

CARDINAL NEWMAN  
AND  
WILLIAM FROUDE, F.R.S.

A CORRESPONDENCE



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*A pencil sketch by Miss Emmeline Deane*

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BY  
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TO  
L. K. H.



## PREFACE

THE following correspondence between Cardinal Newman and William Froude and his wife is largely unpublished hitherto. I am greatly indebted to the Oratorians of Edgbaston, Cardinal Newman's literary executors, for their permission to print these new letters, which were either in their files or in the possession of the Froude family. I wish particularly to record my thanks for the continued assistance and advice of Fr. Francis Bacchus, and for the hospitality of all the Oratorians while I was examining this correspondence. A few of the letters have before been published, and I have made due acknowledgment in my references. None of the letters of William Froude to Cardinal Newman has hitherto appeared in print, and for permission to give them here I am indebted to the daughter of William Froude, the late Baroness von Hügel, who generously devoted to me many hours of conversation about her family. It is through her kindness, also, that I am able to reproduce for the first time the pencil sketch of Cardinal Newman by Miss Emmeline Deane, which is the frontispiece of this book. I am equally indebted to Miss Mary Froude, who has answered my innumerable questions about her grandfather and permitted me to make the first publication of the letters Richard Hurrell Froude wrote to his brother in 1827 and 1828. These are given in the appendix.

In presenting this study of the relations of Cardinal Newman and William Froude I am indebted for advice and many helpful suggestions to Professor Raymond D. Havens of the Johns Hopkins University. Professor

George Boas also gave valued criticism, and Dr. Edward T. Norris, Dr. Edward N. Hooker, Dr. Arthur DuBois, and Dr. Archibald Hart gave of their time in helping to prepare this book for the press. To several friends at home and abroad I should like to acknowledge a debt of thanks none the less great because it is personal; of them all, none has been in everything more generous than T. L. H.

G. H. H.

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*December, 1933.*



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I  
INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

WHEN John Henry Newman was created Cardinal in 1879, he was an old and enfeebled man. His health was so seriously impaired after the trip to Rome for the conferring of the hat that it was more than once doubtful whether he would be able to take part in the ceremonies, but he managed, with St. Philip's help, to make all the addresses expected of him, replying to each presentation in words which only his genius could have put together. The effort, however, overtaxed his strength, and he had to forego many visits to the Pope and to the Holy Places of Rome. An affection of the lungs confined him to his rooms, and he was able only twice to say Mass even in the private chapel of his own residence.

However ill he might be, Newman felt that there was one task he could not put off for a single day. In the short time a curiously ironic fate had left to him, Newman desired to use his new position for the conversion of important thinkers to the Church, and the person above all others whom he wished most dearly to influence was one of the leading scientists of the day, Fellow of the Royal Society, freethinker, and lifelong friend, William Froude. For thirty-five years Newman had corresponded with Froude largely upon religious matters, endeavoring always to give the arguments for belief in the Roman Catholic Church in a fashion sufficiently cogent to win Froude over to that faith. Froude, however, remained unshaken in his scepticism, and in his replies pointed out to Newman the scientific ob-

jections which made such a step impossible for him. His letters were of great value to Newman in presenting the scientific point of view and had some small influence upon the development of Newman's thought up to the time when he set down his final statement in the *Grammar of Assent*. Although Newman recognized fully the difficulty of convincing Froude, he never despaired of final success, and his first sustained act, after his elevation to the Cardinalate, was to write, in spite of the danger to his health, a long letter, "a marvel of lucidity," in which he presented what he hoped was at last an irrefutable argument for the reasonableness of a belief in God. While he was correcting the rough draft of his argument, word came to him that William Froude was dead.

William Froude had had large claims upon Newman's friendship, for he was a brother of the "bright and beautiful" Hurrell who had helped to lead the Tractarians in their gallant and romantic attempt to save the English Church. Upon Hurrell's early death in 1836, William had succeeded in part to the place left empty in Newman's heart. Born at Dartington in 1810, he had grown up in unusual surroundings. His father, Archdeacon of Totnes, was typical of the more devout clergy of the eighteenth century. He had a lively interest in current affairs, in explorations, particularly those of Franklin, and was himself an artist accomplished enough to win praise from the dictator, Ruskin. He frequently gave to the Tractarians advice of a practical nature, and was himself enrolled as a member of that group. In the intellectual atmosphere of Dartington Parsonage, William and his younger brother, Anthony, lived during their most impressionable years, and here both of them heard the first plans for the

Oxford Movement discussed by Hurrell and his distinguished friends from the University, John Keble and John Henry Newman.

