Short Studies II, 210, 215.

perfect style does not strike at all, and it is a matter in which the reader ought to be considered even more than the abstract right'.¹ And Froude, in his essays, always has one eye on the reader - the 'imaginary' person whom he sets out to convince. The other eye he kept fixed steadily on his subject, keeping it firmly in his control. Himself he did not regard: personal as his essays often are, he never intrudes in the same way Carlyle does, for example. He brings his historical knowledge and formidable learning to bear to good effect. And so well does Froude manage his argument, so well organised is it, so amply illustrated, that when we reach the end, his most controversial statements have the aura of the obvious about them. Topical as the essay was, what he had to say of patriotism, materialism and city life still has some relevance today. But the essay is most interesting as an example of Froude's ability to present an argument clinically but trenchantly about a subject dear to his heart and the hearts of most of his contemporaries - the British Empire. And as he weaves together two seemingly diverse strands (the state of the colonies and the condition-of-England question) one can easily imagine how difficult it must have been for many of his readers to withhold their assent in the presence of one of the most astute controversialists of the nineteenth century.

That Froude discovered in the essay genre a form far more congenial to the communication of his most passionate ideas than that of history or fiction (which imposed certain restrictions) we may confirm by comparing 'England and her Colonies' with his short fictional piece, 'The Merchant and his Wife', appositely subtitled 'An Apologue for the Colonial Office'.² The merchant (Britain) successfully persuades his wife (a colony) to leave him, against her will, and become independent. The

¹ Essays in Literature and History, p. 14.

² Short Studies II, 348-50.

analogy with the relationship between mother-country (or fatherland) and dependent colony is easily perceived, and is fairly effective in putting across Froude's views and feelings on the subject. At one point the merchant says to his wife: "'I don't wish you to leave me, but if you have any such desire yourself, I shall not think of preventing you.'" (II, 349). Froude is here, I think, basing the merchant's words on a speech of Gladstone's in the House of Commons when he remarked:

Surely it is a great object to place, if possible, our colonial policy on such a footing, not for the purpose of being about a separation, but of providing a guarantee that, if separation should occur, it should be in a friendly way.¹

When the wife objects to a severing of the sacred marriage bond because she loves her husband, he retorts: "'My dear, don't be sentimental... The only sure bond between human creatures is mutual interest.'" (II, 349). Eventually, seeing he had no affection for her, she elopes with another man (America?). The story is cleverly told, and the moral is clear: it is a successful political 'parable'. But we are back in the realm of veiled assertion where the concealed argument can neither convince nor be refuted. If the argument is just, it must be seen to be so, and not proceed by stealth. Amusing as the piece is, it is best read alongside the essay, not in place of it. The simple, fictional treatment of his chosen theme thereby illustrates the effectiveness of his plainer, fuller treatment in the essay - a form Froude had learned to master.

iii. Criticism of Froude's essays

Referring to Froude's controversial books on Ireland, South Africa, Carlyle and English history, one critic commented that 'no balanced judgment of these works can be made without recourse to the reviews that flurried round them'.² Although this is true to a much lesser extent

¹ Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd ser., 200 (26 April 1870), col. 1901.

² In J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Arsdell (eds), Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research (New York, 1978), p. 16.

of Froude's Short Studies, it is interesting, nonetheless, to consider the response of his contemporaries to his collected essays.¹

The critic who reviewed the second series of the essays in The Athenaeum is considerably less than enthusiastic about the volume:

Whatever Mr. Froude writes is sure to be received with some attention, and the present papers will command the praise that is due to earnestness and sincerity. When we come to examine the details, however, and to test the author's views by common experience, we find so much exaggeration and unsoundness that we fear Mr. Froude will defeat his own object.²

Although the critic insists that 'it is the method of discussion which is the weak point' (and not the subjects discussed), one senses that this adverse criticism of Froude's essays was really provoked by a fundamental disagreement with Froude's attitude to some of the questions under discussion, and in particular to his view of the nineteenth century. For the critic mentions only one example of Froude's 'method' which he found uncongenial: the essayist's supposed proclivity for making unjust comparisons. But he spends a lot of space taking issue with Froude's condemnation of the age's dangerous errors (including laissez-faire), his view of the colonies, his disbelief in human progress, his veneration of the past, and so on. Although he does praise some of the essays (the biographical account of St Hugo of Lincoln and 'A Fortnight in Kerry' for example) the general tone of the review is unfavourable. Froude's fourth series of Short Studies was also reviewed in The Athenaeum.³ This critic refers to

¹ Unfortunately, in no bibliography have these reviews been identified or collected, and I have had to trace them by looking at the relevant years of the main periodicals: inevitably, therefore, some reviews will have been missed.

² The Athenaeum, No. 2275 (3 June 1871), 685.

³ The Athenaeum, No. 2881 (13 January 1883), 45.

Froude's deserved success as an author who can write 'charmingly... on any subject that he chooses to take up' but thinks Froude has mistaken his vocation: he should have been a barrister, for with his 'cynicism', 'bitterness' and 'fierce hatred' he would have performed wonders for his clients - though he would not have made a good judge.¹ The critic finds 'some of the best and some of the worst specimens of Mr. Froude's literary work' in the volume under review. The worst is represented by Froude's long 'essay' on Becket: an 'extraordinary travesty of history' (the critic tellingly quotes Freeman's remark that after reading Froude one immediately knows how things did not happen) in his view. The best is represented by Froude's essay, 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', which is lavishly praised, among other things for its 'passages of extreme beauty'. The conclusion is interesting:

Mr. Froude can hardly be without admirers as long as there are those who read for the pleasure of reading. Scholars and students will turn away from his delightful volumes, because they can never accept him as a safe guide; but for loungers in libraries, whose intellectual fare must be pleasant rather than solid, and who like polished periods, refined cynicism, and a style at once lucid and trenchant, Mr. Froude's 'Short Studies' ought to be for some time to come favourite volumes.

The unsigned review of the same volume in The British Quarterly Review is more laudatory.² The author detects as the leading purpose of Froude's essays a concern to defend the 'rights of the individual as against tradition and authority in all their forms'.³ Froude's leanings are sometimes 'too rationalistic'; at other times his attitude can be one of 'reaction'; but at the critical moment, avers the reviewer, 'he generally recovers himself by a glance at the dogmatism into which free-

¹ In fact this option was not open to Froude (at least until 1872) since he had once taken minor orders while a fellow at Exeter College, Oxford.

² British Quarterly Review, 77 (January, 1883), 209-11.

³ op.cit., p. 209.

thinking ever threatens to precipitate itself, and he decisively retreats from any approach to identification with it'.¹ The essays are variously commended - even the Becket essay, in reference to which the reviewer concedes that 'it is not impossible that in some minor points the purpose may have biased the reading of the facts' but he thinks this 'is never consciously done'.² Froude's duty and sincerity in uttering unpalatable truths, his spirit of charity and reverence, and his harshness upon the 'dogmas' of science and religion alike are among the qualities this critic praises, as well as Froude's ability 'to excite a healthy spirit of questioning with regard to accepted truths' and his acuteness in 'making history bear its testimony in his favour' - surely a somewhat double-edged comment on Froude.

Apart from John Morley's commentary on Froude's essay 'The Science of History' which need not concern us here,³ the only criticism to proceed from the pen of an established author (so far as we know) was written by a youthful Henry James.⁴ Although James praises two of Froude's essays in the first series, including 'England's Forgotten Worthies', which he thinks Froude's best (largely because of the element of narrative in it at which he considers Froude excels), he has harsh words to say of most of Froude's essays:

¹ loc. cit.

² loc. cit.

³ Froude's essay is briefly discussed in chapter 4 above. Morley's article, 'Mr. Froude on the Science of History', Fortnightly Review, N.S.2 (1 August 1867), 226-37, argues that Froude has misinterpreted Buckle, and confused Necessarianism, Materialism and Utilitarianism. His cogent refutation of Carlyle's theory of history is worthy of note.

⁴ The article first appeared in The Nation on 31 October 1867. It is reprinted in Literary Reviews and Essays, ed. Albert Mordell (New York, 1957), pp. 272-75. Curiously, James takes a similar attitude to Froude's essay on history as Morley.

[The articles] are collected probably rather in deference to a prevailing fashion than because they have been thought especially valuable. Valuable they are not in any high degree...The historical papers are written in the popular manner and addressed to the popular judgment, which is but another way of saying they are very superficial. The articles on religious subjects [including, presumably, 'The Philosophy of Catholicism']...are vitiated by a feeble sentimentalism which deprives them of half their worth as liberal discussions.¹

To James - not always the most reliable of critics - Froude is 'unphilosophical', and one-sided, and 'once Mr. Froude and his associates have placed themselves on the same side as a given individual, the latter is allowed to have neither foibles, nor vices nor passions' an observation which was to be disproved in the biography of Carlyle.²

The critic who wrote on three of Froude's religious essays from the first series of Short Studies³ is guilty of a far greater, almost stupefying misreading of Froude's attitude to his subjects. Froude is accused of being unable to discriminate, of making 'crude assertions and faulty analogies', of indolence, of being discreditable and of playing tricks.⁴

¹ Mordell, p. 272. James prefers the Froude of the History where his 'faults' (his 'want of logic', his 'bias') are concealed by his merits (his 'energy of spirit', 'industry of execution', 'dignity of tone' and 'high pictorial style').

² Mordell, p. 274.

³ 'The Gospels and Modern Criticism', Contemporary Review, 5 (July, 1867), 340-61. Apart from the essay on Catholicism, the essays discussed are 'A Plea for the free discussion of Theological Difficulties' and 'Criticism and the Gospel History'.

⁴ op. cit., pp. 341, 343, 344. Any analogy (almost) could, of course, be criticised for being 'faulty', for an analogy is based on a comparison of two different things which have some element in common. As Hume demonstrated in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (1779), one has only to stress the importance of the ways in which the two things differ, and the analogy is weakened.

Froude writes in a 'spirit of concealed banter' so that his essays cannot be regarded as having been offered bona fide.¹ 'It requires no very keen discernment', writes this most hostile of critics, 'to see that his passages of concession and courtesy are but veils for the bitterest irony': in short, Froude (who is 'in the habit of assuming dishonesty as the necessary temper of mind of all defenders of Christianity') is not really 'in earnest'.² These observations are so patently untrue - it is difficult to think of a more 'earnest' (yet intelligent) essayist than Froude, as the other reviewers I quote indicate - that it seems unnecessary to waste space in refuting them.

The writer in The Saturday Review damns Froude's essays with faint praise and sneers at both Froude and his readers before proceeding to castigate Froude 'openly'.³ The essays are 'little more than a series of clever magazine papers'. Froude is accused of 'playing' with his subjects, rather than 'reflecting' upon them. The essays are too short. Froude's knowledge of history (particularly of the medieval period) is vague and awry: he places too much faith in original documents. He attempts to deal with matters beyond his competence. He offers 'sentimental description' not 'sober history', arousing 'a hearty laugh'. 'Mr. Froude is really the most simple-minded of men', comments the critic. Praise is only found for his essay 'The Book of Job' (which, significantly, first appeared in the Westminster Review, not Fraser's) and for his parables and fables which are done 'very prettily'. The article, in fact, sounds so much like the pronouncements of Froude's arch-enemy, E.A. Freeman, elsewhere in the Saturday Review on Froude's History of England and his account of Becket, who had a distaste for original research and regarded the medieval period

¹ op. cit., p. 341.

² op. cit., pp. 342, 343.

³ Saturday Review, 23 (11 May 1867), 601-02.

as his own special preserve into which Froude should never have blundered, that I think it highly likely that this review was by him or by one of his close associates. Certainly another article in the same periodical in which the second series of Short Studies was reviewed is by Freeman, for he refers to an article in the Saturday on Froude's essay on Hugo of Lincoln written by 'us', which we know to be by him.¹ In this article, Froude is again sarcastically rebuked:

Mr. Froude may be read with pleasure, if not with profit, except when his ill-luck leads him to meddle with history or theology. Theology puts him out of temper; history leads him into those quagmires into which it has a way of leading people who venture to meddle with it without understanding...²

The burden of this alternately patronising and savage review is to suggest that Froude is an inaccurate and untrustworthy writer (Freeman's customary stance). But even Freeman is forced to concede that Froude is in earnest and that 'when he takes pains and does not get into a namby-pamby fit, can write clear and attractive English' - not a gift Freeman himself was renowned for. The review of the final series of the essays in the Saturday Review is not, I think, by Freeman, although it does revive aspects of the Froude-Freeman controversy, and takes a similar line to the essays as that taken by the review which appeared in the British Quarterly Review referred to above.³

The only consistently favourable reviews Short Studies received which I have been able to locate, were published in the Westminster Review - the organ of 'advanced' opinions in which some of Froude's early essays had appeared, but which could hardly have sympathised with some of Froude's later and more conservative views which we find in the last three series

¹ Saturday Review, 32 (22 July 1871), 119-20.

² op. cit., p. 119.

³ Saturday Review, 55 (14 April 1883), 472-73. Froude's works generally seemed to have fared badly in the Saturday Review and the Contemporary Review.

of essays. The anomaly is perhaps partly explained by the fact that the Westminster Review articles on Froude's essays tend to dwell less on their content and more on their exposition and argument. The first article refers to the 'sort of fascination' Froude's first series of essays exercised over 'the public mind'; the essays which comprise the second series 'bespeak the presence of Mr. Froude's characteristic excellences, - his almost matchless English style, his analytical acuteness, and his grave political earnestness'.¹ But Froude is criticised for his 'habit of rhetorically abusing a position fairly won, and courting clearness and simplicity at the expense, sometimes, of precious and essential truthfulness'. The critic, as might be expected, disagrees with Froude on the question of progress, taking up the utilitarian position. The second article finds the third volume of essays 'instructive and interesting', and several of the essays are commended in some detail.² The third article commends Froude for seeing more than one side to a question and gives examples of him 'sympathising even where he does not agree'. The reference to Froude's power of 'showing in himself and exciting in others a human sympathy and interest' in historical figures strikes the right note.³

Twentieth-century criticism of Short Studies has been surprisingly rather muted, given the fact that of all Froude's works it is the one most commonly encountered on 'second-hand' bookshelves. J. Middleton Murray, in an unsigned review, 'The Wisdom of J.A. Froude',⁴ takes the

¹ Westminster Review, N.S.40 (July, 1871), 242-43,

² Westminster Review, N.S.52 (July, 1877), 263.

³ Westminster Review, N.S.63 (April, 1883), 570-71.

⁴ TLS, 2 April 1925, p. 236.

chance provided by the issue of a 'world classics' selection of Froude's essays to write eloquently, interestingly and favourably of Froude as the Victorian who has been 'condemned unheard', but most of what he says in defence of Froude (he denies that he was a 'sectarian apologist') does not specifically relate to Short Studies, although he does find in Froude's essays 'real depths...of penetration and intuitive understanding'. Hilaire Belloc, in his introduction to an edition of Froude's essays already cited, saw Froude the essayist as a man who 'imposed his convictions' for 'it was the peculiar virtue of Froude that he touched nothing without the virile note of a challenge sounding throughout his prose'.¹ In a peculiar sort of way, Belloc the convinced Roman Catholic (and himself an essayist) perceived the nature of Froude's mind as revealed in the essays - staunchly Protestant as it was-as few other writers have done. Of Froude's dogmatism and its effect he noted that Froude in the essays was 'asserting unprovable things and laying down his axioms before he [had begun] his process of reasoning', sometimes even taking for granted as certain what many others would regard as open to debate.² 'His judgments are short, violent, compressed', Belloc observed; 'they are not the judgments of balance'.³ He praises Froude's lucidity which he attributes to his clear thinking and manifests itself in 'good order within the paragraph and in the succession of the paragraphs'.⁴ And he also remarks on Froude's careful pitching of his essay at the level of his readership:

¹ Essays in Literature and History, pp. ix-x.

² op. cit., p. xi.

³ op. cit., pp. xiii-xiv.

⁴ op. cit., p. xv.

A choice of subject suited to his audience, an excision of that which would have bored or bewildered it, a vividness of description wherewith to amuse and a directness of conclusion wherewith to arrest his readers - all these he had, beyond perhaps any of his contemporaries.¹

Hugh Walker, on the other hand, while conceding that Froude's 'limpid English is always delightful to read' thinks Froude's essays do not match those of Carlyle for depth, originality and human interest: a strange observation given Carlyle's strictures on the nature of originality and Froude's overriding concern for the 'human' in his essays.² David Ogg points out how very few were the gaps in Froude's astonishingly varied output as a prose-writer.³ He commends such essays as 'England's Forgotten Worthies' where Froude is seen to advantage because happiest with his subject. And if the essayist's function is primarily one of stimulating thought (rather than merely conveying information), Froude in his most challenging articles, Ogg argues, succeeds very well indeed.

What are we to make then of Froude as an essayist and contributor to Victorian periodicals? James Miller Dodds points out how Froude is 'uniformly interesting', without really explaining where his interest as an essayist lies.⁴ The interest of his essays for us resides, I think, largely in the representative quality of their ideas. The 'typical' Victorian did not, of course, exist except in the minds of scholars with a predilection for unsafe generalisations. But we may locate Froude's essays within the mainstream of Victorian thought. If any historian wished to know what a middle-class, mid-Victorian Protestant Englishman of conservative tastes with a public school and Oxford background, really

¹ loc. cit.

² The English Essay and Essayists (1915), pp. 280-83.

³ In his introduction to a selection from Short Studies on Great Subjects (1963), pp. 7-19.

⁴ In Henry Craik (ed.), English Prose, vol. V (1896), p. 638.

thought about a variety of different topics (literary, historical, religious and political) he could hardly do better than turn to Froude's essays. For Froude was certainly not unique. It is his very lack of originality and distinctive genius as a thinker that makes his essays so invaluable for the historian of ideas. Carlyle, Newman, Mill, Ruskin and Arnold - even taken together - would not tell us as much: each is too special, too individual, none of them (with the possible exception of Ruskin) betraying the influence of any of their other contemporaries to any marked extent. Froude's mind was altogether differently constituted, absorbing more than it filtered out. In his essays we see the evidence of this receptivity to 'influence', a receptivity all the more valid because of its partial nature: the successive influences of Newman and Carlyle leaving the deepest marks. Here we have the thinking of a very intelligent, reflective person, acquainted with most of the dominant literary figures of his age, who had read much and travelled widely and determined to set down for his contemporaries his most cherished beliefs and ideas. His sincerity should not be overlooked. Not only is it a precondition for his writings being valuable at all, it is also a compensation for this want of 'originality'. Carlyle, of course, would have gone further. He had learned from Goethe that '[t]he merit of originality is not novelty; it is sincerity. The believing man is the original man; whatsoever he believes, he believes it for himself, not for another'.¹ Froude's sincerity is the means by which we are able to reach the mind of many another of his nameless contemporaries. To read his essays is like watching a ray of light glancing off the different facets of a complexly tessellated rare gem.

That his essays are readable, lucid expositions or carefully

¹ On Heroes and Hero-Worship, Everyman paperback ed. (1975), p. 356.

structured arguments testifies not only to his clarity of thinking but also to his artistry as a prose writer of no inconsiderable merit.¹ Froude sets out to convince his readers - his own mind made up - of the essential rightness of his point of view. His prose style is akin to a clean and polished clear-glass window with scarcely a blemish in it, through which one may look at the view selected by its designer. Arthur Clutton-Brook's definitions of the ideal prose as a vehicle by which a civilised man may talk to other civilised men, and of the essay as a reasoned discussion without violence (he cites the exception of Carlyle shouting

¹ Numerous critics-in Froude's own lifetime and since then - have, in passing, praised Froude's prose style, differing only in their respective choices of adjectives to describe it. George Bainton thought it 'crisp, nervous, energetic, beautiful': The Art of Authorship (1890), p. 306. William Barry thought Froude an especially gifted writer - an English Michelet with 'the style of gods': 'James Anthony Froude', The Bookman, 54 (April, 1918) 11. W.T. Brewster in Studies in Structure and Style (New York, 1896) noted Froude's preference for direct statement, his wide vocabulary, and the force of his style ('undoubtedly the chief quality of Froude's style') which holds the reader's attention and blinds him to the faults or blemishes which are present (p. 246). George Saintsbury saw Froude as 'a great master of style' who develops Newman's 'standard', 'classical' style with its 'rhythmical ornament and elaboration' - A History of English Prose Rhythm (1912), pp. 389, 409-11; 'at its best', the same critic noted elsewhere, 'Froude's style is surpassed by no style of the present day, and by few of any other', its only faults being an occasional diffuseness and a straining to achieve the picturesque: The Collected Essays and Papers of George Saintsbury 1875-1920, 4 vols (1923), III, 79. G.S. Fraser thought Froude's style a blend of Newman's delicacy and precision and Ruskin's vividness while Geoffrey Tillotson remarked upon the smoothness of Froude's style: George Levine and William Madden (eds), The Art of Victorian Prose (New York, 1968), pp. 213, 85. No one has really attempted to analyse Froude's style, sensibly perhaps, for a linguistic analysis in Froude's case would probably lead only to statements of the obvious.

egotistically at the reader) seem perfectly illustrated in Froude.¹
The art never dazzles the reader: it is too unobtrusive a means for transmitting his very forthright ideas for that. It is perhaps this craftsmanship, which with the essays' topicality and typicality account largely for their one-time popularity, that the literary critic would wish to stress most of all, for it is this quality, scholarship apart, which prevents Froude's essays from sliding into that class of writing designated as 'ephemera'.

¹'The Defects of English Prose' in A Book of English Essays (Harmondsworth, 1980), pp. 251-57.

CHAPTER 6

'A KIND OF BEAST-GODHOOD': THE LIFE OF CARLYLE (I)

Leon Edel, in his essay, 'Biography: the question of form', observes that

Of all the branches of literature, I believe biography is the most taken for granted, the least discussed...our explicating critics find little in them to explicate: and critics interested in general ideas tend to use biography as a source for their divagations rather than as a subject for criticism...¹

²
Froude's Life of Carlyle however, more than any of his other works (including his History of England), is the least taken for granted, the most discussed. Several reasons might be adduced to account for the unusual attention this biography has received from its first appearance nearly one hundred years ago, right up to the present time: reasons reflecting both the intrinsic merits of the biography itself and the storm of controversy it engendered. They will emerge more clearly in this chapter and the next. But Edel's remark about the relative lack of interest shown by 'our explicating critics' is perhaps more pertinent to Froude's biography. For apart from its contemporary reviews, the work has indeed received surprisingly little serious 'critical' (as opposed to purely 'polemical') attention this century - a deficiency these chapters in part set out to remedy.

It is my contention that the Carlyle biography can best be understood as a work written from a very clearly defined position. It is, in fact, a thesis-biography, the underlying philosophy of which is the product of the influence of the subject (Thomas Carlyle) upon the author (J.A. Froude). Thus, I begin my study by locating it within its theoretical setting, looking first at Carlyle's very definite conception

¹ In Mario Praz's Festschrift, Friendship's Garland (Rome, 1966), p. 343.

² Published in two parts: Thomas Carlyle, a history of the first forty years of his life, 1795-1835, 2 vols (1882), and Thomas Carlyle, a history of his life in London, 1834-1881, 2 vols (1884). Since the parts form a unity I refer to the biography throughout the next two chapters as the Life of Carlyle and to avoid confusion all references are by volume and page number, volumes one and two of the Life in London being treated as volumes three and four respectively. All references are to the Silver Library edition of 1901-02, a reprint of the second and only edition revised by Froude.

of the nature of biography and then at Froude's characteristic adoption of his mentor's ideas. How precisely Froude's practice as a biographer conforms to the Carlylean notions he espouses will, of course, become evident in my critical discussion of the biography proper, to which is devoted the remainder of the chapter. This central part of my study involves a fairly detailed examination of the biography's subject matter and its literary treatment. This is preceded by a brief review of the relationship of the Life to Froude's other published writings on Carlyle - for example, his edition of the latter's memoirs¹ - and the source-materials upon which Froude draws for his biography. What picture do we get from the biography of Carlyle as a person in relation to others (particularly his wife), and of Carlyle the thinker and 'prophet'? Insofar as it is possible to judge (a matter I shall consider in the following chapter) how truthful, how life-like is this picture? To what literary techniques does Froude resort to convey his picture of a man and his age? What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? And is it an artistic success?

So much for the Life itself. The following chapter deals with a whole series of further questions, which must be answered before we can reach any useful conclusions about the real interest and value of the work for the student of Victorian literature. How did the critics receive the Life of Carlyle? What prompted the vociferous and long drawn-out controversy which ensued? What in particular can we learn from the debate about Victorian attitudes to biography? What, more generally, are the implications of the Life and the debate to which it gave rise for our conception of biography as a genre? In the light of the rather broader, historical survey (albeit a necessarily somewhat concise one) offered in the latter chapter, it should be possible to assess the overall significance of Froude's Life of Carlyle for literary historians and critics alike.

¹ Reminiscences, 2 vols (1881).

Carlyle's conception of biography

In my earlier chapter on Froude's The Two Chiefs of Dunboy, I quoted Carlyle's dictum that '[h]istory is the essence of innumerable Biographies'.

In another essay Carlyle commented:

Again, consider the whole class of Fictitious Narratives; from the highest category of epic or dramatic Poetry, in Shakespeare and Homer, down to the lowest froth Prose in the Fashionable Novel. What are all these but so many mimic Biographies?¹

Elsewhere he reiterates this point:

For there is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography, the life of a man: also, it may be said, there is no life of a man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort, rhymed or unrhymed.²

From the above statements by Carlyle two distinct ideas on biography as a genre emerge. The first is that biography is indeed a literary form to be seen alongside other genres such as the epic poem, the drama, and the novel. And anyone familiar with Carlyle's own writings would surely not find this idea at all surprising. The French Revolution and Past and Present are but two examples of those of his books where the blurring of the lines separating different genres (such as history and biography) is marked: and both works are shot through with poetry and abound in novelistic techniques. The second idea which emerges is this. Novels and plays, because nearly always fictitious in whole or in part, are only 'mimic Biographies'. Genuine biographies, while they may evince certain literary qualities, differ from the 'mimic Biographies' in that they are (or should be) factually accurate works. Hence the approximation to history.

It is this concern for accuracy, for truth, which characterises Carlyle's discussion of biography as he reviews a new edition of Boswell's

¹ 'Biography', Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, People's ed. (1872), IV, 54.

² 'Sir Walter Scott', op. cit., VI, 25.

Life of Johnson. Carlyle is full of praise for this great biography.

Boswell is seen as following Johnson's own advice to would-be biographers:

'If a man is to write A Panegyrick, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write A Life, he must represent it really as it was:'.¹

What is important about Boswell's Life of Johnson, distinguishing it from the Odyssey in Carlyle's view, is 'the import of Reality' and the fact that it is true: 'The Johnsoniad of Boswell turns on objects that in very deed existed; it is all true'.² The insights we are given into

Johnson's nature and indeed into eighteenth-century social history are alike valued by Carlyle.³ Boswell hides nothing; he reveals a great

deal. Carlyle pours scorn on the notion that it is wrong that private conversations should be recorded and handed down to posterity: 'that conversation should not deserve noting down, is the evil', he comments.⁴

In writing a truthful account of Johnson's life Boswell inevitably portrays his subject's faults as well as his virtues but, Carlyle notes, the portrait is painted in the right spirit - the spirit of 'devout Discipleship' and 'Hero-Worship'.⁵ Boswell sees with his heart as well as with his head and the result is a sympathetic yet balanced human picture of Johnson.⁶

In another essay in the same volume Carlyle asks: 'may it not seem lamentable, that so few genuinely good Biographies have yet been accumulated in Literature...?'⁷ One 'genuinely good' biography written in Carlyle's lifetime was John Gibson Lockhart's Memoirs of the Life of Scott (1837-38). It is in the course of a favourable review of this work that Carlyle makes his most important and memorable remarks on biography -

¹ Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford, 1970), p. 840.

² 'Boswell's Life of Johnson', Critical and Miscellaneous Essays IV, 81.

³ op. cit., IV, 83.

⁴ op. cit., IV, 86.

⁵ op. cit., IV, 77.

⁶ op. cit., IV, 79.

⁷ 'Biography', op. cit., IV, 65.

remarks Froude was later to quote in the preface to his Life of Carlyle to explain and justify his approach to writing Carlyle's life in the face of the already growing controversy. After noting that the work 'is not so much a composition, as what we call a compilation well done', he continues:

One thing we hear greatly blamed in Mr. Lockhart: that he has been too communicative, indiscreet, and has recorded much that ought to have lain suppressed. Persons are mentioned, and circumstances, not always of an ornamental sort. It would appear there is far less reticence than was looked for! Various persons, name and surname, have 'received pain:' nay the very Hero of the Biography is rendered unheroic; unornamental facts of him, and of those he had to do with, being set forth in plain English: hence 'personality,' 'indiscretion,' or worse, 'sanctities of private life,' &c. &c. How delicate, decent is English biography, bless its mealy mouth! A Damocles' sword of Respectability hangs forever over the poor English Life-writer (as it does over poor English Life in general), and reduces him to the verge of paralysis...The English biographer has long felt that if in writing his Man's Biography, he wrote down anything that could by possibility offend any man, he had written wrong. The plain consequence was, that, properly speaking, no biography whatever could be produced...there was no biography, but some vague ghost of a biography, white, stainless; without feature or substance; vacuum, as we say, and wind and shadow, - which indeed the material of it was.

Any man's life 'is a series of falls' Carlyle goes on to observe, and any painting of that man's life must represent such things: 'Let them be represented, fitly, with dignity and measure; but above all, let them be represented'.² So Carlyle addresses his plea for truth and honesty to future English biographers, and remarks that he 'hopes that the public taste is much mended in this matter'.³ What must be avoided (and censured if detected) in all biographies is 'prudence', 'malice', 'falsehood', and 'inaccuracy'.⁴ The charges of treachery and malice were urged against Lockhart, merely on the basis that he had spoken the truth about Scott. Carlyle is contemptuous of such charges: indeed, he argues, if the

¹ 'Sir Walter Scott', op. cit., VI, 26-28.

² loc. cit.

³ loc. cit.

⁴ op. cit., IV, 30.

biographer is 'fairly chargeable with any radical defect' it is that 'Scott is altogether lovely to him 'so that' his very faults become beautiful'.¹ Carlyle concludes: 'a man of talent, decision and insight wrote it...with courage, with frankness, sincerity...in a very readable, recommendable manner'.²

Lockhart's biography of Scott was not, of course, so wholly lacking in reticence as Carlyle's words might lull the reader into thinking, though by the standards of the time it was a good deal more frank than most of the other pious memorials which passed public muster as biographies. Carlyle's plea for greater truth and openness in biography went largely unheeded. Twenty years later in her Life of Charlotte Bronte (1857), Mrs Gaskell was to observe about the marriage of her heroine:

Henceforward the sacred doors of home are closed upon her married life. We her loving friends, standing outside, caught occasional glimpses of brightness, and pleasant peaceful murmurs of sound, telling of the gladness within...³

It is not possible to consider in any detail here the extent to which Carlyle's own practice as a biographer lived up to his theory. The 'Lives' of Cromwell and Frederick the Great are indeed to be thought of more as histories than biographies, pace Carlyle's close identification between the two genres. His Life of John Sterling (1851), on the other hand, does illustrate its author's views on biography. It is a work which grew out of a personal acquaintance and is based partly on patient research (included is a large selection of letters carefully arranged) written to correct what Carlyle regarded as a false impression created by Archdeacon Hare's earlier biography of Sterling. Carlyle wrote his version to make known the truth of Sterling's life, as he perceived it: he was

¹ loc. cit.

² op. cit., IV, 31.

³ Elizabeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Bronte, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 519.

not primarily an ordinary clergyman, but a real, flawed personality, struggling to come to terms with painful religious doubts and his 'literary' vocation, and contending all the while with the ill-health which brought about his tragically premature death. The result was something of a minor classic - a work of sympathy and detachment, evincing many fine literary qualities.

Froude's conception of biography

Alan Shelston refers to Carlyle as 'a theorist and practitioner of biography whose theories no one followed and whose practice no one emulated'.¹ This is overwhelmingly true of most Victorian biographers. Froude, representative in so many ways of much that is now regarded as 'typically Victorian' was however exceptional in this. Carlyle's most ardent disciple, a more prolific biographer than his master, adopted his biographical theories almost in their entirety: and indeed, not surprisingly, there are several recognisable points of comparison between his Life of Carlyle and Carlyle's biography of Sterling. But while Froude followed Carlyle's ideas extremely closely, at the same time he moulded his own, distinctive conception of what the biographer's task should involve.

Like Carlyle, Froude accepted the place of the spirit of hero-worship in informing the biographies of great men.² His own biographies (or 'sketches' as he preferred to call some of them) of Caesar (1879), Bunyan (for the 'English Men of Letters' series, 1880), Luther (1883),³ his portraits of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell and others in his History of England, his vivid recreation of the lives and adventures of Drake and other great Devonian sailors and explorers in English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century (1895) and his short account of the life of the twelfth-

¹ Alan Shelston, Biography (1977), pp. 54-55.

² See Froude's introduction to Bk. VII ('Politics') of H. Helmholtz, The Hundred Greatest Men (1885). Among the subjects chosen are Caesar, Oliver Cromwell and Frederick the Great.

³ It is interesting to note that Carlyle himself had once contemplated writing a biography of Luther (Life of Carlyle II, 101).

century bishop, Hugo of Lincoln (1870): each of these 'Lives' is characterised by a Carlylean spirit of reverence on the part of the English historian. Only on two occasions has Froude written in an entirely different spirit: the 'Legend of St. Neot' (1844), which was written at Newman's request and betrays Froude's scepticism about the elements of the marvellous which were supposedly of common occurrence in the life of this medieval saint; and his sketch of the 'Life and Times of Thomas Becket' (1877) in which Froude, not surprisingly, takes the part of the king. His Lord Beaconsfield (1890) and his Life and Letters of Erasmus (1894) are somewhat special cases: the former, shorter work was produced as part of a collection of books on 'Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers'; the latter is cast in the form of lectures which he delivered at Oxford while Regius Professor of Modern History. Both works illustrate Froude's capacity to write intelligently in a spirit of sympathy and detachment upon figures for whom he had admiration and respect but whose views - religious or political - he found at best unconvincing or at worst antipathetic.

Like Carlyle, Froude detested 'cant' and valued frankness. In his article, 'The Late Prince Consort', Froude has this to say of the 'biography' of Prince Albert which he is reviewing:

We are admitted to the most intimate thoughts, we are presented with the private correspondence of Prince Albert himself, and her Majesty, with a frankness which does her infinite honour, has added memoranda from her journals, intended originally for no eye but her own...¹

Reviewing Trevelyan's biography of Macaulay, he makes a similar point, praising the absence of 'unworthy biographical reticence'.² Trevelyan speaks the truth but in the context of 'the respectful affection due to

¹ Fraser's Magazine, 76 (September, 1867), 269-83 (p. 270).

² 'Lord Macaulay', Fraser's Magazine, N.S.13 (June, 1876), 675-94 (p. 675).

a man who has been the most tender and kind of friends to him'.¹

Finally, like Carlyle, Froude is keen - perhaps keener - to stress the obligation of the biographer to strive for accuracy, to base his candid judgements on the evidence available to him and, where necessary, to cite the authorities for his statements. Froude finds fault with a Mr Jeaffreson's biography of Byron for failing in these respects:

'[Byron's] biographer ought not to have repeated a scandalous story, and accepted part of it as true, for which he had no tolerable evidence...'²

Jeaffreson is accused of supplying 'what was wanting by his imagination'³ - hence Froude's reconstruction (based on his own careful research) of a portion of Byron's 'real life'. Froude is at his most sarcastic in criticising what he regards as such a manifestly false portrayal of the poet:

'His work resembles a description of Vesuvius written by someone who did not know that Vesuvius was a volcano' he comments at one point.⁴

Where Froude differs slightly from Carlyle is in the stress he lays on the duties and responsibilities of the biographer to his subject and to the public. The duty of the biographer to tell the public the truth about his subject springs not only from a quasi-religious devotion to 'Truth', but is partly based on the public's right to know. His remarks are worth quoting at length:

Every man who has played a distinguished part in life, and has largely influenced either the fortunes or the opinions of his contemporaries, becomes the property of the public. We desire to know, and we have a right to know, the inner history of the person who has obtained our confidence. And the oblivion and obscurity which is permitted to those whose actions have affected only themselves or their personal circle, is refused to the larger natures which have been the guides or the representatives of their age.

¹ op. cit., p. 676.

² 'A leaf from the real life of Lord Byron', Nineteenth Century, 14 (August, 1883), 228-42 (p. 234).

³ op. cit., p. 237.

⁴ op. cit., p. 228.

When the life of an eminent man is written, he is brought back from the grave for a rehearsal of the ultimate judgment upon him. He has been known so far in the Senate House, in the field, or the Bench, or in the arena of literature. His power has been recognised, his services have been honoured, his guidance has been accepted and followed. The question remains whether the moral aspect of him corresponds to the external; whether we can respect where we have been forced to admire; or whether he is to furnish one more illustration of the irregularities of genius, and of the defects by which the most brilliant gifts are too often accompanied and obscured.¹

He reiterates this sense of duty to the public several times in his biography of Carlyle.² The biographer has two other duties. The first is plainly to himself, for to suppress or distort the truth would be to be guilty of 'deliberate insincerity'. The second is, of course, to the subject of the biography, to his memory and to his reputation. It is the biographer's responsibility to see that the picture of the subject which survives is as authentic as possible, so that his character can be fairly understood and fully appreciated.³

To write a truthful, authentic and artistically satisfying biography of a figure as complex as Carlyle was not an easy task. In fact, at one stage, Froude certainly felt tempted to take the easy way out and give the public a 'whitewashing' biography, an '"idol," to be worshipped' as he candidly admits on more than one occasion.⁴ And indeed there are signs, as we shall later observe, especially in the first pair of volumes (which were written while Carlyle was still alive) that he began to write in this frame of mind. But in the end Froude was able to claim that he had regarded Carlyle's principles (as stated in his review of Lockhart) 'to be strictly obligatory upon myself in dealing with his own remains'.⁵ Thus Froude on the Carlylean spirit in which he viewed his

¹ 'Lord Macaulay', p. 675.

² For example: Life of Carlyle I, vi; II, 487; III, 4.

³ Life of Carlyle III, 2-7.

⁴ See Life of Carlyle I, vii; My Relations with Carlyle (1903), pp. 30-32.

⁵ Life of Carlyle I, xi.

appointed task as Carlyle's biographer. It is in the light of such conceptions that we must base, in part, our judgement of the picture of Carlyle Froude has given to his readers, and of the methods he used in painting it.

The Life of Carlyle

i. Associated publications; sources

As Carlyle's literary executor and biographer, Froude was responsible for the publication of a number of works which had as their subject or author Carlyle and/or his wife. The controversy which links Froude's name with that of Carlyle's (one of several the former had been engaged in) centred not only on his biography of Carlyle but also on certain other works which Froude had edited: what was often called into question was as much the propriety and timing of publication and the manner in which Froude fulfilled his commission. Since several of the early reviewers regarded the biography as part of the larger whole of biographical and autobiographical materials published by Froude, and since these materials constituted in part the sources upon which Froude drew for his biography, it would perhaps be helpful to outline the nature of these materials and their relationship to the biography.

We may quickly dismiss the only volume dealing with a minute portion of Carlyle's life, and which did not prove controversial: Froude edited Carlyle's Reminiscences of My Irish Journey in 1849 (1882), supplying it with the briefest of prefaces. It went relatively unnoticed. The first work of importance which Froude edited was Carlyle's Reminiscences. This consists of a series of memoirs, the longest of which treat of his wife, Jane Baillie Welsh, and his one-time friend, Edward Irving: there are shorter pieces on his father (James Carlyle), Lord Jeffrey, Southey and Wordsworth. It was published within a month of Carlyle's death and provoked the uproar which may be regarded as the start of the Carlyle-

Froude controversy. The autobiographical sections are a source upon which Froude drew in writing the Life but, as he was at pains to point out, he tried to avoid any unnecessary duplication of material. The first two volumes of the biography, covering Carlyle's early life, were published the following year (1882). Then, a year later, Froude published the Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1883) in three volumes. These letters and journal entries although edited by Froude had actually been prepared for publication by Carlyle himself, and were accompanied by his annotations. Whereas Froude relies on these letters of Mrs Carlyle (and on many other unpublished ones) for an impression of the Carlyle marriage, he quotes very little from them in his biography, as he meant his readers to consult the edition of Mrs Carlyle's letters for themselves should they desire further information about the relationship between husband and wife or about other matters. In a sense, as Elizabeth A.M. Dougary observes, the publication of the Carlyle letters and memoirs 'was to condition what Froude was to include in his [biography] in the shape of materials'; these works thus 'pave the way for the biography'.¹ The two final volumes of the biography, dealing with the second half of Carlyle's life, and set in London, were published in 1884. Thereafter, with the exception of a few letters published in The Times in which he defends his actions in writing and publishing the above, Froude published nothing further in his lifetime which touches on the life of Carlyle or the controversy which ensued. Mention should be made however of a pamphlet he wrote while travelling abroad in 1887, in which he sets out clearly and definitively the nature of his relationship with Carlyle, all that he knew of his marriage and the manner in which he discharged his responsibility as Carlyle's literary executor and biographer. This was published

¹ The Materials for Biography, the Handling of the Materials, and the Technique employed to reveal Character and Personality (with special reference to the work of Lockhart, Froude, and Lytton Strachey, in the light of recent psychological investigation) (Ph.D. diss., Edinburgh, 1942), p. 197.

posthumously in 1903 as My Relations with Carlyle along with certain ancilliary materials (including Carlyle's will and a letter from Froude's co-executor, Sir James Stephen) at the instigation of Froude's son and daughter, who both felt that their father's good name had been impugned by recent asseverations.

Naturally, Froude did not rely solely on the published memoirs and letters for the source-materials out of which he constructed his biography. Indeed he had access over a long period to Carlyle's vast collection of unpublished private manuscripts.¹ By far the most considerable proportion of this material consists of letters (chiefly between Carlyle, his wife, and members of his family) and Carlyle's journal which he kept intermittently throughout most of his adult life until his right hand became disabled. Froude cites, quotes from or prints in full 265 letters, according to C.R. Sanders, although it is plain that points of information from thousands of other letters then extant are also included.² He also makes use of whatever other manuscripts have an autobiographical interest: for example, the two which deal with the development of Carlyle's religious ideas (one of which is entitled 'Spiritual Options') which are quoted in II, 8-18. Froude referred as well to various manuscripts written by others, including a notebook of Mrs Carlyle's and an account by Emerson of his visit to the Carlyles at Craigenputtock while still a young man. Finally, among the written sources, was an early German biography of Carlyle by Friedrich Althaus, published in 1866.³ Carlyle had read and annotated this, correcting and qualifying certain points. These materials, supplemented with the autobiographical Reminiscences and the 'mythic' - autobiographical Sartor Resartus, together form the principal sources of most of Froude's Life of Carlyle.

¹ Here accounts differ but the most likely span would seem to be about eleven years.

² 'Carlyle's Letters', BJRL, 38 (September, 1955), 199-224.

³ This is reprinted in translation in John Clubbe (ed.), Two Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle (Durham, N.C., 1974).

From 1849 (when Froude met Carlyle for the first time) onwards the sources of an increasingly large proportion of what Froude relates are unwritten. They consist more and more (especially as the letters to his elder relatives and his wife cease and the journal grinds to a halt) of Froude's own recollections based on personal intercourse with Carlyle, which was extensive in the last fifteen to twenty years of the latter's life, and the observations and reminiscences of members of the Carlyle circle such as John Forster (Dickens's biographer and Carlyle's literary executor before Froude replaced him on his demise) or Geraldine Jewsbury (to whom Jane Welsh Carlyle once referred as 'the most intimate friend I have in the world'¹).

It is important to avoid a misconception here. Froude's Life of Carlyle has, for various reasons, been compared several times with Boswell's Johnson.² As works of art they do indeed bear comparison, but the two biographers approached their task very differently. Boswell treats Johnson's early life somewhat superficially, hurrying over it to reach the point at which they first became acquainted: the remaining three-quarters of the biography treats a mere twenty-one years of Johnson's long life. The reason for this strategy is obvious: Boswell's brilliant facility for reproducing examples of Johnson's conversational prowess would otherwise be largely dissipated. Now despite the fact that Froude knew Carlyle for eleven years longer than Boswell knew Johnson, and although Froude and Carlyle met more frequently than the earlier illustrious pair, Froude

¹ Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, 3 vols (1883), II, 246.

² To cite but two examples: A.O.J. Cockshut in ch. 9 of Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century (1974) and A.J.P. Taylor in his review of John Clubbe's abridged edition of the Froude biography in The Observer, 23 September 1979, p. 36.

does not devote a disproportionate space to the thirty years they knew each other: on the contrary, they do not meet until the very end of the third volume, so that the emphasis if anywhere is rather on Carlyle's early to middle years - the years in which Froude did not know him personally. This generally more balanced (chronologically speaking) arrangement of his biography reflects not only Froude's personal modesty but also his attitude to his sources - his faith in the notion that the personal writings of a wholly sincere man often offer the clearest window into his soul, and his distrust of the stenographer's role where Carlyle was concerned.¹ This last point probably requires some elaboration: it is, after all, where Froude differs most noticeably in biographical method from Boswell. Froude as a rule distrusted the practice of listening to (with a view to later repeating) or even copying down at the time the conversations of illustrious people because

[t]o report correctly the language of conversations, especially when extended over a wide period, is almost an impossibility. The listener, in spite of himself, adds something of his own in colour, form, or substance.²

Hence his preference for Carlyle's 'own words in his journals and letters'. It will be noted that truth (or accuracy) is again the criterion Froude applies. But he also thought the practice inappropriate because unnecessary in Carlyle's case since his speech was so similar to his writing, examples of which abound in the biography.³

So what we have, in a sense, is what Froude admitted might more properly be called not a 'Life' so much as 'the materials for a

¹ Froude would no doubt have concurred with James Field Stanfield, who remarked that 'Letters are to biography what state papers are to history... they are the very chart and compass of biography': An Essay on the Study and Composition of Biography (1813) reprinted in part in James L. Clifford (ed.), Biography as an Art (Selected Criticism, 1560-1960) (1962), p. 70.

² Life of Carlyle IV, 475. In the light of the extremely dubious practices of Frank Harris (an extreme case) and of C. Gavan Duffy and David Alec Wilson (see next chapter), this caution of Froude's seems not misplaced.

³ In fact, Froude does, on more than one occasion, provide a fairly detailed account of what Carlyle's conversation was like: Life of Carlyle I, 398-400; IV, 43.

"Life".¹ Each of these materials was carefully selected by Froude, the principle of selection being the extent to which such materials shed light on Carlyle's character, his ideas and beliefs, his activities and his relationships with others.² How accurate Froude's transcription of his sources was, will be considered in the next chapter - for it was one of the areas of controversy. But although the sources do make up the bulk of the biography they do not constitute the whole. A good quarter (at least) is taken up with Froude's commentary. It is the use Froude made of his sources - the arrangement of them in relation to his accompanying commentary that we must now consider. What does Froude reveal in his biography of Carlyle and his age? And how does he reveal it?

ii. Subject matter

(a) Carlyle the man

What was Carlyle like as a person? It is difficult to convey in a few pages the profundity of Froude's portrait of him. Fortunately, the main lines of his character (once certain qualifications have been made) are etched clearly for the reader fairly early on as Carlyle reaches adulthood, so it will not be necessary for me to dwell extensively on the later Carlyle in my brief exposition. Froude begins to sketch the outlines of his portrait by tracing Carlyle's Scottish ancestry and family background for the reader.³ Thus, we learn that the sternly Protestant inhabitants of Annandale where Carlyle was born were for centuries characterised by 'a certain wildness of disposition' (I, 1). Carlyle's paternal grandfather, we are told was (in Carlyle's words) 'a fiery man, irascible, indomitable,

¹ Life of Carlyle I, xii.

² How far one can judge is, of course, a moot point, if one has not examined the plethora of materials the biographer did not select. I have tried to judge by the extracts Froude did select.

³ Life of Carlyle I, ch. 1 passim: a conventional approach for a biographer, and one which we saw Froude employ in his novels, particularly in The Spirit's Trials where the novelist illustrates his belief in the intricate relationship between environmental and genetic factors and character development.

of the toughness and springiness of steel' (I, 4). The character of Carlyle's father is outlined - a strong, serious, hard-working man with a marked puritanical streak (I, 7). The character of Carlyle himself is seen in relation to his forbears. 'Like the Carlyles generally,' we are told, 'he had a violent temper.' This is immediately illustrated by Froude through an anecdote:

Carlyle's earliest recollection is of throwing his little brown stool at his brother in a mad passion of rage, when he was scarcely more than two years old, breaking a leg of it, and 'feeling for the first time the united pangs of loss and remorse'. (I, 9)

A suggestive anecdote, as the words at the end of the older Carlyle looking back indicate. Froude's inclusion of the episode is particularly apposite. It establishes a psychological pattern which will later be observable in Carlyle's behaviour to others - especially towards his wife. Carlyle's childhood was, on the whole, unremarkable. As a young man, however, his want of more tender qualities is nicely illustrated in the words of a letter from his first sweetheart; in taking leave of him she advises him to

Cultivate the milder dispositions of your heart. Subdue the more extravagant visions of the brain...Genius will render you great. May virtue render you beloved! Remove the awful distance between you and ordinary men by kind and gentle manners. (I, 52-53)

The picture of Carlyle up to his twenty-fourth year then, reflects the multifarious nature of his character: from the outside one observes the rather cold, severe, Calvinist aspect to Carlyle - in part the result of his far from comfortable upbringing; underneath there is a warmth of disposition as one gets to know him better, and the fiery hot temper inherited from his father's side of the family. Then there are a few tell-tale signs of his genius, which several of the friends he made while at Edinburgh University were quick to notice.

Another side to Carlyle's character was soon to emerge, as he begins to be troubled by the indigestion which was to plague him for the rest

of his life. Froude explains Carlyle's attitude to his physical discomfort:

Reticence about his personal sufferings was at no time one of his virtues...Even the minor ailments to which our flesh is heir, and which most of us bear in silence, the eloquence of his imagination flung into forms like the temptations of a saint. His mother had early described him as 'gey ill to deal wi',' and while in great things he was the most considerate and generous of men, in trifles he was intolerably irritable. Dyspepsia accounts for most of it. (I, 18)

Something of the paradox of Carlyle's nature is caught here: to Froude Carlyle is large-hearted when it comes to 'great things' but petty, irritable beyond all reason over mere 'trifles'. His offences, while remarked upon in cool, detached, ironic tones, are not really criticised however; rather they are extenuated: Carlyle's constitutional malaise it seems is largely to blame.

The first unreservedly critical judgement of Carlyle by Froude occurs as Carlyle and Jane Baillie Welsh discuss the possibility of their marriage. Froude took the view that Carlyle loved his mother more than Miss Welsh;¹ that what he really needed was for his house to be kept by his mother or a sister; that, given two such strong natures as those of Carlyle and Miss Welsh, they should have realised better the difficulties which would inevitably arise if they were to marry - in short, that 'it [would have] been better for both of them' had they not married at all. 'Two diamonds,' he comments, 'do not easily form cup and socket.'² In particular, the 'strange temper' of a genius wracked with dyspepsia could only make for unhappiness, even for those 'who were nearest and dearest to him'. Carlyle was usually quick to repent, Froude assures us, of any of his 'cruel'

¹ See Life of Carlyle IV, 149: 'Of the two extreme trials of which Carlyle spoke, the greatest, the one which really and truly was to shake his whole nature, was approaching its culmination.' This was the death of his mother. The other (lesser) trial was, of course, his wife's death thirteen years later. Elsewhere we are told that Carlyle was 'extremely fond of [his wife]: more fond, perhaps, of her than of any other living person except his mother' (II, 276).

² Life of Carlyle I, 186. Froude's rare blunder here (he means, of course, 'ball and socket') is a good example of the sort of thing his opponents would seize upon to ridicule him and hence discredit his portrait of the Carlyles.

or thoughtless acts committed in the heat of the moment, but 'Penitence, however, sincere as it might be, was never followed by amendment, even to the very end of his life'.¹

As we read Froude's account of Carlyle's approaching marriage with Jane Welsh, two points should be noticed. The first is that Froude is, of course, writing with hindsight. Just as in The Lieutenant's Daughter we saw the 'innocent' love of Henry Carpenter for Catherine Gray in the light of his later seduction and abandonment of her, so Froude here views the courtship and early married years of the Carlyles with the retrospective knowledge which came from his acquaintance with them both in their last years together. His picture is also coloured by taking into account the feelings of the older Carlyle, the remorseful widower, looking back and wistfully regretting certain aspects of his behaviour to his late wife. Froude does, however, capture the romance, the sense of the moment, as he quotes from their letters to each other: this counterbalances the above effect. But it is important to realise that the picture of the early Carlyle that we are given is not just of the early Carlyle: Froude sees his life always as a whole at any given moment, so that the picture is a composite one, a complex creation. Secondly, Froude throughout the first two volumes is, on the whole, more critical of Carlyle and less critical of Jane Welsh than in the later two volumes.² In the end, a balanced picture of both characters emerges: both come in for a mixture of praise and blame, but

¹ Life of Carlyle I, 187. Cf. I, 326.

² Such is the general emphasis. There are occasions, of course, when Jane Welsh Carlyle is seen as far from blameless in her altercations with her husband. See for example Life of Carlyle I, 215, 373. And Carlyle himself, as we note in the main text below, is certainly not presented unsympathetically.

it is important to notice the changing bias in their delineations - a change which probably reflects not only Froude's own changing conception of their characters as he read their letters and journals and the fact that he knew the later Carlyles personally, but also the readjustment of his attitude to the writing of Carlyle's biography. For the first two volumes were substantially written towards the end of Carlyle's lifetime and they do provide one or two slender, oblique indications that they were written in a rather different spirit from the later ones.¹ For example, Froude remarks at one point when talking of Irving's love for Jane Welsh, 'I should not unveil a story so sacred in itself, and in which the public have no concern, merely to amuse their curiosity' (I, 158). And again, referring to the love-letters of Carlyle and his future wife, he comments: 'Letters written under such circumstances are in their nature private, and so for the most part remain' (I, 268). This very 'Victorian' emphasis on a domestic religiosity, on the reticence decried, as we saw earlier, by both Carlyle and Froude, may seem strange in the light of his explicit avowal that he adhered to Carlyle's principles in writing the latter's life-history. But the explanation is not difficult to find. Froude himself provides it. Initially, he had indeed felt tempted to write a 'whitewashing' biography:

It would have been as easy as it would have been agreeable for me to construct a picture, with every detail strictly accurate, of an almost perfect character. An account so written would have been read with immediate pleasure. Carlyle would have been admired and applauded, and the biographer...would at least have escaped censure.²

And Froude, it seems did actually start to write Carlyle's life in this 'cowardly' spirit, to use his own word.³ But after much heart-searching

¹ See Life of Carlyle II, 370.

² Life of Carlyle III, 2-3. Cf. I, vii-viii.

³ My Relations with Carlyle (1903), pp. 30, 32.

he found that he could not, in all conscience, persist in writing in this way, for the 'blank spaces' left by his suppression of certain facts would be filled sooner or later by rumours and guesses, to the unfair detriment of Carlyle's reputation; his Life of Carlyle would be inauthentic - a 'mockery': 'the whole story must now come out' he decided.¹ Thus the picture we get of Carlyle in the early volumes (and especially, according to Froude, in the first²) needs to be modified in the light of what we learn in the later volumes. It would be wrong to stress the difference too much: it is really a question of emphasis, more than one of factual disjunctures and, viewed as a whole, the picture of Carlyle is certainly consistent.

The actual engagement and eventual marriage of Carlyle and Jane Welsh are the occasions the relation of which allows Froude to take stock for the first time of Carlyle's character.³ The portrait is not, it has to be conceded, a very endearing one. Of a letter in which Carlyle writes to his bride-to-be, asking whether she is prepared to sacrifice herself to the cause to which he has dedicated himself, Froude has this to say:

And this was selfishness - selfishness of a rare and elevated kind, but selfishness still; and it followed him throughout his married life. He awoke only to the consciousness of what he had been, when the knowledge could bring no more than unavailing remorse. He admired Miss Welsh; he loved her in a certain sense; but, like her, he was not in love.⁴

¹ op. cit., p. 33. Froude believed Carlyle's reputation would survive a thorough scrutiny (See Life of Carlyle I, 369). Even so, he determined not to make two things explicit (Carlyle's alleged impotence and his violence to his wife on one occasion) as we shall see. It should be noted that Froude is referring here to his whole strategy underlying not only the writing of the biography, but his decisions about the editing and publication of the Carlyles' memoirs and letters.

² op. cit., p. 30.

³ In fact these events in themselves are not really described for us: they are announced very casually, almost in passing. See Life of Carlyle I, 269, 279, 378.

⁴ Life of Carlyle I, 296. Cf. I, 350-54. Again, notice the glimpse of the future Froude offers. To put events into their proper perspective, he seems to urge, we must ever be prepared to step out of their temporal perspective, and look forwards and backwards at the effects and causes of the events related. This is a characteristic hallmark of Froude's writing of fiction as well as of biography, as we have seen in earlier chapters.

Nor did she 'love him as she felt that she could love' (I, 300). But Carlyle, in Froude's view, was often myopic (and sometimes completely blind) about the feelings of those around him, and in this case he only 'dimly perceived that the essential condition [for their marriage] was absent'.¹ What their marriage in the end entailed for each other is summarised neatly, with equanimity and perhaps just a vein of cynicism, shortly after the above remarks.²

Carlyle gradually emerges as thoughtless, as one who commonly 'chose to have his own way', as an 'unbearable inmate of any house...where his will was not absolute' as a 'moody, violent, and imperious' person - even in the eyes of his future wife (I, 360-63). On the other hand, despite the many difficulties - poverty, his 'many troubles bodily and mental', the product of his constitution and his genius respectively, with which he had to contend, it could be fairly urged that

[h]is life had been pure and without spot. He was an admirable son, a faithful and affectionate brother, in all private relations blamelessly innocent...he was determined, in the same high spirit and duty which had governed his personal conduct, to use [his talents] well...and never, never to sell his soul by travelling the primrose path to wealth and distinction. (I, 369)

He could, on occasion, acknowledge his faults and though often 'impatient, irritable over little things' he could be extremely charming - and he certainly was not wanting in a sense of humour.³ Although '[h]e spoke much of hope...he was never hopeful'; and he was not really 'the cheerfullest of companions' (II, 296). He was inclined to be arrogant and 'Johnson himself was not more rude, disdainful, and imperious' (II, 408). Yet at times he could behave heroically: the memorable example of his noble reaction to Mill's burning of his manuscript of the first volume of The French Revolution is a case in point.⁴

¹ Life of Carlyle I, 300. On Carlyle's 'constitutional blindness' see also I, 346, 352, 362; II, 297.

² Life of Carlyle I, 302. For a more elaborate view, see I, 378-82.

³ Life of Carlyle I, 372; II, 50-51.

⁴ Life of Carlyle III, 26-32.

The better one knew him, the more one was forced to admire him, in Froude's view.¹ Froude relates several examples of Carlyle's tender-heartedness, of his many kindnesses in the midst of so many anxieties, even to strangers.² Carlyle appears before our eyes by turn as despotic, generous, sarcastic, and even shy.³ Froude's personal recollections of Carlyle, and his assessment of him are, on the whole, favourable.⁴ Carlyle's 'general aim in life was noble and unselfish' and 'in the use of his time and talents he had nothing to fear from the sternest examination of his stewardship' (IV, 251).

Such is the picture of Carlyle as he finally stands before the reader. It is a picture which permits no grand generalisations to be formed, for any such statements would need to be so hemmed in with qualifications that their effect would be negated in the process. There were, in fact, two Carlyles and Froude tries to paint for the reader both the 'lights' and the 'shadows' as he calls them.⁵ The life of the 'hero as man of letters' turns out to be (in Carlyle's own words) 'a kind of beast-godhood'. Froude's honest, perceptive, lively, thoroughly captivating and very human portrait reflects the complexity, the many-sidedness of the nature of this strange figure. And as he paints, Froude sometimes steps back - now revering, now admonishing, sometimes excusing, at other times sharply criticising, here gently mocking there depicting with warmth and admiration. However the reader himself may react to the Carlyle herein depicted, he will surely agree that for its degree of psychological acuity and for its sheer vivacity the portrait of Carlyle has few if indeed any equals in the vast gallery of English literary portraits.

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 191.

² Life of Carlyle IV, 275-76, 366-67, 371.

³ The picture of Carlyle, nervous and worried at 71 years old, and taking a tot of brandy to calm his nerves before giving an important lecture is curiously touching: Life of Carlyle IV, 322-23, 331.

⁴ Life of Carlyle IV, 277, 490-91.

⁵ Life of Carlyle II, 487-95.

(b) Carlyle the thinker; the nineteenth-century intellectual context

In a sense, it is something of a false distinction to try to separate Carlyle's ideas and the social and intellectual context from which they sprang (and which they were in part to condition), from his personality. The two are too closely interwoven, as Froude recognised, and as his biography duly reflects. Thus, Carlyle's advocacy of an enlightened despotism as the ideal form of government, for example, finds its parallel in Froude's description of Carlyle as 'despotic' in his domestic affairs.¹ But although Froude shrinks from 'prematurely' assessing the significance of Carlyle's ideas (he is too much the disciple sitting at the master's feet for that) and although he hardly criticises Carlyle's published works (a biography is not the place for literary criticism, in Froude's view) he does nevertheless relate, as one would expect, the development of Carlyle's thought and the composition of his works to his life and - perhaps more importantly - he also distils for the reader the essence of Carlyle's writings, in a most lucid, concise and readable form. And in the process he catches the precise mood, the very cast of thought of many Victorians - an atmosphere which has proved more elusive to later writers who lacked Froude's own experience. It would be fatally easy to underestimate what is in fact one of the glories of Froude's biography: for Froude the expositor of Carlyle's ideas (thrown into relief against the wider backcloth of Victorian intellectual currents) has performed a signal service at least as important as those of Froude the amateur psychologist or Froude the literary artist. Froude's exposition of and commentary upon Carlyle's ideas and writings is a fitting complement to his portrait of Carlyle the man. And it is my contention that as a summary of Carlyle's main ideas and arguments this work - even when allowances have been made for the undoubted fact that it is the work of one who is almost wholly

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 251.

uncritical in his acceptance of Carlyle's ideas in their entirety
- has few, if any, rivals.¹

Froude is particularly insightful when providing a synopsis of the young Carlyle's political radicalism and - even better - his religious doubts, perhaps because, as I noted in my discussion of the Nemesis, he had experienced such doubts himself. Where feasible, Froude relates the ideas to contemporary or earlier developments on the socio-economic scene or in the realm of philosophical, theological, scientific or literary achievement. Thus, we gather, Carlyle's early radical convictions were based very largely on the impressions he gained himself, or through his father, of the dire economic position of Scotland in the years following Waterloo. And Carlyle's inner discontent (partly the result of his dyspepsia and insomnia) also coloured his response to what was happening around him:

Men who are out of humour with themselves see their own condition reflected in the world outside them, and everything seems amiss because it is not well with themselves. But the state of Scotland and England also was well fitted to feed Carlyle's discontent. The great war had been followed by a collapse. Wages were low, food at famine prices. Tens of thousands of artisans were out of work, their families were starving, and they themselves were growing mutinous. (I, 65)

Hence 'the conviction was forced upon him that there was something vicious to the bottom in English and Scotch society, and that revolution in some form or other lay visibly ahead' (I, 65).

Froude's account of young Thomas Carlyle's religious doubts and his 'conversion' (to describe which Froude draws heavily on Sartor Resartus) is an excellent imaginative recreation of the mental turmoils and struggles involved in the dialectical process through which so many Victorians had passed, from faith through doubt to an eventual synthesis:

¹ In this section it is difficult to give a fair and full impression of Froude's contribution without quoting at length on the one hand, or merely referring to the passages of especial worth, on the other. Also, it is, I imagine, quite clear that there is no space here to consider in any detail how accurately Froude, compared with later critics and historians, summed up Carlyle's ideas, and the Victorian intellectual background more generally: up to a point, his accuracy has to be taken as read in this respect.

There had come upon him the trial which in these days awaits every man of high intellectual gifts and noble nature on their first actual acquaintance with human things - the question, far deeper than any mere political one, What is this world then, what is this human life, over which a just God is said to preside, but of whose presence or whose providence so few signs are visible? (I, 66)

Froude proceeds to sketch the religious background of Carlyle's childhood, in which the Bible was viewed as containing 'all spiritual truth [necessary] for guidance in word and deed', in which book 'every fact...was literally true', and 'to doubt was not to mistake, but was to commit a sin of the deepest dye, and was the sure sign of a corrupted heart' (I, 67). But Carlyle, through his 'wide study of modern literature' began 'to feel the growing influences' of his age and regarded much of what he had been taught as 'doubtful or even plainly incredible' (I, 67). The experience was a painful one for Carlyle:

[L]ike a true Scot, he knew that he would peril his soul if he pretended to believe what his intellect told him was false. If any part of what was called Revelation was mistaken, how could he be assured of the rest? (I, 67)

The phase of scepticism lasted with Carlyle for some two years before he experienced something akin to what we read of Teufelsdröckh's 'spiritual new birth' in the chapter, 'The Everlasting No', in Sartor Resartus, part of which Froude reprints in his biography.¹ His resulting beliefs Froude describes very thoroughly for the reader at a later stage:

He was a Calvinist without the theology. The materialistic theory of things...he utterly repudiated. Scepticism on the nature of right and wrong...never touched or tempted him. On the broad facts of the Divine government of the universe he was as well assured as Calvin himself; but he based his faith, not on a supposed revelation, or on fallible human authority. He had sought the evidence for it, where the foundations lie of all other forms of knowledge, in the experienced facts of things interpreted by the intelligence of man. Experienced fact was to him revelation, and the only true revelation. Historical religions, Christianity included, he believed to have been successive efforts of humanity...to explain human duty, and to insist on the fulfilment of it...In revelation...confirmed by historical miracles, he was unable to believe - he felt himself forbidden to believe by the light that was in him...To Carlyle the universe was itself a miracle... [But] while he rejected the literal narrative of the sacred writers, he believed as strongly as any Jewish prophet or Catholic saint in

¹ Life of Carlyle I, 103-09.

the spiritual truths of religion. The effort of his life was to rescue and reassert those truths which were being dragged down by the weight with which they were encumbered...The spiritual universe, like the visible, was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever...The theories which dispensed with God and the soul Carlyle utterly abhorred...God to him was the fact of facts...God's law was everywhere: man's welfare depended on the faithful reading of it... In this faith he interpreted human history, which history witnessed in turn to the truth of his convictions...¹

Carlyle's religious beliefs lead inexorably to his political creed, for history for Carlyle, as we have seen, was God's Bible, God's revelation to mankind. He saw his task primarily as one of interpreting God's law thus revealed for others: hence such a book as The French Revolution, the 'lessons' of the events therein described, Carlyle was in no doubt about whatsoever.²

Froude's exposition of Carlyle's political ideas is thus inextricably bound up with his accounts of Carlyle's principal writings. His explanation of Carlyle's politics, though extremely lucid and cogent (Froude undoubtedly possessed the gift of compressing the main arguments of long, difficult books into a few pages) is not quite so accomplished as his synopses of Carlyle's philosophical and religious opinions. These last two Froude could on occasion question and qualify from his personal experience, introducing a more objective perspective, illustrative of the fact that Froude had himself thought long and deeply about such matters. Thus in one instance Froude admits that Carlyle 'was not always consistent in what he said of Christianity' and proceeds to give examples of what he means (II, 487). But when it comes to politics Froude is wholly uncritical of Carlyle's fundamental stances: indeed, I have only been able to trace one instance of Froude criticising a particular political viewpoint of Carlyle's, and the disagreement is merely over a matter of practical politics, and not over a theoretical

¹ Life of Carlyle II, 2-5, 18. Cf. IV, 278-83.

² The importance of the French revolution in Carlyle's thought (to him, I think, more important than the birth, death and resurrection of Christ), is summed up graphically for us by Froude thus: "I should not have known what to make of this world at all," Carlyle once said to me, "if it had not been for the French Revolution": Life of Carlyle II, 19.

issue.¹ In fact, Froude is somewhat weaker in expounding his master's political creed precisely because he could not perceive the inherent inconsistencies of his philosophy. This leads Froude at times to offer specious defences of the more ludicrous aspects of Carlyle's political thought: a good example is Froude's rather forced attempt to convince his readers that there is no essential contradiction between the early radical Carlyle of 'Signs of the Times', Sartor Resartus, and the later reactionary Carlyle of 'Shooting Niagara' and 'The Nigger Question'.²

Once this limitation has been recognised, however, it may be admitted that Froude's survey of Carlyle's historical and literary works and the political thought which pervades them is admirable.³ Properly speaking there is indeed no literary criticism as such. Froude zealously presents the political kernel of Carlyle's most celebrated works, reserving his praise for Carlyle's literary abilities, for those writings the public might be less familiar with such as Carlyle's early translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister ('one of the very best [translations] which has ever been made from one language into another'), his biography of Schiller ('Few literary biographies in the English language equal it for grace, for brevity, for clearness of portraiture, and artist-like neglect of the unessentials'), and his 'Diamond Necklace' ('the very finest illustration of Carlyle's literary power').⁴

He dovetails his description of Carlyle's life from day to day with accounts of his reading so that the reader is given some idea of the more formative influences (particularly in German literature) on Carlyle's thought and works.⁵ Froude does allow himself to comment freely on

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 376-77.

² Life of Carlyle II, 140-41.

³ Perhaps the best short example which can be mentioned is Froude's brief, clear explanation of what Carlyle meant by 'cant' and why he loathed it so much (Life of Carlyle IV, 18). It is an important notion, occurring often in Carlyle's writings, but is all too easily passed over as meaning some sort of 'hypocrisy'. Froude's plain, digestible account is superb.

⁴ Life of Carlyle I, 200, 262; II, 404.

⁵ Life of Carlyle I, 132 ff., 385 ff.; IV, 277 ff.

Carlyle's literary abilities: and here he speaks with authority.

Carlyle's style, he tells his readers, owes more to his father than to 'Jean Paul'.¹ Carlyle's strengths (his intellect, his imagination, his sensibility, his ready command of facts, his prose style) and weaknesses (his lack of a metrical ear, the absence of invention, his lack of spontaneity) are analysed with great aplomb.² Thus we learn why, in Froude's view, Carlyle would never have made a novelist:

his convictions were too intense for fiction...he could have little written an entertaining novel as St. Paul or St. John. His entire faculty - intellect and imagination alike - was directed upon the sternest problems of human life...He required something which he could really believe... (II, 116)

The insights Froude offers here are the more valid, one feels, because founded upon his own literary experience as a novelist, historian, essayist and (on occasion) poet.

The same might be said of his estimate of Carlyle as an historian.³ In Froude's eyes, Carlyle's special gift was his ability 'to bring dead things and dead people back to life; to make the past once more the present, and to show us men and women playing their parts on the mortal stage as real flesh-and-blood human creatures'. He continues: 'Very few writers have possessed this double gift of accuracy and representative power', and in this respect, he thinks, 'no writer in any age had equalled him' (IV, 221).

The essence of Carlyle's political thought, expressed in The French Revolution, in the essay on 'Chartism', in Past and Present, in his historical 'biographies' of Cromwell and Frederick, and in Latter-day Pamphlets, is summarised at intervals throughout the biography. Froude's summaries are extremely succinct paraphrases - almost 'trans-

¹ Life of Carlyle I, 411.

² Life of Carlyle I, 262, 385; II, 384-85 n.

³ Life of Carlyle IV, 218-22.

lations' - of the actual works, and any reader wishing to refresh himself with the central ideas of Carlyle's thought could hardly do better than to read Froude's concise presentation of them. The disciple is certainly more readable than the master - partly because Froude does not imitate Carlyle's difficult prose style. Froude explains the fascination the French revolution held for Carlyle: 'it illustrated to him in all its features such theory as he had been able to form of the laws under which this world is ruled' (III, 12). The symbolic history of the Jewish nation likewise illustrated that 'as long as men kept God's commandments it was well with them''but if they ignored them and pursued material prosperity and pleasure, then 'in some form or other retribution would come' (III, 12). This 'simple creed', Froude notes, was 'the central principle of all [Carlyle's] thoughts' (III,13). The form the government of a nation took was good or evil insofar as it encouraged obedience to God's will: in effect, that the main criterion was justice, and after that, whichever 'was best administered was best' (III, 13). 'Rights men had none, save to be governed justly. Duties waited for them everywhere. Their business was to find what those duties were and faithfully fulfil them' (III, 13). If a society was not organised according to such principles, if the rich were enjoying themselves 'while the poor toiled and suffered', then 'hunger and fury would rise up and bring to judgment the unhappy ones whose business it had been to guide and govern, when they had not guided and had not governed' (III, 13-14). For Carlyle, 'the French Revolution was the last and most signal example of "God's revenge"' (III, 13). Froude explains the implications of this view:

France of all modern nations had been the greatest sinner, and France had been brought to open judgment. She had been offered light at the Reformation, she would not have it...She had preferred to live for pleasure and intellectual enlightenment, with a sham for a religion, which she maintained and herself disbelieved... (III, 15)

The 'fate of France' would turn out to be the fate of other countries including England (there were already signs in the Chartist riots) if people continued to dedicate themselves to materialism, 'progress' and 'reform', ignoring meanwhile the need for 'repentance and moral amendment' (III, 15). This is the sense in which Carlyle was a 'Radical', Froude explains, and his lack of faith in political remedies and his concomitant disenchantment with party politics spring largely from the fact that party proposals were not radical enough.¹

Carlyle's antipathy towards the overtly materialistic philosophies such as Utilitarianism and laissez-faire economics is expressed by way of a contrast of the nineteenth century with an idealised picture of the middle ages, in his book Past and Present. Froude explains how in this work Carlyle elaborated upon his favourite theme of the necessity of a strong, just and benevolent government of a society in which God's law was revered and obeyed.² The figure who for Carlyle epitomises this notion is Oliver Cromwell, to whom he had alluded in his book of lectures On Heroes and Hero-Worship. In producing Cromwell's letters and speeches with an extensive commentary, Carlyle gave to the world his 'might is right' doctrine in which the notion of rule by majorities through the ballot-box was decidedly dispatched, according to Froude's rather glowing account of Carlyle's restoration of 'the real man'.³ The more reactionary elements in Carlyle's political philosophy became decidedly more pronounced in the 1850s and after, as is evident in his protestations in favour of slavery, and against democracy in Latter-day Pamphlets. Froude's account reflects this change in emphasis (though he does not, of course, use the word 'reactionary') but he is increasingly forced on to the defensive,

¹ For Carlyle's view of the Condition-of-England question see Life of Carlyle III, 172-74.

² Life of Carlyle III, 303-10.

³ Life of Carlyle III, 383-90.

in the face of the public outcry against many of Carlyle's later pronouncements.¹ Thus Carlyle's 'savageness was but affection turned sour, and what he said was the opposite of what he did', he avers at one point (IV, 32). And on one occasion Froude's implication that Carlyle altered the course of European history seems faintly ridiculous.² Overall, however, the picture which emerges of Carlyle's political views is an accurate and fair one, whether one agrees or disagrees with Froude's almost wholesale adoption of them.

What made Carlyle such an attractive figure to the Victorians? Why did they look up to him as a sage, as a figure of authority? How was it that he was so influential? Clearly, until after Carlyle's death when Froude's biography was published, the Victorian reading public did not know Carlyle the man intimately: they only knew the thinker and writer, the religious sceptic and moral prophet, the political radical-turned-reactionary. How does Froude account for Carlyle's influence in the biography? Froude's explanation is offered to the reader in the course of a passage which should be a locus classicus for the historian of Victorian ideas: in a brilliant tour de force written from a perspective that is at once personal and representative of the experience of so many Victorians, Froude explains what it was that made Carlyle and his writings so important to his contemporaries. And he provides many an insight into the Victorian mind as he conducts his readers on a guided tour of the more significant spiritual and intellectual emanations of the Victorian consciousness.

The passage - one of the book's finest - is too long to quote in full here, and any summary (of what is already a brilliant summary) is bound to be inadequate.³ Froude begins by remarking upon how Carlyle

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 25-40.

² Life of Carlyle IV, 431-34. Perhaps one should add, in 'fairness' to Froude, that at least one later scholar (H.J.C. Grierson) advances the claim that Carlyle's worship of force, his authoritarianism, and his biography of Frederick of Prussia prepared the way for Hitler's Nazi Germany. For a fuller account of this debate see the chapter on Carlyle in David J. De Laura (ed.), Victorian Prose: a guide to research (New York, 1973).

³ See Life of Carlyle III, 309-17 for the passage in full.

'had offended men of all political parties, and every professor of a recognised form of religion' and thus came to be regarded as an inco-
clast with whose name no sect of any sort could be linked (III, 309).
He mentions Carlyle's 'anomalous' and 'brilliant' style, seeing him as
a more genial humourist than Swift (III, 309). But all this, as Froude
admits, was 'on the surface' and does not really explain how Carlyle
attained the influence upon successive generations that he undoubtedly
did (III, 310).

To explain this, Froude insists, it is necessary to look at the
'circumstances in the time which made Carlyle's mode of thought exception-
ally interesting' especially, he adds, to 'young men...whose convictions
were unformed...' (III, 310). These circumstances Froude now proceeds to
sketch for the reader with a grasp of the diversity and sweep of nineteenth
-century intellectual developments which is remarkable.¹ He charts the
path of change - political, theological, scientific and philosophical:
this, he comments, was the 'era of new ideas, of swift if silent spiritual
revolution' and to all who 'inquired with open minds it appeared that things
which good and learned men were doubting about must be themselves doubtful'.
He continues:

Thus all round us, the intellectual lightships had broken from
their moorings, and it was then a new and trying experience. The
present generation which has grown up in an open spiritual ocean,
which has got used to it and has learned to swim for itself, will
never know what it was to find the lights all drifting, the
compasses all awry, and nothing left to steer by except the stars.

In this condition the best and bravest of my own contemporaries
determined to have done with insincerity, to find ground under their
feet, to let the uncertain remain uncertain, but to learn how much
and what we could honestly regard as true, and believe that and live
by it. (III, 311).

For Froude this feeling was voiced by two writers in particular: Tennyson
in poetry, and Carlyle in prose. Carlyle appeared 'as a prophet and

¹ One is reminded inevitably of the picture Froude gives in his History of England I, ch. 1, of the passing of the middle ages.

teacher' and to all 'who took life seriously...his words were like the morning reveille' (III, 312). Carlyle offered a 'higher creed' than mere soulless materialism or the rationalistic Utilitarian ethic. He offered to the young a noble vision, a vision of hope. Carlyle, like John Knox before him, spoke with certainty, with authority in the midst of 'the controversies, the arguments, the doubts, the crowding uncertainties of forty years ago' (III, 313).

Two things in particular - God's existence in the world and the moral implications of this fact for mankind - Carlyle made clear for all to take in and understand:

Carlyle was the first to make us see [God's] actual and active presence now in this working world, not in rhetoric and fine sentiments, not in problematic miracles at Lourdes or La Salette, but in clear letters of fire which all might read, written over the entire surface of human experience. To him God's existence was not an arguable probability, a fact dependent for its certainty on Church authority, or on Apostolic succession, or on so-called histories which might possibly prove to be no more than legends; but an awful reality to which the fates of nations, the fate of each individual man, bore perpetual witness. (III, 313)

Thus, for Froude and many others, Carlyle offered an honest, credible, meaningful alternative to rationalism, to a scripture-based Protestantism (then being assailed by the German biblical exegetes), to the Oxford Movement and to the Catholic Church. In a world wracked by change Carlyle offered truth, certainty and stability - Arnold's 'fleeting and elusive shadow' for which so many Victorians yearned. For his witness he pointed to history, to events such as the French revolution. And the moral lessons to be drawn from God's revelation made so incarnate were simple, and could be summed up in the imperative, 'do your duty':

We were to do our work...because we were bound to do it by our Master's orders. We were to be just and true, because God abhorred wrong and hated lies, and because an account of our deeds and words was literally demanded and exacted from us. (III, 313-14)

Carlyle's teaching was not shrouded in dogma or 'stifled' by traditions. He was wholly sincere, 'a man of high original genius and boundless

acquirements, speaking out with his whole heart the convictions at which he had himself arrived in the disinterested search after truth' (III, 314).

Froude concludes by mentioning his personal debt of gratitude to Carlyle, for he was saved by Carlyle's writings from committing himself to any one of the several 'creeds or no creeds' which were then competing for his attention while at Oxford:

Carlyle taught me a creed which I could then accept as really true; which I have held ever since, with increasing confidence, as the interpretation of my existence and the guide of my conduct, so far as I have been able to act up to it. Then and always I looked, and have looked, to him as my master. (III, 316)

Such is the adulation which many felt prompted to give to 'the Prophet of Cheyne Row'. Reading Froude's account of the appeal Carlyle held for him and countless others here and elsewhere in the biography, we learn a great deal not only about the substance of Carlyle's own teachings but also about the intellectual setting in which those teachings were delivered and received. More perhaps than in any other of his works, Froude here had his finger on the rapid, irregular pulse of the Victorian intellectual scene.

iii. Method and techniques

(a) Drama and narrative

How does Froude manage to convey the above impression of a man and his age? To what specifically literary techniques does he resort in the biography? The Life of Carlyle is best understood, I think, as a complex work, functioning on more than one level. In the following pages I shall argue that it is an essentially dramatic work, but with a sophisticated narrative structure superimposed.

The dramatic core of the biography, despite - or perhaps because of - the fact that it constitutes about three-quarters of the whole, is easily overlooked. By 'dramatic' I mean quite simply that Froude lets

events tell themselves, he allows the main characters to speak for themselves.¹ Hence the many letters and journal entries which he duly reproduces for the reader. This method ('showing' not 'telling') has one distinct advantage over the alternative: the argument and its evidence are at one. In other words, it is difficult to criticise effectively the accuracy of the presentation of a character if that character is allowed to tell his or her own story. Thus such an approach would seem, on the surface, to make for a high degree of reliability, of authenticity. But of course, even if a biography consisted entirely of edited documents, with no ancilliary commentary whatsoever, the 'dramatic' method would still be something of an illusion. For behind the edited extracts lies a powerful, controlling persona, just as there looms the dramatist's shade behind every play enacted on the stage. And the persona (be he editor or biographer or both) has, of course, decided upon the treatment of his materials; and because his treatment is in part latent, it is not always easy to be aware of how those materials have been treated. Has his transcription of them been accurate? Has he added anything? Has he omitted anything important? We saw earlier, when considering the use of sources, that in the case of Froude's Life of Carlyle the judgement of his selection procedure was not easy; in the following chapter we shall see how this question and the related one of editorial accuracy generated more heat than light in the controversy.

But what of Froude's organisation of his materials? Is there anything in the biography to suggest that in arranging these, he is covertly but deliberately manipulating the attitudes of the reader to elicit the desired response? Froude's policy here is, I think, fairly straightforward for it is basically chronological. But there are occasions in the

¹ Thus, at one point, Froude is able to say of Carlyle's mother, 'Her character will unfold itself as the story goes on': Life of Carlyle I, 8; my emphasis.

biography when his acute, very developed sense of timing (which we noticed in his novels) prompts him to recall, for example, a later quotation by one of the Carlyles and place it alongside an earlier event. The resulting juxtaposition frequently has an undercutting or ironic effect. A blatant example of this would be Froude's reproduction of a letter in which Carlyle refers to Mrs Buller (the mother of some children he tutored) as one of the 'ancient dames of quality, that flaunting, painting, patching, nervous, vapourish, jigging, skimming, scolding race of mortals'. In a footnote Froude reproduces a comment of Carlyle's made just one year previously, in which he refers to her as 'one of the most fascinating women he had ever met' (I, 234). A more subtle example is his reproduction of a comment made by Jane Welsh Carlyle many years after she had been married, at the end of a chapter consisting largely of letters between Miss Welsh and Carlyle, discussing where and how they will live once they are married. The comment of Jane Welsh Carlyle reads: 'I married for ambition. Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him - and I am miserable' (I, 302). Here and elsewhere the fact that Froude forces the reader to make links between, say, Miss Welsh at 24 years old and Mrs Carlyle some forty years on, is an indication that he has in mind the larger, complete pattern, and that he wants to share this vision of developing, complex (even at times contradictory) human beings confronting their destinies. Lord David Cecil speaks of the art of the biographer as being similar to 'the maker of pictures in mosaic, his art is one of arrangement: he cannot alter the shape of his material, his task is to invent a design into which his hard little stones of fact can be fitted as they are'.¹ Froude's organisation of his materials certainly shows

¹In James L. Clifford (ed.), Biography as an Art (Selected Criticism, 1560-1960), p. 153.

him to be in perfect control in this biography.

But superimposed on the carefully selected and arranged materials is a highly sophisticated narrative, which occupies a good quarter of the biography. Here Froude helps the reader more explicitly to understand and interpret the events and characters described. It is no merely supplementary 'commentary' to the letters and diary extracts, however: rather, it is a remarkable, sustained, intelligent piece of writing which deserves to be read in its own right. This is not to say that it does not complement the longer dramatic portion of the work: it undoubtedly does, and the result is a nice unity. The main point about the 'narrative' is that it offers the reader an alternative perspective on the persons and events depicted in the documentary part of the text. It works along similar lines to the combination of the impersonal, omniscient third person narrative with the heroine's subjective, first person narrative in Bleak House. The letters and journal entries allow the reader to sympathise, and perhaps even identify with, say, Carlyle, as his life unfolds. The impersonal, 'objective' (because detached) narrative of Froude, however, causes the reader to stand back and to think critically about the characters before him, with the help of the comments of the (almost omniscient) narrator, who can see past, present and future, and so is in a position to help him understand what is happening. The involvement-alienation process is not, of course, so crudely simple as I have described it. There may be times, for example, when the reader feels extremely alienated from Carlyle as his thoughts spill on to paper in his journal - though this may often be due to the reader's imperfect approach and the historical gap which exists between the modern reader and the subject. But it is certainly the case that Froude, anxious to mould the reader's response throughout, offers him in the main narrative a degree of shared knowledge about Carlyle which opens up one or more perspectives which would probably

have remained unopened had the reader only had access to the documents themselves. Froude is thus a sort of 'model reader': his critical reading of the documents stands before the reader as an exemplum of, as well as an aid to, the reading process itself.

How does Froude control and vary the distance between the reader and the subject-matter? The answer lies mainly in his careful deployment of four different techniques, three of which although subtle in effect are readily detectable, and function very effectively on a surface level, and the fourth (his use of allusion) though not so important, operates at a rather deeper level. I will deal first with each of the three main techniques, before discussing briefly Froude's allusion technique.

The techniques which operate 'superficially' tend to draw attention to themselves and are the most easily appreciated. The three which Froude uses most commonly are: addressing the reader through the medium of a specially created persona (the 'Greek chorus'); his use of satire; and his gradual development of an ironical perspective. The initial effect in each case is to create a distance between the reader and a particular character (nearly always Carlyle) or set of events. What happens as a result of this distance being created we may consider as we look at specific examples.

Froude's alter ego - the Greek chorus, as he refers to it (a device with which Froude, in his fondness of Greek literature, would have been very familiar) - is first mentioned after Froude has just quoted the letter from Carlyle to Miss Welsh in which he explains his view of the possibility of marriage, and reminds her that 'the love which will not make sacrifices to its object is no proper love' (I, 293). At the end of the letter, Froude comments:

The functions of a biographer are, like the functions of a Greek chorus, occasionally at the important moments to throw in some moral remarks which seem to fit the situation. The chorus after such a letter would remark, perhaps, on the subtle forms of self-

deception to which the human heart is liable, on the momentous nature of marriage, and how men and women plunge heedlessly into the net, thinking only of the satisfaction of their own immediate wishes.... Self-sacrifice it might say was a noble thing. But a sacrifice which one person might properly make, the other might have no reasonable right to ask or to allow. It would conclude, however, that the issues of human acts are in the hands of the gods, and would hope for the best, in fear and trembling. (I, 295; Froude's ellipsis)

What does the introduction of the chorus in the above passage achieve?

Froude speaks rather glibly (and not, perhaps, without conscious irony)

of the function of the chorus as throwing in some appropriate 'moral remarks'. One is inevitably reminded of the didactic, intrusive narrator of so many Victorian novels. However, this is, I would suggest, rather misleading, for the chorus as Froude uses it is far from gratuitous or ornamental; it is no optional extra, added for the reader's moral edification.¹ It is a highly complex device, serving a number of functions.

First, it establishes a distance between the reader and the subject, between the biographer and his subject, and between the reader and the biographer. The first and third functions ensure that the reader is at least temporarily 'disengaged' from the documents presented and so in a position to think critically about them, instead of assimilating them unreflectingly; the second function (for the persona is distinct - if not always distinguishable - from the biographer and comes between him and the subject) presents the reader with an alternative perspective, a way of regarding the behaviour of, say, Thomas Carlyle or Jane Welsh, from without (hitherto only having heard their own points of view) which, because non-identical to the authoritative voice of the biographer, the reader is free to accept or reject as he pleases, without impairing the tacit contract which exists between him and the biographer. How the reader regards the chorus (the voice of society? a voice dispensing

¹ Froude is partly to blame here: he speaks of 'functions' (plural) but only mentions one of them.

conventional wisdom? or merely a mask or disguise so that the biographer can make his own comments?) will depend upon the response the chorus elicits, and will obviously vary from one reader to the next, depending on his or her ideological preconceptions (in the widest sense of the phrase). Secondly, and partly as a result of the 'distances' established, the chorus forces the reader to widen his sympathies. Here, indeed, it does bear comparison with the moralising third person narrator at its best - in the novels of George Eliot, for example - since the effect is so obviously a beneficial one. Thirdly, it helps the reader to cope better with the meaning of the subject matter: it offers a viewpoint, the partial or total acceptance or rejection of which is a means whereby the reader is enabled to develop his thinking about the characters and events upon which the chorus comments. Finally, it invests specific moments in the narrative (such as the Carlyles contemplating marriage) with a poetic intensity and significance which in consequence reverberate like ripples through the rest of the story. This function is not perhaps so imprecise or vague as it may sound. When we read, after another of Carlyle's letters, that '[t]he Greek chorus would have shaken its head ominously, and uttered its musical cautions, over the temper displayed in this letter', the note of foreboding present in this comment and the sense that the seeds of a tragedy are being sown before the reader's eyes, are inescapable even though the precise implications of the chorus' interruption are not at this stage clear.¹

Froude's use of irony and satire in the biography are two devices which work in a broadly similar way to the chorus since both present the reader with a series of different ad hoc perspectives (the effects of which are cumulative) from which to view Carlyle and those with whom he comes into contact. They are devices which Froude uses to modify

¹ Life of Carlyle I, 360. John Drinkwater who, in 'The Great Victorians', The Outline of Literature, 2 vols (1923-24), described Froude as 'the best of [Carlyle's] biographers, significantly, à propos of Froude's other writings, commented that 'his knowledge of stage effect is perfect' - II, 548-49.

the eulogistic notes which are sometimes struck as he writes with warmth and sympathy of his old mentor and friend. They are the wry asides which the chorus is not permitted to make. Examples abound - many of them humorous. Froude's language is redolent with irony, and he was a master of finely modulated tones.¹ Nearly always subtle (occasionally he sneers or writes sarcastically, but never resorts to the harsh invective in which Carlyle himself frequently indulged) Froude manoeuvres the reader into differing positions, sometimes whispering in his ear, at other times pointing an accusing finger at Carlyle, and sometimes just winking at the reader or wearing an amused smile. The following examples illustrate these various stances. I shall consider his use of irony first.

My first example occurs at the end of the chapter in which we read of the Carlyles' marriage.² Froude mentions Jane Welsh's expectations of a happy marriage and then glances forward to remark that although 'the reality was not like the dream' in that their married life was 'not happy in the roseate sense of happiness' yet their lives were 'grandly beautiful'. But he immediately undercuts this verdict with an anecdote which in its power of contrast and measured understatement is remarkably revealing:

I well remember the bright assenting laugh with which [Mrs Carlyle] once responded to some words of mine when the propriety was being discussed of relaxing the marriage laws. I had said that the true way to look at marriage was as a discipline of character. (I, 381-82)

The irony is of a sophisticated and unusual kind, for the naive statement of the younger Froude (which presumably, in Mrs Carlyle's view, was truer than he realised in her case) is self-deprecatingly held up by the older Froude almost as a warning to would-be rosy-spectacled readers who might

¹ The only problem is that one is occasionally left in some doubt as to whether Froude is being ironic or not in specific instances, particularly when what we suspect might be a remark genuinely meant has been preceded or followed by an obviously ironical remark, as not infrequently happens. Cf. Life of Carlyle IV, 226-27.

² Life of Carlyle I, 378-82.

be inclined to ignore or water down some of Froude's more serious asseverations about the Carlyle marriage. Occasionally, the ironical turn of phrase suggests a plurality of meanings as alternatives to the superficial, ostensible one, thereby leaving open the possibilities of interpretation. Froude's casual remark that 'for some reason, no artist ever succeeded with a portrait of him', for example, leaves the reader wondering (III, 235). Where the irony is heavier, it is usually clearer and perhaps more effective. In the following case, Froude is referring to Carlyle's stay with the Ashburtons at one of their country estates. Carlyle had no taste for shooting and in a letter to his wife criticised those peers of the realm whose tastes differed from his in this; Froude comments:

Poor 'shooting paradise'! It answered the purpose it was intended for. Work, even to the aristocracy, is exacting in these days. Pleasure is even more exacting; and unless they could rough it now and then in primitive fashion and artificial plainness of living, they would sink under the burden of their splendours and the weariness of their duties.¹

The real drift of Froude's meaning is clear: and the satire which is also present in these lines is directed (by implication) at both Carlyle and the aristocracy.

Froude's satirical jibes are more gently mocking or ridiculing in nature. Consider the following statements:

governments, in fact, do not look out for servants among² men who are speculating about the nature of the universe...

The cocks were locked up next door, and the fireworks at Cremorne were silent, and the rain fell and cooled the July air; and Carlyle slept, and the universe became once more tolerable.³

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 15. Froude himself, it should perhaps be pointed out, was an expert shot.

² Life of Carlyle III, 65. The reference is to a 'national education' scheme of Carlyle's which came to nothing.

³ Life of Carlyle IV, 142. Carlyle was perpetually troubled by noise: the crowing of the cocks next door in this instance.

The Eternities, however fond he was¹ of their company, left him time to think of other things.

The effect of each of these statements is to deflate the image of Carlyle before our eyes, so that he appears at times ridiculous, vain, petty, arrogant, impatient - in short, human after all, and only of limited importance, a mere grain of dust in the universe. This technique is carried further when Carlyle is seen in relation to animals. In a letter to his brother Carlyle remarks how one Basil Montague, in offering him a situation as a clerk, probably regards him as a 'polar bear' who, 'reduced to a state of dyspeptic dejection, might safely be trusted tending rabbits'; Froude quickly turns Carlyle's metaphor against him, with a satirical flourish:

The 'polar bear,' it might have occurred to Carlyle, is a difficult beast to find accommodation for. People do not eagerly open their doors to such an inmate...after all, situations suited for polar bears are not easily found outside the Zoological Gardens. (III, 71)

Elsewhere the picture of Carlyle being 'obliged to Nero' (Mrs Carlyle's dog) and forgiving the cat for their reception of him on his return home from a visit, has a similar deflating effect (IV, 64). The metaphor of Carlyle as a bird of prey, sick and moulting after exerting himself to write Latter-day Pamphlets is another instance of the same satiric technique.²

In the end, Froude's use of both irony and satire to indicate Carlyle's weaknesses, establish the littleness of the man to set alongside the irony-free, satire-free picture we get elsewhere of Carlyle as a great man: the whole picture is thus a balanced one. We are aware of the 'beast' in him as well as the God, of the fool and the genius. Nowhere has Froude's conception of the essentially paradoxical nature of reality (and human nature in particular) found a better expression than in this biography.

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 226. This refers to Carlyle's feeling that he 'had the Eternities for company, in defect of suitabler'.

² Life of Carlyle IV, 68, 86.

Froude's use of allusion is another means in the narrative proper of exercising a degree of hidden control over the reader's interpretation of his subject matter. Insofar as the reader is aware of Froude's literary allusions, another level of interpretation thus becomes a possibility. The difficulty lies in assessing the extent to which a perceptive and cultivated reader (Victorian or modern) might reasonably be expected to respond to such possibilities as Froude may be deemed to offer within the confines of his 1,850 page text. John Clubbe, the only critic ever to have noted and attempted to analyse Froude's 'network' of allusions, identifies two principal patterns.¹ The first set of allusions is drawn from an epic model: Spenser's Faerie Queene. Carlyle is the Red Cross Knight, his wife is Una and Lady Ashburton Gloriana (with elements of Duessa). Clubbe is certainly right in identifying these allusions and undoubtedly Froude meant them to provide an analogy for the reader by which he could rightly judge (in his view) the relationships between the three characters so depicted.² Clubbe's very interesting interpretation is not, however, entirely convincing: one feels that he over-emphasises the importance of the Spenserian allusions which, after all, only occur in one volume of the biography and have the ring of a convenient 'rule of thumb' approach about them rather than that of an organised frame of reference. The second pattern of allusions in the biography, in Clubbe's view, is suggested by the title of his article, 'Grecian Destiny'. Froude's model here is Greek tragedy: Carlyle is Oedipus, and Jane Welsh, Iphigenia.³ Here, I feel, Clubbe is stretching the 'evidence' (what little there is) too far. As he admits, at no point in

¹ 'Grecian Destiny: Froude's Portrait of the Carlyles', in John Clubbe (ed.), Carlyle and his Contemporaries (Durham, North Carolina, 1976), pp. 317-53. Cf. also his introduction to his abridged ed. of the Life of Carlyle (1979). His rationale for Froude's use of allusion is that Froude wished 'to make implications regarding the Carlyles which he could not make directly' ('Grecian Destiny', pp. 323-24).

² See Life of Carlyle III, 119, 367-68, 397 ff., 414-25, 445.

³ Presumably it is Carlyle's mother who is Jocasta to his Oedipus: see above, p. 205, n. 1. Jane Baillie Welsh is Iphigenia insofar as she 'sacrifices' her life to her husband and his career.

the course of the biography does Froude refer to Oedipus, and Iphigenia is referred to only once (and even then not by name). Clubbe bases his claim that Froude meant his readers to perceive the connection he supposedly had in mind between the Carlyles and characters from Greek tragedy upon the evidence that in the first place Froude knew of and delineated these characters in other writings in terms which suggest parallels with the lives of the Carlyles, and in the second place that Froude refers to Carlyle as Oedipus in My Relations with Carlyle. But this latter work, written in 1887, three years after the last two volumes of the biography were published, can hardly be acceptable evidence that Froude, in the biography itself, meant his readers to recognise the parallels Clubbe suggests. It is, of course, possible that Froude had the parallel in mind as he wrote the biography: we cannot say. But the text of the Life as it stands warrants no such conclusion. Clubbe's post-Freudian interpretation of the lives of the Carlyles as obliquely alluded to through literary analogies in the biography is thus extremely specious.

It is my contention that Froude does indeed make use of allusion but that the allusions do not form part of a total 'system' of analogies: rather, they are to be conceived of as used on an ad hoc basis to highlight the significance of specific points (for example, aspects of Carlyle's character) in the course of the narrative. Thus, pace Clubbe, Froude several times alludes to the protagonists of certain Shakespearean tragic plays, particularly Macbeth and Hamlet.¹ This is not to say that he sees Carlyle as either of the above characters, but that at specific points in the narrative he may point to well known fictional figures to illustrate an aspect of his subject's behaviour.

¹ See Clubbe's introduction to his abridged ed., p. 25. I have counted eight separate allusions to these two plays.

Two examples will have to suffice. Froude has just been describing Carlyle's increasing weakness with the advent of old age; he continues: 'to Carlyle, as to Hamlet, the modern world was but "a pestilent congregation of vapours"'.¹ And immediately afterwards Froude tells the reader how he 'often...heard [Carlyle] repeat Macbeth's words' (and Froude reprints Macbeth's famous 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' speech).² The first allusion catches the mood of Carlyle's eccentric, brooding melancholy introspection: had Froude continued to quote from the same speech of Hamlet's, the reader would have been reminded of the greatness of man ('how like a god') and the littleness of man ('this quintessence of dust'). The Macbeth quotation strikes several chords, chief among which are despair, nihilism, remorse and general world-weariness - all of which qualities are to be found in Carlyle the old man.³ Froude's use of allusion serves as a practical tool for the reader, confirming impressions gained elsewhere or (more rarely) suggesting fresh interpretations of characters and events. Froude makes an effective though limited use of it: its success is difficult to adjudicate however, as much depends on the alertness and memory of the reader who has a great deal of material to deal with. It could be misleading to stress it as a device making for unity.

(b) 'A Rembrandt picture'

Froude's Life of Carlyle is a remarkably even, consistent work of art, richly suggestive and evocative of its period and both penetrating and revealing of Carlyle as a person and a thinker. For wealth of vivid, realistic detail it would be difficult to match with other biographies of

¹ Life of Carlyle IV, 484-85. The reference is to Hamlet, Act II, Sc. ii, l. 322.

² Macbeth, V. v. 19-28.

³ See Life of Carlyle II, 495; IV, 280, 340, 346, 381, 494.

comparable scope. Carlyle himself lives and breathes in these pages: he was the sort of writer whose personality emerges in any case in his works to a very large extent, and it is a tribute to Froude's ability as a biographer to acknowledge that we come close to knowing the man and his ideas as well as we know either through his published writings. How accurate or truthful a picture of Carlyle Froude has given to the world is more difficult to assess: this question will be considered in depth in the next chapter. But of the living-ness of the portrait of Carlyle and his age, and of the manner in which Froude communicates such a vision there can be no doubt. One reaches the end of the biography imagining that one could predict Carlyle's probable response to any number of given hypothetical (or real) modern situations - religious, political, scientific - so well does one come to know him. There is the sense that Froude has grasped the heart of the matter, that he has caught Carlyle's essence in this book.

The work is not altogether without its faults: it is possible to detect imbalances of emphasis here and there, as we have seen in the case of the portrayal of the Carlyles in the early volumes, but this loss of balance is rectified in the later ones. It might perhaps be urged that Froude devotes a disproportionate space to Carlyle's early life, though Froude himself consciously chose to do so.¹ Occasionally Froude is too concise where one would have liked fuller treatment or slightly more prolix in other instances than one feels the circumstances warranted. Very occasionally he is a little repetitious,² but the work as a whole is certainly not too long: indeed, the narrative exhibits a remarkable economy, and the length owes itself to the great swathes of letters

¹ See Life of Carlyle IV, 447.

² See, for example, Life of Carlyle I, 16-18, 43.

and journal entires which Froude deliberately reproduced so that the reader may immerse himself thoroughly in the mind of Carlyle.

There is not enough space here to consider the incidental beauties (such as Froude's remarkable gift for summarising ideas and information¹) or Froude's brilliant prose style. Out of a huge plethora of materials, Froude has created a warm, honest, living portrait of a tremendously influential Victorian figure. His synopsis of Carlyle's religious and political views, and the re-creation of the intellectual atmosphere of early and mid-Victorian Britain are superb indeed. In his selection and dramatic treatment of his materials, and in the sophisticated narrative which encompasses them, Froude is at his very best as a literary craftsman. It is a challenging work, written from a committed standpoint, yet Froude himself (generally very self-effacing²) is often remarkably detached for one who knew and loved Carlyle so well. For its perceptions, for its total unity,³ for the biographer's gift for capturing evanescent moments, for the sense of control (it is truly a very well orchestrated work),⁴ for its humour, for its ability to move, enlighten and instruct, it has to be accounted Froude's greatest and most substantial, lasting achievement, and certainly as the greatest biography of the last century.

¹ See, for example, Life of Carlyle I, 314-20.

² See Life of Carlyle IV, 97.

³ Clubbe (Introduction, p. 62) claims that the work lacks unity: this is clearly not the case, for Carlyle himself is the principle of unity.

⁴ Daniel Aaron, in his preface to his edited work, Studies in Biography, (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), puts it rather well when he describes Froude as 'ever in control of his corruscating subject' (p. vi).

Froude referred to his book as 'a Rembrandt picture',¹ and certainly for its artistic encapsulation of the central paradox of Carlyle's greatness and littleness, the description holds good. There is also a sense in which it could be regarded as something of a metaphor for the Janus-like nineteenth century; for the subject matter of the work looks back in many ways to the past (to the middle ages, to the Reformation, to the eighteenth century - the century of the French revolution, in which Carlyle was born) while the artistry of the work looks forward to the twentieth century and to a new era for biography (Froude has been called 'the first modern biographer'²). In this respect it certainly deserves to be read also by non-Victorian specialists and indeed by anybody interested in the development of an important literary form.

¹ Paul, p. 331.

² Clubbe, Introduction, p. 46: a remark the significance of which will become clearer in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

'DEPTHS AND INFINITE WINDINGS' : THE LIFE OF CARLYLE (II)

In the previous chapter we saw how the interest for us of Froude's Life of Carlyle resided largely in its subject matter (the portrait of Carlyle, man and thinker, in the context of the Victorian age) and in Froude's brilliant, assured artistic treatment of his materials. But although this largely explains the work's interest, it does not wholly do so. Before assessing its full significance some further questions, with which this chapter is concerned, have first to be explored. These are concerned with the effect the publication of the biography nearly a century ago had at the time, and the critical reactions to it since then. It will be seen that Froude's biography had wide-reaching implications for the way in which people were to think of Carlyle, the prophet of his age, and indeed for the way in which biography as a genre thereafter developed.

Below I consider first of all the critical reception of the biography: the early reviews, and the (albeit scanty) development of critical opinion on it since then up to the present day.

The next rather longer section provides a brief survey of the controversy to which the biography's publication gave rise. Here I examine the dominant issues, looking incidentally at the principal works of the controversy. After examining later studies of the controversy, I try to give a balanced summary of current critical opinion on the issues in question, my own necessarily tentative judgements on them emerging in the process. I also look briefly at a selection of post-Froudean biographical writings on Carlyle in order to evaluate the extent to which later biographers have accepted Froude's portrait of the Carlyles.

In conclusion, both in the light of the above critical-historical survey, and in the light of my examination of the Life itself in the last chapter, I assess the overall value and significance of Froude's biography for the literary historian of the Victorians.

Critical reception of the Life of Carlyle

Three problems confront anyone attempting to give an account of the critical reception of Froude's Life. In the first place it is difficult to avoid looking also at the reviews of Froude's editions of Carlyle's Reminiscences and the Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle. This is so because some reviewers refer, for example, to the first two volumes of the Life as an instalment of the biography, following the Reminiscences, or else refer in the course of their review to those aspects of the earlier work and its reception with which the reader is supposed to be familiar. Secondly, it is difficult in looking at the 'critical' reception of the biography, referring in passing to those reviews of the ancilliary works which have something to say of Froude as a biographer, to avoid getting drawn into the history of the controversy, as the reviews quite often tend to be wholly or partly controversial in nature, some scarcely referring to the actual text at all. Finally, partly because the biography was issued in two separate parts and partly because of the recognised importance of Carlyle as an influential figure, the number of reviews the Life received is greater than for any other of Froude's works - probably even exceeding the number of notices his History of England received. Having traced the reviews, one finds oneself confronted with a great bulk of material; Goetzman, in his bibliography of writings on and by Froude, lists no less than 122 separate reviews of the biography, the Reminiscences and the Letters and Memorials which appeared in fifty different newspapers and journals.¹ Although many of these are to be found in non-British journals or in English provincial newspapers, thereby proving either difficult to obtain or less pressing reading, the considerable number

¹ Robert Goetzman, James Anthony Froude: a Bibliography of Studies (New York, 1977).

of reviews which remains is nonetheless difficult to summarise adequately. In the following pages is my attempt to provide as faithful a picture as possible of the critical reception from 1881 to the present. I have been necessarily highly selective, trying to include those responses which seem to me to be either interesting in themselves or more generally representative or both: I hope that the variety as well as the similarity of response is below illustrated. I have drawn my early examples almost entirely from some of the better-known and then more widely read national periodicals with which Froude's readers would have been most familiar and which themselves no doubt helped to shape public opinion.

An early reviewer represents what we might term the 'mainstream Victorian response' to Froude's biographical endeavours.¹ The attitude first struck by this writer is one of hushed reverence for the lately dead. Any biographer should practice a 'certain reserve' while showing the reader 'a man at his best'.² But the same writer also insists that 'it is not so great an evil to speak ill of the recently dead as to contribute a false account of them'.³ These statements illustrate the fundamental contradiction inherent in the position of many reviewers of Froude's biography. They stress the importance of providing a truthful picture of the dead person on the one hand, while on the other hand, inveighing against any picture which fails to keep back any of the subject's (unspecified) unpleasant characteristics: for the biography must edify at all costs.⁴ Froude's very frank biography did not comply with the last two conditions, in the eyes of several reviewers.⁵ The

¹ Julia Wedgwood, 'Mr. Froude as a Biographer', Contemporary Review, 39 (May, 1881), 821-42.

² op. cit., p. 822.

³ op. cit., p. 821.

⁴ Cf. op. cit., p. 842: 'When a biography has to be written, give a picture of the whole man. Give his failings, in their due proportion, and with that due reserve which is indeed rightly understood only a part of proportion.' In other words, tell the truth, but please do not, for Heaven's sake, upset us!

⁵ As we shall see, it was not wholly frank: Carlyle's alleged impotence is perhaps only obliquely hinted at, and his supposed use of physical violence once on his wife is not referred to explicitly.

present reviewer, confining herself to Froude's edition of the Reminiscences, finds the picture of Carlyle therein painted misleading because it reflects the older, morbid Carlyle looking back with 'pathetic' remorse on his younger days. Froude is seen as an iconoclast who has wasted the biographical powers with which he was well endowed to make 'a worthy contribution' to the public's understanding of the life of Carlyle: instead he 'has hurt tender recollections and sacred feelings'.¹

Such is the atmosphere in which the Reminiscences and the biography was received, the precise characteristics of which we shall explore further in the next section. But although many reviewers commented adversely on the propriety of publishing Carlyle's remains, and appeared somewhat shocked at some of Froude's honest disclosures about Carlyle's selfishness, this did not prevent them from generally regarding the biography in a favourable light. This was partly because they saw the earlier volumes in particular as correcting or qualifying the rather morose picture of Carlyle in the Reminiscences.² But more importantly when looking at the biography in their capacity as literary critics, they were forced, on the whole, to acknowledge Froude's skilful presentation of Carlyle. The reviewer writing in The Athenaeum, for example, notes Froude's special ability in the first two volumes to sum up characters in neat phrases and quotations, and commends the method he has adopted throughout the biography, identifying it and commenting upon it thus:

He has adopted the modern theory of biography and his entourage to disclose the character of his hero ipsissimus verbis. His comments are few and judicious, and there is little if any hero-worship in this account of the apostle of hero-worship...Mr. Froude has acquitted himself admirably, and it is rare indeed to find a biography crammed with interest and so free from unnecessary triviality. Judged merely as mémoires pour servir, these volumes must take rank among the most valuable of their class. As a contribution to our knowledge of

¹ op. cit., p. 825. Cf. Tennyson's poem, 'The Dead Prophet', which was probably prompted by the Life of Carlyle.

² The reviewer in The Saturday Review (see next page) takes this attitude.

Carlyle the man they offer full material and adequate comments...¹

The writer in The Saturday Review does not judge the biography so favourably, seeing it as a somewhat fragmentary work: but this, he admits, is perhaps unavoidable if it is to reflect its subject, for Carlyle

was a partial Chaos which never became a beautiful Cosmos; and, as the man himself was or was not, so must be his biography. Mr. Froude, who may be almost called the Iconoclast of his own idol, had perhaps no other choice than to set him up in the fragmentary way which has been adopted.²

The reviewer in All the Year Round, on the other hand, while critical of Froude's procedure in publishing the Reminiscences separately in advance of the biography, is unequivocally positive in his praise for what had by then been published of the Life itself: 'for the manner in which Mr. Froude has performed his task in these recent volumes there can be nothing but praise' he comments.³ He notices the dramatic-narrative method of composition and again the word 'judicious' occurs when describing Froude's comments on the materials. Froude's 'high literary reputation will suffer no loss through this work' in his view.⁴

The unsigned review of the 'Early Life' in Notes and Queries is written by one who, while critical of Carlyle's character and message, nevertheless accepts without qualification Froude's account of Carlyle.⁵ He finds the biography 'stimulating reading' and commends the slight

¹ The Athenaeum, Nos. 2841-42 (8, 15 April 1882), 435-36, 467-68 (p. 435). The author presumably has in mind the many 'Life and Letters' type biographies, then popular, which contained many letters of the subject.

² Saturday Review, 53 (22, 29 April 1882), 499-500, 533-34 (p. 500). The reviewer had not, of course, seen the as then unpublished later volumes of the biography, so his remarks on the 'chaotic' nature of the work are somewhat out of place.

³ All the Year Round, N.S.29 (20 May 1882), 324-30 (p. 325).

⁴ op. cit., p. 326.

⁵ N & Q, Series VI, 5 (3 June 1882), 438-39. The reviewer thus not surprisingly finds Mrs Carlyle a 'far more attractive figure'. The response is unrepresentative in its unquestioning acceptance of Froude's account: most of the reviews I have read accept Froude's account on the whole as true, but tend to qualify their acceptance.

'threads' with which Froude connects the materials: 'they are in every case adequate' and '[m]uch that Mr. Froude says deserves to be quoted'.¹ The reviewer also regards Froude's justification of his biographical approach as outlined in his preface to the Life (see my previous chapter), where he quoted from Carlyle's review of Lockhart, as 'ingenious' and thoroughly convincing: 'No apology whatever is needed for the volume [sic] now published'.² H.R. Foxe-Browne similarly welcomes and justifies Froude's 'precise' account of Carlyle's early life, though he is somewhat more percipient than the author of the review just mentioned in detecting a certain 'chivalrous bias' (with which he concurs) on Froude's part towards Jane Welsh Carlyle.³ He does not agree, however, with Froude's interpretation of the husband-wife relationship. Here we encounter another strange characteristic of the early reviews of the Life: the reviewer, who nearly always never knew Carlyle or his wife personally at all, implies that he knows better than Froude, despite having little or no evidence upon which to base such a judgement. Foxe-Browne depicts Froude as having 'misunderstood' matters, as exaggerating certain elements ('most wives are martyrs, whether their husbands are geniuses or not'); the Carlyles' marriage was basically happy, he insists.⁴ The anonymous reviewer in The Spectator praises Froude's unobtrusiveness ('the biographer is scarcely seen at all') and thinks the work almost perfect: 'a more admirable life [sic] we cannot imagine'.⁵

Herbert Cowell, in his review of the Reminiscences and the first two volumes of the biography, praises the Life for the fairness, fidelity and 'balance' of the picture with its 'striking tints' and Froude himself for his 'diligence' and 'judgement'.⁶ But he is unimpressed

¹ *ibid.*

² *ibid.*

³ 'Carlyle and his wife', Gentleman's Magazine, 152 (June, 1882), 685-705 (p. 687).

⁴ *op. cit.*, pp. 687, 705.

⁵ The Spectator, 55 (April, 1882), 468-69, 530-32 (pp. 530, 532).

⁶ Blackwood's Magazine, 132 (July, 1882), 18-35 (pp. 19, 22, 23).

with Froude's 'scissors and paste' method - an uncommon response to the biography. 'Printing a variety of selected materials for a biography, in preference to executing a completed picture of a life, can scarcely be called a work of art', he argues, thereby missing the point of the 'dramatic' aspect of Froude's method as I have outlined it in the last chapter.¹

More strangely still, this reviewer finds Froude's English 'barbarous' and thinks that more information is needed on Carlyle's message and influence for which Froude accounts in 'vague generalities' rather than in 'closely reasoned detail'.² Here again, he is unrepresentative: most reviewers, although by now disenchanted with Carlyle's views (remember they are writing in the 1880s), largely accept that Froude's summary of them is at least adequate and fair. The strength of the biography, for Cowell, lies in Froude's portrayal of Carlyle's character: the reader is given the materials he needs for judging this 'in the process of development' although Froude does dwell rather too much, he feels, on the 'scars' and 'blotches' in Carlyle's makeup.³ In this naive, at times contradictory, and often condescending review of Froude's work, Cowell sees Froude as working with other people's compliments to Carlyle 'after the fashion of third-rate novelists, who, feeling that they cannot draw their heroine, make the inferior characters in their plot converse and exclaim about her merits'.⁴ Certainly Froude, drawing on his earlier experience, uses techniques found in the novel (whatever the quality) as we have seen, but the specific device mentioned by Cowell is to be found only in an entirely different biography of Carlyle by Froude which exists, one suspects, only in the reviewer's somewhat colourful imagination.

¹ op. cit., p. 18.

² op. cit., pp. 18-19. Again, the reviewer at this time would not of course have seen the later two volumes. Cf. p. 34.

³ op. cit., pp. 223-33.

⁴ op. cit., p. 35. In conclusion, the reviewer, anticipating the later volumes, remarks that 'we trust that...Mr. Froude may...prove himself equal to the occasion...' (p. 35).

Contrast this with the more representative response such as that which appears, oddly enough, in The Month.¹ This reviewer sees the biography as a refutation of the charges made against Froude at the time of the publication of the Reminiscences, and praises in particular the very method which Cowell misunderstood and criticised, whereby Froude 'has judiciously kept himself in the background, allowing Carlyle to tell his own story as far as possible'.²

The reviews of the latter part of the biography, dealing with Carlyle's life in London, exhibit a similar variety of response, though with notable exceptions they seem to agree on the excellence of Froude's literary artistry as a biographer.³ G.S. Venables sounds the characteristic note when he remarks that 'Mr. Froude's completion of his Life of Carlyle may be welcomed with almost unqualified satisfaction'.⁴ Carlyle's life, he thinks, 'could have found no more sympathetic and eloquent narrator'.⁵ As with many of the reviews of the biography, this one has a substantial space devoted to either summarising or quoting from Froude's account of Carlyle - an account with which Venables, who knew Carlyle, generally agrees. He especially commends Froude's comments on Carlyle's style since Froude, he thinks, speaks with the authority of an accomplished artist. The reviewer in The Spectator while acknowledging the work's 'great and permanent interest' found the Life 'impressive' but 'painful' partly because we are given rather too much of the old Carlyle in reverie.⁶ John Morley's review is a characteristically sane and balanced but lively critical discussion which illustrates something I shall touch upon later in the chapter: namely,

¹ The Month, 46 (September, 1882), 139-45.

² op. cit., p. 145.

³ An example would be the review which appeared in The Athenaeum, No. 2974 (25 October 1884), 524-26. Here Froude is compared unfavourably with Lockhart. His works ('crude compilations') are too long and over-frank.

⁴ Fortnightly Review, 42 (November, 1884), 594-608 (p. 594).

⁵ op. cit., p. 596.

⁶ The Spectator, 60 (October, November, 1884), 1401-02, 1406-07, 1438-39.

that intelligent authors and critics - and especially later biographers - were influenced by Froude's Life of Carlyle and the debate it provoked to the extent that they were forced to question hitherto commonly held assumptions about the function of the biographer and the nature of biography, which in turn led to a revitalisation of the genre.¹ Morley is only too aware of the complexity of human nature so that he realises what difficulties attend the biographer's task in general, and the problems in the case of Carlyle in particular. In his view Froude has arrived at and presented a truthful account of Carlyle in the biography. Morley believed this to be so, insofar as he could reasonably judge on the evidence available - and this despite the fact ~~that~~ he found Carlyle's character and teaching alike antipathetic. Froude is surely right, he considers, about the importance and influence of Carlyle and Tennyson in the passage quoted in my previous chapter. Froude's method and style he cannot praise too highly: 'Nobody living is Mr. Froude's superior in the art of clear exposition' he notes.²

Criticism of Froude's Life of Carlyle after 1884 is increasingly difficult to disentangle from the 'literature of controversy': indeed, of criticism properly considered there is but little, and what little there is is quite often written from a partisan viewpoint and sometimes tells us as much about the author as about Froude's biography. Frederick Harrison's article on Froude's Life of Carlyle is an early example of

¹ 'The Man of Letters as Hero', Macmillan's Magazine, 51 (November, 1884), 62-70.

These assumptions are illustrated in Julia Wedgwood's review, discussed above and epitomised below in the article by Mrs Oliphant, 'The Ethics of Biography', which appeared in the Contemporary Review, 44 (July, 1883), 76-93. But even Morley is not without the very Victorian streak of hurt refined feelings, as he shows when he remarks after having alluded to Froude's account of Carlyle's relations with his wife, 'here let us close the distressing page' (op. cit., p. 65).

² op. cit., p. 68.

what I mean.¹ His 'discussion' (if we may call it so) is an example of the extreme sort of response which is encountered in the personal attacks on Froude in the controversial articles dealt with below. Harrison has been told things he 'would rather not have heard'.² As a result of reading the biography, he asks the reader rhetorically, 'do we really know [Carlyle] better?'³ The answer is a decided 'no' for in Froude's hands the 'biographical instrument' is 'a hindrance and a source of error'.⁴ It seems that Froude ('a master of literary picturing') has exaggerated small incidents, and blown them up out of all proportion so that it is 'as if we were caught up again into the bewildering realm of Brobdingnag': astonishingly, this criticism is advanced despite Froude's own admission that in Carlyle we are dealing with a figure who is himself a source of much exaggeration.⁵ More positively, Harrison does see Froude's biography as a 'drama of real life' and concedes that it is 'recorded by one of the greatest dramatists in our language'.⁶ His somewhat contradictory comments on what the biography reveals however do capture, I think, part of the interest of it:

And yet, perhaps it is as well that now and then the veil should be lifted from the fireside, and from off the human heart of man and wife. It is a mystery that no poem and no romance has ever solved. What depths and infinite windings are there in the heart and life of man!⁷

Froude's first biographer, Herbert Paul, is one of the earliest writers to compare the biography with Boswell's Life of Johnson.⁸ Because it is so honest a portrait it 'lives, and will live, when biographies written

¹ Originally written for the January 1885 issue of the North American Review, this article is reprinted in his book, The Choice of Books and Other Literary Pieces (1891), pp. 173-99.

² op. cit., p. 176.

³ loc. cit.

⁴ op. cit., p. 177.

⁵ op. cit., pp. 186, 179.

⁶ op. cit., p. 185.

⁷ op. cit., p. 185.

⁸ Paul, p. 288.

for flattery or for edification have been consigned to boxes or to lumber-rooms'.¹ Even allowing for 'mistakes' the work (especially the last two volumes) must be regarded as a masterpiece, since it illustrates to the full Carlyle's 'essential qualities'.² Froude's second biographer, W.H. Dunn, sees it as a work which 'can never be superseded'.³ He singles out for praise Froude's style in the latter part of the biography, which Froude wrote 'so thoroughly possessed by his subject that he forgot himself': although he was exhausted, the style, comments Dunn, is 'confident, unhurried, sure'.⁴ Elsewhere he argues that Froude should be considered Boswell's equal: the biography belongs in 'the very forefront of English biography'.⁵ He praises Froude's 'skilful selection' and the work's consequent 'remarkable unity'.⁶ Harold Nicolson, in his study of English biography, claims that Froude 'was the first to introduce into English biography the element of satire'.⁷ Froude is described as reacting against a strictly scientific method on the one hand, and a commemorative, hagiographical method on the other: he favoured 'truth' and indeed, writes Nicolson, 'the final impression left by his work is one of absolute and convincing actuality'.⁸

¹ Paul, p. 313.

² Paul, p. 322. Although writing as late as 1905, Paul still thinks that Froude should, out of tact and good taste, have omitted the more pointed of Carlyle's comments, such as his description of Keble as an ape.

³ Dunn II, 499. Cf. Richard D. Graham, The Masters of Victorian Literature 1837-1897 (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 211.

⁴ Dunn II, 498.

⁵ W.H. Dunn, English Biography (1916), p. 168.

⁶ loc. cit.

⁷ The Development of English Biography (1927), p. 131.

⁸ op. cit., pp. 128-29.

Only two post-second world war critics have looked at Froude's biography in some detail and, significantly, both rate the biography extremely highly. A.O.J. Cockshut, indeed, in his fascinating discussion of the work, accounts Froude 'the greatest of all our biographers'.¹ This is because of Froude's accomplished 'dialectical' incarnation of Pascal's vision of contrast of the greatness and littleness of man in the tragically painted portrait of Carlyle with its 'lights and shades'. Among the beauties of the biography he observes is the manner in which Froude conveys the sadness of the passing of time ('by showing us a man ill-adapted to the time process itself'²) and, above all, Froude's portrayal of the Carlyle marriage which Cockshut thinks is excellent.³ His interpretation of Froude's view of the relation between the man and the thinker in Carlyle is somewhat misleading, as it involves a rather pronounced re-drawing of the lines. According to Cockshut, in Froude's view 'all Carlyle's vices were domestic, all his virtues effectively operative in the great world'.⁴ This is something of an oversimplification; at best it is very broadly true. For, as I indicated in the last chapter, Froude does on rare occasions criticise Carlyle's ideas and, more importantly, he does repeatedly emphasise the 'private', 'domestic' virtues which exist alongside his 'vices' (Froude does not use this word).⁵ I think Cockshut is right, however, in emphasising that Froude tried 'to detach the man from the doctrine' though I cannot agree that he did this

¹ Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century (1974), p. 152. The remark is ambiguous: Cockshut probably means 'of all the biographers we consider in this book'.

² loc. cit. His quotation of T.S. Eliot's phrase 'A lifetime burning in every moment' to illustrate the nature of Froude's achievement does seem to me entirely apt: as I pointed out above, at any given moment in the narrative Froude is able to show the reader the whole Carlyle - past and future as well as present - so that the smallest incidents can sometimes have a rather fatalistic tinge to them.

³ op. cit., p. 165.

⁴ op. cit., p. 146.

⁵ Froude often stresses Carlyle's other side (the 'lights' as he calls them): see, for example, Life of Carlyle II, 491-92.

'without knowing it himself'.¹ Certainly Froude seems largely unaware of Carlyle's obvious deficiencies as a thinker; certainly he saw Carlyle the thinker as 'inevitably triumphant in the eyes of posterity'; certainly he saw Carlyle's life as essentially tragic; but Froude very explicitly, on several occasions, states his belief in Carlyle's core of moral goodness (despite his faults): 'there never was a man...whose conduct in life would better bear the fiercest light which can be thrown upon it', and again: 'I learnt to reverence the man as profoundly as I honoured the teacher'.² In short, there is a gap between the public and the private Carlyle, but they do intersect: Froude is far from diagnosing some form of split personality. His work is dialectical, but it is an even more complex and finely balanced dialectic (with areas of grey, of umbra and penumbra, to extend Froude's own metaphor) than Cockshut's account might suggest.

Clubbe's even fuller discussions of the biography also emphasise what Cockshut refers to as Froude's 'sense of drama and destiny'.³ I have already explained why I fundamentally disagree with Clubbe's main thesis (and therefore its attractive implications) in his article 'Grecian Destiny' in my discussion of Froude's use of allusion.⁴ Much of what Clubbe has to say elsewhere in the article and in his introduction to the abridged edition is nevertheless very astute and interesting. He points out how the biography was designed 'more for posterity than for [Froude's] contemporaries', - something which perhaps explains the unease of some of the reviewers who sometimes wrote as if they were not altogether

¹ op. cit., p. 149.

² Life of Carlyle III, 5, 316-17.

³ op. cit., p. 152.

⁴ See 'Grecian Destiny', p. 353, for Clubbe on the extent to which 'Froude the artist betrayed Froude the biographer' (a false distinction) because of the Greek models of Carlyle and his wife.

sure of what Froude was really saying.¹ He endorses Froude's version of the Carlyle marriage resoundingly.² He does detect flaws in the work (he thinks that 'one would hardly guess from Froude's pages that Carlyle was a social and, at times, convivial being'³) but in fact his view of the biography (he is 'dazzled' by its 'literary artistry'⁴) is very favourable indeed. Reviewing Clubbe's abridged edition, A.J.P. Taylor had only praise for Froude's achievement⁵ and Kay Dick emphasised how 'compulsively readable' the work is.⁶

¹ 'Grecian Destiny', p. 317. One of Clubbe's reasons for seeing the Life as the first modern biography which he offered in 'Grecian Destiny', is that it was 'the only nineteenth-century biography to imply - in Victorian England he could do no more than that - the importance of sex in marriage' (p. 319).

² Except in one main point: he thinks the case unproven as regards Carlyle's impotence, but inclines to the view that he was probably not impotent. See pp. 72, 660-61 (n. 24), 670-71 (n. 1), and p. 655 (n. 5) of his edition.

³ 'Grecian Destiny', p. 352.

⁴ In the preface to his edition, pp. xiii, xiv; also the introduction pp. 39-40.

⁵ 'Carlyle warts and all', The Observer, 23 September 1979, p. 36.

⁶ 'Tantalising study that shocked Victorian England', The Times, 25 February 1980, p. 13.

The Carlyle-Froude controversy

'It is doubtful', wrote W.H. Dunn, 'whether any other biography of a distinguished man was ever written in the face of such opposition and criticism as Froude encountered.'¹ Elsewhere he comments that the 'storm' which Lockhart's Life of Scott raised 'was but a summer breeze in comparison' and 'it might also be said that Froude was permitted to enjoy no peace of mind after the biography was given to the public'.² Certainly, as we saw in my introductory chapter, Froude was never out of controversy for very long: from his first published work, his 'Legend of St. Neot' (1844), to the posthumously published My Relations with Carlyle (1903), his works provoked the extreme responses which popular, forthright works written from a convinced, dogmatic (if not technically sectarian or partisan) position on matters religious and political inevitably produced. But of all the controversies - including the sciamachy of the historian, E.A. Freeman, and the earlier burning of the Nemesis at Oxford - the one which was occasioned by his Life of Carlyle is by far the most vociferous and drawn out as well as the most interesting and important from our point of view.³ 'It is not too much to say,' wrote Wilfrid Wilberforce, 'that these volumes [the biography and the editions of the letters and memoirs of the Carlyles] were the leading books of the seasons in which they appeared. For months together people "talked Carlyle" and little else, unless we add criticism of Froude, for, of course, there was plenty of abuse poured upon the man who had painted his hero as he believed him to be.'⁴ For

¹ Dunn II, 483.

² English Biography, p. 168.

³ Even as late as 1930, letters were appearing in the columns of The Times defending or attacking Froude, who had been dead for 36 years.

⁴ 'Froude and Carlyle', CW, 90 (October, 1909), 46-47.

in reading the diffuse plethora of materials which make up the controversy (which is not yet completely dead¹) it is possible to learn a surprising amount about two important subjects. First of all, one is put into a position where one can at least judge how truthful, on the whole, Froude's picture of Carlyle was, and indeed how accurate a writer he was generally. And secondly, one learns a great deal about late Victorian attitudes to biography. This is a subject of greater moment than might at first be imagined. For largely as a result of Froude's biography and the controversy surrounding it, attitudes to certain vital questions in the theory and practice of the writing of biography (how much should a biographer tell, for example?) were very much in a state of flux. The old-fashioned early- and mid-Victorian vein of prudery was still there (some matters are sacrosanct), largely in the 'pro-Carlyle, anti-Froude camp'; but alongside it was a more modern approach, shared by those few who defended Froude, which was to lead to a re-thinking of the nature and aims of biography, and give us Strachey in the early stages, and later on many fine biographies such as Richard Ellmann's James Joyce and Humphrey Carpenter's J.R.R. Tolkien. It is surely rare that the response to a literary work teaches so much about the subject-matter, the work itself, its author, the milieu in which it was received, and the genre and its development thereafter.

It should be emphasised that the following short account of the controversy and the main issues involved is given with some trepidation.

¹ The article of K.J. Fielding's referred to below is a very recent contribution. The controversy will perhaps be 'over' when all the MS evidence of the Carlyles has been published - particularly their collected letters, now being gradually published. Even then, not all the issues will be conclusively resolved of course: whether Carlyle was impotent or not will never be 'proved' one way or the other - at best a balance of probabilities will be established.

I am acutely aware that the huge and difficult subject would need many years of study to produce a really fair, fully comprehensive account.¹ What follows is thus only the most concise of summaries of the controversy as it developed from the publication of the Reminiscences in 1881 to the present day, and my interpretation of the implications of it for our understanding of the biography, its setting and its influence.

Carlyle's Reminiscences, edited by Froude, was published just a month after his death; the reason for its swift publication was to ensure that in writing of the deceased, people would have something definite, authentic upon which to base their assessment of him.² In the event, its publication turned out to be one of the great literary scandals of 1881. A few months later Sir Henry Taylor commented in a review that Froude had abrogated his responsibility in publishing the book which 'has thrown a sad element of bitterness into the outburst of admiration and sorrow which followed upon [Carlyle's] death'.³ The reviews were almost unanimously hostile to the book: the public, it seemed, resented having to accept, according to the reviewer in Notes & Queries mentioned earlier, 'the distinct declaration...that Thomas Carlyle was a narrow, jealous, querulous egotist'.⁴ For Carlyle's Reminiscences contained sundry references to persons living and dead (some eminent, others unknown) which, if not libellous, were certainly disparaging or critical in character, and as such constituted an affront to the public's sense of decency. Julia Wedgwood, in the Contemporary Review article cited above, after inveighing against the almost indecent haste with which the volumes were produced (with the

¹ Dunn claimed to have spent twenty-five years working on it before producing his book, Froude and Carlyle: a study of the Froude-Carlyle Controversy (1930).

² As The Times editorial of 9 May 1881 recognised: 'Mr. Froude has performed a valuable service in giving us at so short notice the materials which were needed for obtaining a greater insight into the genius of a master-life....' (Cited in Dunn's Froude and Carlyle, p. 295).

³ Nineteenth Century, 9 (June, 1881), 1009-1025 (p. 1009).

⁴ op. cit., p. 438.

consequent careless editing) wrote:

We never remember a book, concerning which opinion was so unanimous, as concerning the Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle. That it should not have been written in the opinion of most of those whose opinion was worth having, but that it should¹ not have been published seems to us the opinion of everybody...

Froude had committed an 'act of literary cruelty...without parallel' in publishing the memoirs.² He is depicted as a miner dragging up the ore in its raw form, but not bothering to separate off the mud from the precious metal. He is either disloyal to or ignorant of Carlyle's instructions in his will (part of which was included in the Reminiscences, and which speaks of the difficulty of the 'fit editing' of the book for publication); incredibly, he is even seen as the person 'with the smallest qualification for forming an opinion' as to the propriety of publishing the volumes.³

Such criticisms were echoed in certain quarters when Froude produced the Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle two years later, and in response to the publishing of the biography proper (as we have partly seen above). The public's memory of the deceased should not be disturbed according to the reviewer of the former work, in the Saturday Review:

Again the question must be asked why all these uncomfortable and sad and sordid and degrading secrets of a domestic interior should have been ruthlessly thrown open for general inspection. Is there no sense of decency, no power of reticence left in the world, when it comes to considering the propriety of a profitable publication of memoirs or letters?⁴

¹ op. cit., p. 824. The writer of the Blackwood's Magazine review discussed earlier is the one exception I have been able to find: he takes the attitude that 'When all is said and done with, the fact remains that no bones have been broken' (op. cit., p. 19).

² Although she seems greatly offended that the reputations of others should have suffered from Carlyle's frank, incisive comments about them, she is not averse to repeating some of these comments despite the fact that this would seem to be fanning the flames.

³ op. cit., p. 829.

⁴ Saturday Review, 55 (21 April 1883), 502-03 (p. 502).

It is the reviewer who feels 'uncomfortable' at the truths revealed; it is the reviewer's sense of 'decency' and 'propriety' which feels affronted by the work's publication; it is the reviewer's idealised picture of an almost perfect, saintly Carlyle which is 'degraded': hardly any of these criticisms reflect on the work in question at all. They tell us more about that very Victorian quality of 'respectability' running through the delicate sensibilities of the readers, which Carlyle himself anathematised in his review of Lockhart. This sort of sensibility finds its perfect expression in an article by Mrs Oliphant, entitled 'The Ethics of Biography'.¹ She objects to the demythologisation of heroes: are we any the better, she wonders, for thinking of Luther as 'a fat priest, who wanted to marry'? She is particularly critical of the motives of the cynical biographer who is in reality the detractor of his subject; she refers to a 'recent instance' who has 'misused his advantages and traduced his subject':

it is difficult to understand why a biographer, himself a man of intellect and character, should voluntarily seek the society living, or devote himself to the elucidation of the life when ended, of a warped and gloomy soul, whose temper is odious to him, and whose defects he sees in the clearest light...is it a pleasure in associating moral deformity with genius, and showing, in one who has strongly demanded veracity as a condition of life, a character ignoble and untrue?²

Reading such a reaction to Froude's biography, one is forced to wonder whether the reviewer is talking about the same book, and if so, how she could have possibly so misunderstood Froude's attitude to Carlyle to write in this way.

¹ Contemporary Review, 44 (July, 1883), 76-93. Throughout the article Mrs Oliphant never once refers to Froude by name: but it is transparently obvious that the book she is talking about is his Life of Carlyle.

² op. cit., p. 82.

The burden of the case made out against Froude by his principal critics, who centre around Carlyle's neice, Mary Aitken Carlyle, and her husband (Carlyle's nephew) Alexander Carlyle, appears in outline in the above quotations taken from the early reviews. There are three main issues. First there is (astonishingly) Froude's personal character; much of the controversy consists of direct ad hominem attacks on Froude and involves questioning his motives - was he sincere? And, did he have pecuniary gains in mind? Secondly Froude's accuracy as an editor was debated - how accurate were his transcriptions of Carlyle's manuscripts? Thirdly, there is the issue of the truthfulness of the picture Froude provides in the biography (and elsewhere, especially in My Relations with Carlyle) of the characters and the marriage of the Carlyles. Here a number of topics receive close attention, chief among which are Carlyle's alleged impotence, whether he was ever physically violent to his wife, his relationship with Lady Ashburton and the early married life of the Carlyles at their home in Craigenputtock. It will be noticed that there is comparatively little attention paid to Froude's account of Carlyle's beliefs and opinions and the intellectual background to these: his interpretation was largely accepted as true.¹ And there is scarcely any disagreement about Froude's literary artistry: in the controversy this was usually taken as read and so ignored or very occasionally it was mentioned to point out how it was a brilliant tool for Froude's distortion of the truth in his portrait of Carlyle. Thus the controversy is mainly concerned with questions relating to the contents of Froude's biography, and especially with his interpretation of Carlyle the man. What follows is a brief account of the place of these issues in the developing controversy.²

¹ There are one or two exceptions: William Samuel Lilly, for example, in Four English Humorists of the Nineteenth Century (1895) takes issue with Froude's account of Carlyle's religious beliefs.

² What is not attempted here is a blow-by-blow account of the cannonading as it struck the broadsides of the two 'camps': and for a synopsis of the legal wrangling see Dunn's study.

The attacks on Froude's character - the questioning of his sincerity and the imputation of dubious motives to his aim in writing the Life - are ubiquitous in the polemical writings which set out to give the reader an alternative 'correct' picture of Carlyle. They are the least serious of the criticisms voiced against Froude as a biographer but it is interesting to look at what was being said if only because of what we learn (sometimes by implication) about the mentality which felt offended by the book and so obliged to 'retaliate'. The mildest of the attacks merely involve casting aspersions on Froude's understanding¹ or suggesting that he might have been biased (in favour of, say, Mrs Carlyle's side of the story²): the method here is to make Froude appear merely stupid.³ The more serious attacks accuse Froude of various deliberate forms of moral irresponsibility. Thus Lilly refers to Froude (a mere 'leader writer' not a biographer) as 'mendacious', a 'pseudomaniac' and a 'Judas' who played tricks with the papers entrusted to him by Carlyle; the motive, he thinks, is plain: 'he wanted to make his Carlyle volumes a success, a pecuniary success, and he knew - no one better - that nothing pays like a succès de scandale'.⁴ Froude's principal antagonists in the

¹ Even such a comparatively late critic such as Elizabeth Garrett Bell takes this view: his 'distorted' account owes itself to the fact that 'Froude could not understand this extremely Scotch couple' - 'A "Not Unblessed Pilgrimage", The Carlyles' Married Life', Cornhill, 57 (July, 1924), 51-78 (p. 76).

² The most chauvinistic of the male critics usually add at this point some tag such as 'naturally' or 'who would not?'.

³ We shall see a similar tactic being used when Froude's editorial inaccuracy is under scrutiny.

⁴ 'New Light on the Carlyle Controversy', Fortnightly Review, 79 (June, 1903), 1006-1008. Froude and Gladstone are both seen as born liars. Lilly is the classic case of the controversialist who weakens his case by going too far. The 'Judas' epithet was cleverly exploded by Froude's nephew, W.H. Mallock, in 'The Secret of Carlyle's Life', which appeared in the following (July) number, on pp. 180-92. It was, of course, Oscar Wilde who was later to remark that every great person had his disciples, but that it was invariably Judas who wrote the biography: see Richard Ellmann, Literary Biography (Oxford, 1971), p. 3 .

debate, Mary and Alexander Carlyle, Sir James Crichton-Browne and David Alec Wilson, all at various points indulge in ad hominem polemic. Mary Carlyle refers to Froude in her letters as 'a wretch' and 'a villain & has an utter disregard of truth'.¹ Alexander Carlyle is particularly virulent in his comments: the Life is referred to as 'the thing commonly called a Biography of Carlyle';² the index to his 'alternative' edition of Mrs Carlyle's letters and memorials contains entries like 'Froude, James, his croakings concerning Mrs. Carlyle's household duties';³ in The Nemesis of Froude, a book he wrote with Sir James Crichton-Browne, Froude is 'most obsequious',⁴ and his My Relations with Carlyle is described as consisting of 'the writings of wounded egotism' for 'having first assassinated the reputation of Carlyle, Froude now mutilates the remains'.⁵ Crichton-Browne adduces the fictitious portrait of Edward Fowler as a lying school-boy in The Spirit's Trials as 'evidence' of Froude's tendency 'to stray from the strictly veracious'.⁶ Froude, we are told, was 'unfrocked' as a priest; all his works 'have been discredited'; and he has a 'perverted imagination'.⁷ Taking up Froude's wistful verdict that perhaps it would have been better for both of them had the Carlyles not married, Crichton-

¹ Quoted by Hyder E. Rollins, 'Charles Eliot Norton and Froude', JEGP, 57 (October, 1958), 652-53.

² New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. Alexander Carlyle, 3 vols (1903), I, 202 n. A. Carlyle, Norton and others over the years issued alternative editions of the Carlyles' letters and remains since Froude was held to have been inaccurate, and biased in his selections. They also wrote whole books and pamphlets attacking Froude or 'defending' Carlyle. It fell to D.A. Wilson to write the alternative Life of Carlyle which he did in six volumes.

³ *op. cit.*, I, 353.

⁴ The Nemesis of Froude (1903), p. 77.

⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 3. John Clubbe observes in his notes to his abridged edition of Froude's Life, p. 680 (n. 22), that in A. Carlyle's copy of this work he has pencilled in a comment against Froude's reference to 'the place opposite heaven' which reads: 'where [your soul] now is, I hope!'. Taken literally, perhaps this is the strongest of the comments against Froude.

⁶ From his long, bitter introduction to A. Carlyle's edition of Mrs Carlyle's letters and remains already cited, p. x.

⁷ *op. cit.*, pp. x, lxxv.

Browne remarks that 'Froude had had two wives himself - but grudged his friend one'.¹ Wilson, who holds it 'idle to doubt Froude's good faith'² and regards Froude as sincere (though 'self-deceived')³ accuses Froude of perpetrating a 'filthy libel' (Carlyle's supposed impotence)⁴ and portrays him as sycophantic;⁵ he further infers that because Froude did not show any signs of grief in public at the death of his second wife he had 'no passionate emotions of any kind' and so, of course, could not even begin to understand Carlyle.⁶ Froude's own reply to such attacks (at least to those made in his own lifetime) can be read in his letters to The Times⁷ or, more comprehensively, in My Relations with Carlyle (the publication of which was finally provoked by Crichton-Browne's introduction cited above). But what are we to make of such acrimonious personal assaults on Froude's character? So extreme, so ridiculous (to the point of being amusing), so unfounded are the wounding assertions, that the only reasonable response is to reject the substance of the personal allegations made. There can be no doubting Froude's sincerity. It is

¹ op. cit., p. xxxv. He almost gives away the weakness of his case when he remarks 'The wonder is that Carlyle, with his quick discernment and passion for truth, should have made Froude his principal literary executor' (p. xi). Cf. also his article in the Contemporary Review, 84 (July, 1903), 33-51.

² From the preface to his Life of Carlyle, 6 vols (1923-34); the final volume was written by his son, D.W. MacArthur.

³ D. Alec Wilson, The Truth About Carlyle, An Exposure of the Fundamental Fiction Still Current (1913), p. 29. He contradicts himself in the preface to his biography, when he says that Froude 'could not be sincere'.

⁴ The Truth About Carlyle, p. 29.

⁵ According to Wilson, Froude was always begging to be admitted to Cheyne Row (The Truth About Carlyle, p. 36).

⁶ Mr. Froude and Carlyle (1898), p. 274. Wilson's specious assessment of Froude's so-called 'Jesuitical' methods is ludicrous indeed in the light of the non sequiturs and similar logical gymnastics of which Wilson is capable. Froude is seen as Erasmus, Carlyle as Luther; elsewhere we are reminded that 'Nature and Newman together were too much for [Froude]' - hence his inability to face the truth (vide Wilson's Life of Carlyle I, vi-vii). For even more outrageous calumnies (if possible) see Mr. Froude and Carlyle, pp. 314-16.

⁷ See, for example, The Times, 2 November 1886, p. 8.

only too plain from My Relations with Carlyle how much Froude loved and respected Carlyle.¹ But why did these people, some of whom such as Wilson never even knew him, feel prompted to make such exaggerated, wild statements? I can only surmise at two reasons. The first and kindest interpretation of their reaction is that they genuinely believed that Froude had so totally misrepresented and maligned Carlyle's character (whether they knew him or not) that a response in kind was fitting, even just. The second, more cynical explanation which, in the face of the deplorable, twisted logic they resort to in order to back up their claims seems not unlikely, is quite simply that they recognised that Froude, always a controversial figure with a distinctly 'suspicious' past, was an ideal target for the sort of ad hominem polemic which could be used in a devious, oblique way to discredit the much-read, successful biography itself.

The question of Froude's accuracy as an editor is an easier one to resolve. Froude himself, pointing to his failing vision, and Carlyle's almost illegible handwriting (in his old age) candidly admits that:

It is likely enough that I have made mistakes in matters of fact as well as in the reading of the manuscripts. Let all such be made known. No one will be better pleased than I shall be. I complain only of reflections on my good faith and² personal honesty, which I fling off me with legitimate indignation.

Froude was certainly a poor proof-reader (as W.H. Dunn points out) and to judge his transcribing and editing of the letters and remains of the Carlyles by rigorous, modern scholarly standards, he would be found wanting indeed. For example, if one compares the facsimile of one of the manuscript sources of Froude's biography³ with Froude's transcription of sections of it in the actual Life, one notices all sorts of errors creeping into the latter version. Where Carlyle has written 'some geometry, algebra (arithmetic

¹ See especially My Relations with Carlyle, pp. 2-3, 9, 12, 37. Froude's co-executor, the lawyer Sir James Stephen, commented that 'The most affectionate son could not have acted better to the most venerated father' (p. 62).

² My Relations with Carlyle, p. 38.

³ The Althaus biography, referred to earlier as edited by Clubbe in Two Reminiscences.

thoroughly well), 'Froude transcribes this as 'some geometry. Algebra, arithmetic tolerably well.'¹ That Froude was inaccurate is undoubtedly true, but how inaccurate was he in the Carlyle biography and memoirs?² C.E. Norton, who re-edited Carlyle's Reminiscences at Mary Carlyle's request in 1887, claimed that Froude's edition 'was so carelessly printed as frequently to do grave wrong to the sense' and that over 130 errors were made in the first five pages.³ But Mallock points out how 72 of these 'errors' are cases of normalised punctuation (where Froude had substituted commas for semi-colons, and replaced some of the colons with full-stops, in accordance with usage, Carlyle's punctuation being highly idiosyncratic); that 52 of the errors are simply cases where Froude has used small-case letters for Carlyle's peculiar over-use of capitals; and that the remaining few errors are either misreadings of almost illegible words or extremely nugatory in nature, not appreciably affecting Carlyle's meaning. Mallock (who sees Froude as an artist similar to J.M.W. Turner, offering magnificent landscapes rather than house agents' photographs) comments that 'on this babyish foundation persons apparently educated have sought to establish the contention that it was impossible to trust Mr. Froude as a biographer, as an historian, or as a man'.⁴ His point, in other words, is that

¹ Cf. Two Reminiscences, pp. 31-32 (and accompanying plate 3, pp. 138-39) with Life of Carlyle 1, 16.

² See my first chapter. Froude was generally inaccurate, as criticism of of his edition of The Pilgrim, his History of England, his Life and Letters of Erasmus and his Caesar has shown.

³ C.E. Norton (ed.), Reminiscences by Thomas Carlyle, 2 vols (1887), p. vii. Wilson is not so harsh on Froude's inaccuracy in the biography as Norton: the former detects roughly one error per page, the latter thought an error per sentence a more reasonable estimate (Mr. Froude and Carlyle, p. 307).

⁴ 'The Secret of Carlyle's Life', p. 191. Although Mallock is Froude's nephew and might therefore be presumed to be partisan, this is not really so: his article is a remarkably balanced account of the controversy, in which he sees both sides; although he comes out in favour of Froude's interpretation of the evidence in the end, he is critical of Froude.

Froude was inaccurate in minor details, but not over important matters.¹
The tactic of showing how inaccurate Froude was over his reproduction word for word of Carlyle's letters and journal-entries, thereby implying that his portrait of Carlyle must also be unreliable, was obviously more effective than the personal attacks, and so tended to be extensively deployed (often in footnotes) by Alexander Carlyle and D.A. Wilson. But it was an approach which, one suspects, was motivated by an animosity towards Froude or his memory rather than by any disinterested search after truth. This was certainly the case with Norton's contribution to the controversy, as his correspondence with Ruskin illustrates. Ruskin was a friend of Norton, Froude and Carlyle. Norton, who disliked Froude personally, tried to persuade Ruskin to cut him, over the controversy. Ruskin replied:

As for giving up Froude! - My dear Charles, he was C[arlyle]'s only comfort for years and years before his death - and during my own illness last spring was as tender as a sister.²

Ruskin was unequivocal in his support of Froude during the controversy:

I am very fond of Froude, and with him in all that he has done and said, about C, if it had to be said or done, at all[sic] and I never saw any one more deeply earnest and affectionate in trying to do right.³

Ruskin's comments (including his snapping at Norton's petty 'niggling and nagging' attacks on Froude) were regarded by Norton as evidence that he was mentally ill. Rollins points out that Norton should have confined himself to his scholarly corrections of Froude, instead of impugning his motives as well: his 'large share in [the controversy] was directed by emotion rather than reason' he comments.⁴

¹ More than one writer has pointed out that Norton's own edition of the Reminiscences was far from being entirely accurate. See, for example, Richard D. Altick, Lives and Letters (New York, 1965), p. 237.

² Quoted in Rollins, *op. cit.*, p. 654.

³ *loc. cit.*

⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 664.

What were the central accusations centring on Froude's portrait of the Carlyles, made against him in the course of the controversy? How accurate was Froude's total picture of Carlyle the man? The first question is easily answered. Froude's chief opponents insisted that not only was he malignant in intention, indiscreet,¹ and an inaccurate editor, but that his whole presentation and interpretation of Carlyle's character were radically wrong.² This, they argued, is because he got certain facts wrong, while others he distorted to fit the dubious theories he espoused concerning Carlyle's behaviour, and elsewhere exaggerated for literary effect. Froude had a jaundiced view of matters: this was partly because of his rather pessimistic outlook on life, and partly because of a selective use of his sources and his reliance on unreliable authorities such as Geraldine Jewsbury.³ Carlyle was not selfish, irritable and inconsiderate towards his wife as Froude made out. He was not impotent; their marriage was consummated. He certainly never used physical violence on her. Mrs Carlyle did not perform the duties of a menial servant at Craigenputtock. Carlyle was not infatuated at any point with Lady Ashburton. And the Carlyle marriage was indeed a happy one, and such

¹ A.J.P. Taylor (op.cit.), reviewing Clubbe's edition of the Life, pointed out that 'the other Victorian husbands were shocked at Froude's frankness not at Carlyle's behaviour'.

² Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, for example, considered Froude's portrait to be actually 'repellent': 'The Real Carlyle', Contemporary Review, 84 (September, 1903), 342.

³ A.C. Benson, in Rambles and Reflections (1926) suggests that Froude, although 'wholly incapable of deliberate distortion' did present a rather inaccurate picture, but not because he was pessimistic - rather because of the 'strong romantic element in him' which made him see 'facts not as they were, but by the light of his own imagination'; 'his subconscious mind was too strong for him'. Yet, 'as a whole, Froude's Life of Carlyle is a very stately and noble memorial' (p. 122).

occasional upsets as there were, owed more to Jane Welsh Carlyle than to her husband. Such is the gist of the great disagreement over Froude's account of the Carlyles.¹ Wilson sums up these points neatly with just a shade of exaggeration thus:

A single idea dominated [the biography] - mysterious, melancholy, monotonous, like the drone of a bagpipe. Carlyle was an oddity, half-mad, and he ill-treated his wife - that was all the common reader read, particularly in the country; but the esoteric meaning, plainly written between the lines of many a page, whispered in society from the first, and alluded to in the leading newspapers, was that Carlyle was a eunuch, and that his wife's sorrow was the lack of sexual intercourse...²

For Wilson, who actually praised (albeit faintly) the artistry of the biography in Mr. Froude and Carlyle, Froude's 'description of Carlyle... is a failure...it is merely an account of Carlyle as he appeared to Mr. Froude...it is a book of blunders'.³ He 'mixes up a grain of fact with a bushel of fiction' he comments.⁴ There is no space here for me

¹ It should be realised that Froude does not state in the biography that Carlyle was impotent, nor that he was violent physically to his wife. These views are expressed in My Relations with Carlyle. At best he can be seen as hinting very obliquely in the Life on such matters. The two most obvious passages I would cite to support this view seem to have gone unnoticed by the critics. In Life of Carlyle III, 407, Froude remarks that 'There was a violent scene when [the Carlyles] parted'. (This does not however coincide with the date of the entry in Mrs Carlyle's diary, in which she refers to the tell-tale blue marks on her wrist.) And in I, 323-24, Froude prints an extract from Carlyle's journal which reads in part: 'Inverse sensualist, not drawn into the rank of beasts by pleasure, but driven into it by pain! Hush! Hush!...Perhaps, like an eagle (or a goose) ['weary nature'] will "renew her mighty youth" and fly against the sun...and no more lie among the pots, winged, maimed, and plucked, doing nothing but chirp like a chicken in the coop for the livelong day.' Vague as these remarks are, they could, without distorting them, be read as signifying Carlyle's contempt for his impotence: he experiences physical pain (dyspepsia) but not sexual pleasure - like and yet unlike an animal.

² The Truth About Carlyle, p. 27.

³ Mr. Froude and Carlyle, p. 90.

⁴ op. cit., p. 105.

to conduct even a brief examination into the evidence for and against Froude's interpretation of Carlyle's character and his marriage with Jane Baillie Welsh. But what I shall do in the next few pages is look briefly at the arguments of Froude's main opponents, and consider more recent scholarly responses to the controversy, before reviewing how subsequent biographers have reacted to Froude's portrait. In the course of this necessarily rudimentary analysis, I hope that both the current state of scholarly opinion on Froude's interpretation, and my own tentative views on its validity, will become gradually plainer.

The arguments of Froude's opponents in the controversy constitute a curious mixture of the naive and the disingenuous. Thus Alexander Carlyle writes confidently that if any reader should want a true picture of Carlyle, instead of Froude's false portrait, all he need do is read the various editions of Carlyle's letters and memoirs, prepared by Norton and himself, for the resulting picture, 'self-drawn and therefore indisputably true and faithful in outline' would answer to that reader's demands.¹ The question as to how objective a picture we are likely to get of Carlyle by reading his words alone does not seem to have even occurred to him. The disingenuousness takes many forms. Alexander Carlyle frequently derides Geraldine Jewsbury's character, for example, since he thereby discredits one of Froude's 'apocryphal' sources for the view that Carlyle was impotent.² He uses a similar technique to disparage Froude's notion of Carlyle's physical violence (on at least one occasion) to his wife. The evidence, claims Alexander Carlyle, 'rests on idle gossip and hearsay,

¹ In the preface to New Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 2 vols (1904), p. vii. The letters, needless to say, have been selected so as to present a pleasant picture of Carlyle.

² See, for example, Alexander Carlyle (ed.), New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, 3 vols (1903), I, 127. In his article, 'Froude and Carlyle: the Imputation Considered Medically', BMJ, 27 June 1903 (I), 1498-1502, Crichton-Browne even goes so far as to suggest that Geraldine Jewsbury conspired with Froude.

or on certain humorously exaggerated expressions in Mrs. Carlyle's letters'.¹ In fact, Froude's evidence was based upon one of Mrs Carlyle's journal entries which refers to bruises 'which in a fit of passion [Carlyle] had once inflicted on her arms'.² Crichton-Browne's ingenious explanation of these bruises is that they might well have been 'finger-prints left [by Carlyle] in his efforts to prevent her from doing herself personal violence'.³ Another method commonly used is to exaggerate and caricature Froude's picture of Carlyle so that its falsity becomes an easy target to assail. Thus they try to establish that Froude believed that Carlyle (a 'brutal assailant'⁴) frequently 'bullied his wife'.⁵ Froude is often set up as a second-rate novelist, implying that much of his biography is fictitious.⁶ Where Froude makes his points by quoting from the actual words of Carlyle or his wife, it is suggested that he is misinterpreting his materials. The question of Carlyle's impotence is dealt with in three ways. It is flatly denied: 'There is no truth in [Froude's claims]. The evidence of their falsity is absolutely conclusive'.⁷ It is repudiated strongly as one of Froude's 'filthy, scurrilous

¹ New Letters of Thomas Carlyle, pp. ix-x.

² My Relations with Carlyle, p. 11.

³ Quoted by Ronald McNeill in 'The Real Froude', Contemporary Review, 84 (August, 1903), 224-32 (p. 227).

⁴ Nemesis of Froude, p. 72.

⁵ Mr. Froude and Carlyle, p. 224.

⁶ op. cit., p. 223.

⁷ Nemesis of Froude, p. 59.

assertions' since Carlyle's manhood is only too evident in his writings,¹ and since it is 'incompatible with intellectual stability and strength of character' which Carlyle undoubtedly had.² Finally, the alleged impotence of Carlyle is eventually denied on the grounds that Mrs Carlyle either had 'frequent miscarriages' (despite the fact that no remotely convincing evidence is offered to support such an assertion)³ or that she was 'sterile'.⁴ Carlyle's wife, in fact, comes in for some severe criticisms. When Carlyle acts badly towards her (as they admit he occasionally did) one is reminded how trying he must have been finding his dyspepsia; but when Mrs Carlyle complains in her letters of his behaviour we are told how she is probably exaggerating as a result of her ill-health.⁵ Many other examples could be cited of the doubtful logic Froude's opponents employed when their position was less than assured, and of the gloating, point-scoring spirit in which they point out Froude's genuine (but minor) errors. Reading such contentious material is a laborious though far from fruitless task. To return to Froude's biography afterwards is thoroughly refreshing.

¹ This phrase occurs in the BMJ article already cited, p. 1502. Despite the title of Crichton-Browne's article, there is little medical consideration of the problem. His views were strongly criticised by medical colleagues in later numbers. Mallock (op. cit.) asks how an assertion of a natural defect can be considered 'filthy' or 'base'.

² The Truth About Carlyle, p. 8. He takes the curious view that 'if Carlyle never lived up to the full measure of his manhood, his preaching is discredited'. Had the remark been made of, say, D.H. Lawrence, it would still be unjustifiable, but applied to Carlyle, it is nearly nonsensical.

³ Alexander Carlyle, The Carlyle Myth Refuted (Edinburgh, 1930), p. 6. The child's clothes referred to could have been those of another 'Jeannie' (one of Carlyle's sisters): and there is no reason to suppose that Mrs Carlyle's illnesses were miscarriages. Such expressions found in the letters could easily refer to a delay in her menstrual cycle.

⁴ Crichton-Browne's hypothesis in his BMJ article. Evidently there is nothing 'filthy' in remarking that a woman is infertile.

⁵ Mr. Froude and Carlyle, pp. 224 ff.

How did the controversy strike later scholars and critics?

Herbert Paul quotes Lord Derby and those members of Carlyle's family who supported Froude's version of the Carlyle story.¹ To explain Froude's attitude to his portrait of Carlyle in the face of the controversy, he reiterates Froude's 'confidence in the essential greatness of the man', and Froude, thinking Carlyle's reputation would bear the strain, did not fear therefore to dwell on Carlyle's failings: the truth would only be advantageous to him.² Edmund Gosse relates Froude's biography and the controversy surrounding it to the decline in Carlyle's reputation, but in his view, although 'Froude may have accelerated... he certainly did not start the landslip', which was already happening before Carlyle's death, as evidenced by the public's growing disenchantment with Carlyle's increasingly reactionary statements.³

Dunn's Froude and Carlyle is the first lengthy account of the controversy, and although it is written as a defence of Froude against his 'enemies' it remains the best-written, most informative and comprehensive account published to date.⁴ Dunn insists that he has no wish to 'maintain that [Froude] is faultless'. Rather:

What I do wish to emphasise is that Froude was in a better position than any other person to portray the real Carlyle, and that, with all its faults, his portrayal remains the best work on Carlyle's life in print.⁵

¹ Paul, pp. 309, 328.

² Paul, p. 313. Lytton Strachey's alternative explanation is characteristically witty. 'Froude's adoration,' he writes, 'was of so complete a kind that it shrank with horror from the notion of omitting a single wart from the portrait': Portraits in Miniature (New York, 1921), p. 195.

³ Books on the Table (1921), p. 301. Cf. J. Chartres Molony, 'The Fall of an Idol', Blackwood's Magazine, 257 (June, 1945), 411-20.

⁴ It also has the merit of including many of the relevant legal documents: he has a good grasp of the intricacies of the complex morass of legal detail.

⁵ op. cit., p. 3.

Of The Nemesis of Froude he notes that 'the tone is violent and the argument almost incoherent with rage' while Wilson's monumental six volume biography of Carlyle he sees as mere 'propaganda'.¹ He detects in the controversy many instances where Froude's meaning has been 'perverted or misrepresented', and successfully refutes a number of charges made against Froude involving matters of fact.² The inaccuracy charges Dunn regards as not proven: though there are errors, he admits, very few of these are of any importance. Dunn's 'examination' of the main issues is like the curate's egg: good in parts. As far as the main lines of the courtship and marriage of the Carlyles and the Lady Ashburton affair are concerned, his substantiation of Froude's position is thoroughly convincing. His reading of the 'blue marks' episode, as he concedes, is somewhat incomplete as he was not permitted access to the relevant papers. He defends Froude's belief in Carlyle's impotence well - perhaps too well - elaborating upon his chief source (Geraldine Jewsbury) but explaining how Froude had supposedly obtained corroboration of this view from Ruskin, whose cousin became aware of the fact in the course of a medical examination of Mrs Carlyle.³ His account of the early married life of the Carlyles at Craigenputtock is certainly unsatisfactory: he does not consider Carlyle's own judgement on the value of Geraldine Jewsbury's 'mythic' evidence upon which Froude partly based his account; nor does he consider at all one of the main charges brought against Froude by Alexander Carlyle, namely that his statement that Mrs Carlyle had actually to milk the cows was mistaken and gave the wrong impression altogether.⁴ One feels that Dunn has omitted to consider this awkward example because

¹ op. cit., pp. 100, 104.

² op. cit., pp. 238 ff.

³ op. cit., p. 210.

⁴ op. cit., pp. 160-73.

the evidence for once is so clearly against Froude and in favour of his opponent. Dunn's main contention is that 'the whole superstructure of hostile criticism rests upon slight foundation'.¹ Reading his account of the controversy, one feels that one is being addressed by a very accomplished defence counsel rather than by the most impartial of judges who has examined all the evidence objectively. He excuses Froude more often than he blames him and although his impressive marshalling of an imposing body of evidence does indeed point to the fundamental truth and fairness of Froude's picture of Carlyle (who, if anything, Dunn thinks was over-estimated by Froude) one does not feel as entirely convinced of this as Dunn would no doubt have liked. He concludes by suggesting that Carlyle would have approved of Froude's biography of him because he 'endeavoured to present a truthful portrayal' and although it might be excessive to claim that Froude inaugurated 'a new era in biography' it is at least possible to point to his seminal role in bringing 'an era to completion' for he 'made an end of the incredible panegyric'.²

K.J. Fielding's more recent, briefer considerations of the controversy could almost be regarded as an attempt to revive the main issues from an anti-Froude, and anti-Dunn position. In the article, 'Froude's Revenge, or the Carlyles and Erasmus A. Darwin', Fielding takes a similar view of Froude as a biographer to Julia Wedgwood in the review discussed earlier.³ Julia Wedgwood was Erasmus Darwin's niece; Fielding thinks that Darwin was hard done by in Froude's Life (which 'is darkened by looking backward from the shadows of old age').⁴ Fielding regards Froude's biography as 'notoriously unsatisfactory: for Froude was self-opinionated,

¹ op. cit., p. 260.

² op. cit., p. 272.

³ E & S, N.S. 31 (1978), 75-97.

⁴ op. cit., p. 76

independent, and at odds with so many of Carlyle's surviving friends, that his account has always left the sense of something missing...'¹

And again: 'that there is something to be said for Froude cannot be denied.

But he has said it all. It is what he did not say...that may now concern

us'.² In a sense, Fielding is justified in trying to emphasise Carlyle's humour and warmth and sociability, for although Froude does show this other side to Carlyle's character, he gives it less evidence than perhaps the evidence warrants. But this is really, I think, more a consequence of Froude's method: Carlyle's conviviality and humour obviously emerge more in conversation, and Froude, as we saw, objected to the Boswellian practice of recording his conversations. Carlyle's darker side, on the other hand, appears more in his journal, and since Froude reproduces a great deal of this first hand evidence, the overall effect is inevitably to make Carlyle appear a somewhat more melancholy figure than he really was. But Fielding finds Froude himself antipathetic in another article.³ Emblematic of his reaction is the contemporary satirical cartoon he reproduces of Froude splattering a bust of Carlyle with ink, like a naughty schoolboy ragging a master. Fielding is the last (so far) in the long line of Froude detractors. He finds him 'untrustworthy', 'bitter', 'contentious' and 'tactless'.⁴ For his task as biographer, Fielding observes, 'Froude had neither the sympathy, the knowledge, the nerve, the judgement, nor the time'.⁵ He

¹ loc. cit.

² op. cit., p. 77.

³ 'Froude and Carlyle: Some New Considerations', Carlyle Past and Present: A Collection of New Essays, ed. K.J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr (1976), pp. 239-69.

⁴ op. cit., p. 239. The charge of tactlessness is probably not altogether an unfair one. Fielding quotes from a letter by a Mrs Empson (a daughter of Lord Jeffrey) who complains about Froude's edition of the Reminiscences in which some unfavourable references were made to her father: '"I wrote to Froude to express my sense of injury - his only explanation was that he had not thought I was alive. I leave you to judge how this could satisfy me or my daughters"' (p. 252).

⁵ op. cit., pp. 239-40.

criticises Dunn's defence of Froude (Dunn believed Froude a greater person than Carlyle: in his eyes 'Froude can do no wrong').¹ He admits that Froude was sometimes right in the controversial disputes in which he was involved, and that his biography will remain indispensable, the 'standard Life', since it is the 'authority' for Carlyle's journal extracts. He wonders what would have happened had John Forster not died when he did, and continued as Carlyle's literary executor (instead of Froude) and perhaps written Carlyle's biography: Forster would at least have been discreet, if his biography of Dickens is anything to go by. But Fielding forgets that it was the 'discreet' Forster who was Froude's original source for the story about Carlyle and Lady Ashburton. Fielding, who has examined some of the solicitors' legal papers connected with the controversy, takes the line that Froude and Stephen behaved deviously, almost blackmailing the 'determined, intelligent and truthful' Mary Carlyle.² Froude should not have relied solely on Jewsbury for the 'impotence' story, he thinks: if there were no written evidence, he should have left the story well alone. (This seems strange that a biographer, who knew his subject, should have to rely on written sources for the more controversial incidents.) Froude is seen as imprudent, ready to resort to tricks if necessary, lacking in 'self understanding' and 'it is not too much to say that in some ways he was a fool'.³

The only two balanced accounts of the controversy, free at least from any detectable emotional biases, are those of John Clubbe⁴ and Edward Sharples, Jr.⁵ Clubbe takes the view that the

publication of the complete correspondence [of the Carlyles] generally supports [Froude's] interpretation of the events and his understanding of the psychology of those involved...

¹ loc. cit. Cf. p. 254.

² op. cit., pp. 254, 262.

³ op. cit., pp. 258, 262.

⁴ John Clubbe (ed.), Froude's Life of Carlyle; 'Grecian Destiny'.

⁵ Carlyle and his Readers: The Froude Controversy Once Again, Ph.D. diss. (University of Rochester, 1964).

it is hard to deny the acuity of his insight into their motivations.¹

Froude was often wrongly but sometimes fairly criticised (particularly over his 'textual lapses') but, Clubbe avers, 'no one has had a better understanding of Carlyle than Froude'.² He thinks it a shame that his biography has been denied 'the fair hearing it deserves' through being 'submerged from the beginning in controversy'.³ He makes the valid point that Froude is often at his most controversial when he is actually quoting or paraphrasing the Carlyles themselves. Froude's biography is 'not only a convincing but also a fundamentally trustworthy study of the Carlyles and their marriage': and no other biographer has known them as well as he or has possessed his psychological and artistic gifts.⁴ Sharples's central argument is that the controversy is understandable within its historical setting and that although Froude may still be distrusted, 'most of the points disputed in Froude's interpretation resolve in Froude's favor'.⁵ Froude was right, he believes about the unhappy character of the Carlyle marriage, though it did have intellectual compensations. He regards Carlyle's alleged impotence as unfounded hypothesis. The Craigenputtock period of the Carlyles' life he thinks Froude interpreted fundamentally correctly, relying on their letters and journal entires, although he got some of the details wrong. And Carlyle's infatuation with Lady Ashburton, though 'innocent' did undoubtedly have unhappy repercussions for Carlyle's wife. 'Froude's art has long been accepted, and now', he comments, 'it is conceded that he justly interpreted Carlyle's life.'⁶

¹ Clubbe (ed.), Froude's Life of Carlyle, p. 655 (n. 5).

² op. cit., p. xiii.

³ op. cit., p. xiv.

⁴ 'Grecian Destiny,' p. 322.

⁵ Sharples, p. vii.

⁶ op. cit., p. 224.

How did later biographers of Carlyle react to Froude's picture?

David Masson in his early 'lectures' thought Froude insufficiently adulatory: the dual complaint of Froude's mood being 'too uniformly like that of a man driving a hearse' and that his biography was 'little else than Carlyle himself soliloquising and journalising' appears here for the first time.¹ Another Carlyle worshipper, H. Larkin, thought Froude's version of the central characters and events simplistic, and written for 'ladies' maids': 'he first sets off the victim Wife against the bluebeard Husband, and then the meekly forgiving Husband against the shrewish Wife'.² Richard Garnett is similarly opposed to Froude's supposedly sacrilegious denigration of the Carlyle marriage.³ John Nichol, on the other hand stresses his indebtedness to Froude and sternly criticises those who have sought to discredit the biography.⁴ R.S. Craig, while avowing his respect for Froude as a person, disagrees with Froude's 'eloquent but uncomprehending' interpretation of Carlyle's life.⁵ He thought Froude allowed himself to be taken in by Jane Welsh Carlyle and so wrote a life coloured by her interpretation of events.⁶

Wilson, in his immense biography is, as we have already partly seen, highly critical throughout of Froude's work. Froude was a 'bore', one who was 'living in illusions', a mere 'counterfeit' of Carlyle.⁷ Wilson

¹ Carlyle, Personally and in His Writings (1885), pp. 10, 24

² H. Larkin, Carlyle and the Open Secret of His Life (1886), p. 319.

³ The Life of Thomas Carlyle (1887).

⁴ Thomas Carlyle (1892).

⁵ The Making of Carlyle: An Experiment in Biographical Explication (1908), p. 312.

⁶ op. cit., p. 491.

⁷ In the preface to Carlyle, p. vi.

collected some fifty volumes of materials and condensed them into six hefty tomes. The laboriously constructed life is far too long, detailed and prolix, and relies too much on anonymous third- and fourth-hand 'backstairs gossip' as one critic put it, for the many anecdotes which he tediously relates.¹ Wilson, of course, had never met Carlyle (or Froude). His industry and his thoroughness may be praised but not his truthfulness or his art. He was a blinded worshipper of Carlyle, and his biography reflects this: one searches in vain for any criticisms of Carlyle, the less salubrious aspects of whose character are glossed over. As art his Life is almost laughable: some of the 'chapters', for example, are no more than a couple of brief paragraphs long: its organisation, its imaginative power and its style are all much more inferior to Froude's.

E.E. Neff's biography of Carlyle is rather more balanced: he praises and accepts Froude's account of the Carlyles, though he does think Froude embroidered certain incidents and overemphasised the 'shadows'.² He acknowledges Froude's 'honesty and brilliant literary gifts' however, and thinks that Froude's refusal to write a whitewashing account probably saved Carlyle's reputation from the fate of a delayed 'deflation'.³ Lammond's book follows Froude's line almost wholly (even to the point of borrowing some of Froude's Spenserian allusions) and criticises Wilson's biography. A witty, urbane, no-nonsense sort of book, it is a perceptive, critical account of Carlyle's life and ideas.⁴ Trudy Bliss in her selection of Mrs Carlyle's letters largely concurs with Froude's assessment of Jane Welsh Carlyle and her marriage, and criticises Froude's opponents 'who

¹ Lord Cushendun, 'Carlyle and His Biographer - the "Inaccuracy" of Froude - A Vindication', The Times, 6 March 1930, p. 15.

² Carlyle (1932).

³ op. cit., pp. 263-64.

⁴ Carlyle (1934). See pp. 96-97 for examples of Lammond's incisive humorous account of Carlyle's intellectual orientation.

were anxious to represent Carlyle as a blameless husband rather than to accept him as a great figure whose genius made those around him suffer'.¹ Julian Symonds regards Froude's portrait of the Carlyles as only partly true - though much better than the Wilson biography, which he regards as trying to make out that the life of the Carlyles was 'little else than a long honeymoon'.² He thinks it unfortunate however that 'the effect of Froude's brilliant but over-dramatic biography...has been to shift interest from the work to the man...'.³ Lawrence and Elizabeth Hanson's biography of Jane Welsh Carlyle assimilates the essentials of Froude's picture and confirms his impression of her life as fundamentally unhappy.⁴ Thea Holm's The Carlyles at Home (1965) tends to avoid the larger, controversial issues, but John Stewart Collis's biography of the Carlyles shows the author's 'highest regard for Froude's Life', and defends his role in the controversy.⁵ He seems to accept Froude's belief that Carlyle was impotent.⁶ N. Brysson Morrison's biography is also written with Froude rather than Wilson as its unacknowledged authority.⁷ Finally, Ian Campbell's life

¹ Jane Welsh Carlyle: a new selection of her letters (1949), p. 345.

² Thomas Carlyle: the Life and Ideas of a Prophet (1952), p. 292.

³ loc. cit.

⁴ Necessary Evil: The Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle (1952).

⁵ The Carlyles (1971). 'There is no question that it is amongst the few supreme biographies that have ever been written' (op. cit., p. 179).

⁶ 'In the main, a lot of the attack amounted to saying, "Fancy believing what Froude has to say, who knew Carlyle for only twenty years and was his constant companion over the last fifteen years, or listening to Geraldine Jewsbury who was merely Mrs Carlyle's intimate friend, instead of to us, who never knew either of them"' (p. 180). For his evidence for Carlyle's impotence, see pp. 179-82.

⁷ True Minds: the Marriage of Thomas and Jane Carlyle (1974).

of Carlyle accords extremely high praise for Froude's work ('one of the greatest ever written') and thinks his picture is basically right, although needing to be qualified.¹ By comparison, Wilson's 'monumental six volume act of piety' and the controversy itself, he found distasteful.²

It should be fairly clear from the above survey that the closer we get to the present time, and the further we move away from the very heated passions of the boiling controversy, and as the evidence accumulates and becomes more accessible, it becomes easier to get the controversy into focus. The picture which emerges, I suggest, is something like this. Of Froude's sincerity there can be no doubt: he set out to write a frank biography of Carlyle in accordance with the latter's pronounced views on the nature of the genre. The result of his attempt we examined in the previous chapter. Looking beyond that to the controversy it caused, it becomes plain that inaccurate as Froude was as an editor, the main lines of his portrait of Carlyle are true. On some matters he was mistaken; on others we cannot at this stage be absolutely sure and perhaps never will be altogether so. But we feel he captured the essence of the man. And this view, with a few exceptions, would seem to be that of an increasing majority of scholars, critics and biographers who have studied the matter for themselves.

¹ Thomas Carlyle (1974), p. 159. He also thinks Froude is a little too kind to Mrs Carlyle.

² op. cit., p. xii.

'The achieve of, the mastery of the thing!': in conclusion

What then is the real value of Froude's biography of Carlyle? What is the full significance of its controversial reception and the debate it generated? The value of the Life of Carlyle is three-fold. First, it gives the most fascinating, truthful and sympathetic but critical portrait of the man we have - and this portrait lives. Carlyle as we 'know' him today is largely of Froude's creation. If a modern scholar wished to have an authentic, comprehensive picture of Carlyle, he would surely turn to Froude's standard life - a measure of his achievement. Secondly, it presents a superb, though uncritical, synopsis of Carlyle's ideas and beliefs and influence on Froude's contemporaries: the work is soaked in the Victorian intellectual atmosphere, and we learn much from it - from one who experienced it himself. Thirdly, and very importantly, it is a great work of art, certainly the best biography to emerge from the last century, and as such it deserves fuller recognition. Froude's brilliant fusion of dramatic and narrative modes, his feeling for his subject and his overall control of his materials are superb.

The significance of the work and the controversy for students of Victorian literature is difficult to overestimate. It is not merely that in charting the reception of the book we learn so much about late Victorian attitudes to biography in particular and Victorian moral attitudes more generally. The Life and the debate about it contributed enormously towards a change in perceptions about the nature of biography, and the aims and functions of a biographer. Thereafter - certainly before the present century was very old - the biographer could not approach his subject in the way earlier pre-Froudean biographers had done. The biography as pious memorial, in which truth was held to be of less account than propriety, slowly became a thing of the past.¹ In his humorous

¹ Exceptions can of course be found, especially among the third-rate biographies of the less eminent public figures. The 'pious' attitude on the part of the public is not, perhaps, altogether dead. A letter to the editor of The Guardian, protesting about a biography of the late Earl Mountbatten, stating that 'privacy by definition is not for plunder' and objecting to reducing the readership of The Guardian, in which the review was printed, 'to numerous peeping-Toms', appeared as I write this (10 September 1980), p. 10.

use of satire and irony to attain a perspective on his subject Froude paved the way for Strachey and later biographers. It was as if a breath of fresh air had blown away the cobwebs and mustiness of a dingy room. The genre had been liberated from the bonds constricting it; it had been given a new lease of life.¹

If originality and influence are related in any way (along with whatever intrinsic qualities a work may have) to the sense in which a work of literature can be considered 'great' or 'major', it is clear that Froude's Life of Carlyle alone of his works would qualify for such epithets. It is, I believe, his most important achievement. Froude himself modestly remarked that his book 'will be of use hereafter'.² But he would not have pointed to the artistry of the book, and he could not of course predict its literary influence. He would have pointed to his picture of Carlyle the man and prophet, whom he believed future generations would come to appreciate at his true worth. That we see matters rather differently a century on takes nothing away from Froude's achievement. 'Every biography,' wrote Robert Gittings, 'is in fact a comment on the human spirit itself.'³ In this work, Froude captures and comments upon the very essence of one remarkable human spirit, at once a product of and at odds with his age. The manner in which Froude reincarnated Carlyle's soul in the pages of his biography and the impact his work had make this a worthy pinnacle of Froude's literary endeavours.

¹ George Stuart Gordon, The Lives of Authors (1950), put it rather well when he said that Froude fought the battle 'for the right to be uncomplimentary', to lay bare the facts as he saw them (p. 18). John A. Garraty adopted a more minimalist position when he observed that if Froude's biography 'did not herald a new era in biography, at least it set people arguing about the nature of the form': The Nature of Biography (1958), p. 96.

² My Relations with Carlyle, p. 40. Froude felt that it was the most important thing he had done, although it had been a painful experience actually writing it.

³ The Nature of Biography (1978), p. 14.

CONCLUSION

The fact that Froude is a neglected writer today seems all the more strange when one reads the obituaries of him of more than eighty years ago. To his Victorian contemporaries he was certainly an extremely important figure. The writer in The Times noted that 'Froude's name has taken its permanent place among the immortals'.¹ The writer in The Saturday Review foresaw more astutely what might happen to Froude's reputation: 'His great voluminousness, a certain inequality...and, most of all, a curious absence of any very salient manner, have, perhaps, caused him, and may, perhaps, cause him, to be ranked a little lower than he deserved'.² Even allowing for any exaggeration which may steal furtively into the more blinkered, eulogistic pieces written soon after Froude's death, the general view of his achievement was nevertheless very laudatory. With the recent deaths of other leading Victorian authors (Tennyson, Browning, Newman) and the 'retirement' of figures such as Ruskin and Swinburne, Froude's death had left something of a void: an era was gradually coming to an end, it was felt. With his departure from the literary scene, the country had lost someone who had belonged to 'the first rank of English authors'.³ The Spectator took a similar line. Froude was 'unquestionably...a great man of letters...a man of brilliant parts...[who] fascinated his generation by his wit, his rhetoric, and his verbal magic'.⁴ Froude was not, of course, praised unequivocally: his inaccuracy as an historian and his adoption of Carlyle's rigid, reactionary political views were criticised. But his prose style and his mastery of narrative in its different guises

¹ The Times, 22 October 1894, p. 7.

² Saturday Review, 78 (27 October 1894), 453.

³ Edinburgh Review, 181 (January, 1895), 173.

⁴ The Spectator, 73 (27 October 1894) 553.

were regarded as more than making up for such blemishes.

Occasionally, later writers have hinted at Froude's significance. Leslie Stephen's superb account of Froude's achievement emphasises how his life and works touched upon so many different aspects of the Victorian intellectual scene.¹ Undoubtedly, whatever disservice the Carlyle-Froude controversy may have done to Carlyle's reputation, it certainly did not enhance Froude's. Though when the Victorians generally began to be disparaged during the first half of this century, Froude, perhaps because he was 'the most typical of the Victorians',² was scarcely thought even worth denigrating: he began to be forgotten. J.M. Hone's assertion in 1918 that Froude stands 'high in the second rank of English writers of the nineteenth century' seems oddly out of place.³ After the Victorians began to regain literary respectability in the 1950s, W.H. Dunn attempted to draw attention to Froude's significance with his very mediocre two volume biography. Critics - among them, as we have seen, Cockshut, Willey, Grosskurth and Clubbe - have dealt piecemeal with various of Froude's writings, but no single study of his works has yet appeared. If, as Clubbe has pointed out, 'work on Froude stagnates in what one might call a prescientific state...he seems destined to be the last of the major Victorians to gain critical attention', why has no critical study been forthcoming?⁴ Perhaps, after all, as Ronald Bryden thinks, Froude is quite simply too uncongenial a figure:

Time, which pardons Paul Claudel, has not yet managed to forgive James Anthony Froude the nastiest set of opinions held by any of the great Victorian prose masters. He scorned democracy, hated

¹ Studies of a Biographer, 4 vols (1898-1902), III, 220-53. Cf. Andrew Fish, 'The Reputation of Froude': 'One of the significant figures of the Victorian era, [Froude's] course ran across most of the currents of what is usually considered to be Victorianism...': PHR, I (June, 1932), 179.

² The words of H.V. Routh, Towards the twentieth century: essays in the spiritual history of the nineteenth century (Cambridge, 1937), p. 11.

³ 'The Imperialism of Froude', NS, 11 (1 June 1918), 172.

⁴ From the preface to his abridged edition of Froude's Life of Carlyle (1979), p. xvii.

tolerance, detested Catholicism, regarded the 'Teutonic' nations as ordained leaders of the world, categorised coloured races with the animals and held cruelty justified in a righteous cause. All this he said in prose which, superb with conviction, matched Dickens for drama, Carlyle for pulpit force, Bagehot or Acton for massive, lucid elegance. It should be possible to admire him historically without wincing...

Bryden exaggerates, of course, to make his point. But whatever the explanation for the neglect of Froude, is it deserved?

In this thesis I have tried to show that this neglect is not deserved. A prolific author, some of his writings (including, perhaps, much of his historical work) are indeed of very limited interest today. But his novels, some of his essays and his biography of Carlyle are well worth studying for the representative quality of the ideas they embody and (in certain instances) for their literary success. His early novels, although unorthodoxly constructed and artistically flawed, are romans à thèse illustrating Froude's philosophical and theological speculations within specific socio-psychological frameworks. The Spirit's Trials and The Lieutenant's Daughter are workings out of the moral questions surrounding a qualified Spinozan determinism. The Nemesis of Faith provides the reader a wealth of insights, at times profound, and always validly grounded in the author's experience, into the faith-doubt process in a period of intellectual change. The Two Chiefs of Dunboy, a much later novel, while less experimental in form, does raise questions about the relationship of history to fiction as Froude presents his challenging view of the Irish problem. His wonderfully lucid essays with their mixture of the topical and the timeless, reflect many facets of mainstream nineteenth-century thought on a large variety of subjects. Finally, there is his greatest literary work, the superb Life of Carlyle: what it reveals of the most remarkable of the Victorian sages and the manner in which it reveals it testify to Froude's controversial significance as a major biographer. Had he written nothing else he would still deserve greater recognition than he has so far received as an important Victorian writer. Taken as a

¹ Ronald Bryden, The Unfinished Hero and other essays (1969), p. 166.

whole, Froude's literary writings constitute an impressive achievement, from which much still remains to be learnt.

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