William's share of the Froude genius was sufficient at once to set him apart from his fellows when he went to Westminster School. His letters to Hurrell show him to have been a rather shy young man already more interested in mathematics than in football. Hurrell encouraged him to perfect himself in his studies, but cautioned him not entirely to neglect the more worldly matter of getting on with his companions and enjoying the benefits of competitive sport. In later life William often acknowledged the decisive influence his older brother had upon the formation of his mind. It was from Hurrell that he learned the principles of thinking which enabled him to win a distinguished place in the field of science. Hurrell's letters to him, some of which are given in the appendix, dealt not only with the necessity of right thinking but of right conduct. He advised him especially to distrust his emotions and the wild thoughts to which they could give rise. It will be not uninteresting to note, in the following correspondence, how fully William obeyed this caveat.

In 1828 William Froude entered Oriel College, Oxford, where he immediately drew attention to himself, so Hurrell wrote, by the depth of his science papers, which frequently overreached the abilities of the younger dons. Newman assisted in the direction of William's work, and during Hurrell's absences took upon himself the task of administering "periodical rowings" in classics and prose composition. In such hands it is small wonder that, throughout his life, William was able in his letters to reproduce to perfection the "Oriel style," and to win from his associates the

tribute that of them all he best embodied the classic spirit.

When Froude went up to Oxford, Oriel was just beginning to assume the position, with Balliol, of the "prison house," and to its reputation for learning he contributed by his daily custom of rising at five-thirty to work steadily until two or three. He had at one time considered a medical career but shortly abandoned it for abstract science. Mathematics, in which he took a first, became his chief interest at the University, but he also dabbled in chemistry, and his rooms were made conspicuous in the court by the large stains of acid running from his windows down to the ground two floors below. His chief recreation was sailing, in which Hurrell had coached him, but even in this he turned his scientific bent toward the improvement of bows proper for racing craft.

In 1833 Froude took a position under Henry Robinson Palmer, vice-president of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and worked on the South Eastern Railway. Four years later he joined the engineering staff of Isambard K. Brunel, the designer of the *Great Eastern* steamship. While engaged in work on the Bristol and Exeter Railway, he made a contribution of major importance in propounding what is known to engineers as the "curve of adjustment." In the same year he married Miss Kate Holdsworth, and, in 1844, the two removed to Dartington to care for the aged Archdeacon, who was in failing health. Forced by this circumstance to relinquish his engineering career, Froude turned to experimental science. In 1856 he was asked by Brunel to make some investigations of the motion of ships in waves. This study became the major work of his lifetime and gained for him a place in the first rank of British scientists. His experiments were carried on



privately in the estuaries about Salcombe, and Froude was frequently seen by the natives rowing about apparently playing with toy boats. When on one occasion two uniformed men (naval officers interested in the experiments) were seen at the oars, a story spread about the locality that William Froude was mad and had to be in charge of two "keepers." By 1868 his work had so far progressed that he made formal application to the Chief Constructor of the Navy, Sir Edward James Reed, for the building of a covered experimental tank suitable for testing model ships. His proposals were approved by the Admiralty on February 1, 1870, and the tank was constructed. Froude developed a mechanism whereby models in wax could be cut directly from the plans of the proposed vessel. He also determined a "law of similitude and comparison" whereby, from the results of tests upon the model, he was able to make extraordinarily accurate predictions concerning the behaviour of a full-sized ship.

Froude's development of the experimental tank profoundly affected the course of all naval designing. Out of this work grew his invention of a bilge keel able to hold vessels more steady in wave action. His results were at once applied to British warships and subsequently to the commercial ships of every country. The British Government only recently completed an elaborate tank, dedicated by Stanley Baldwin in November, 1932, as the *William Froude Laboratory*, a part of the new National Physical Laboratory at Teddington. "Today there are more than a score of experimental tanks in existence," Mr. Baldwin said in his speech, "and everyone of them is a monument to the genius and work of Froude."<sup>1</sup> The first purely com-

<sup>1</sup> *Nature* (Nov. 26, 1932), p. 801.

mercial tank built in England in 1881 bore an inscription to William Froude as "the greatest of experimenters and investigators in hydrodynamics."

The Royal Society elected Froude to membership on June 2, 1870, and in 1876 awarded him their Gold Medal. Froude contributed a number of papers to the publications of the Royal Society as well as several to the Institute of Naval Architects.

It is not, however, Froude's scientific career which is of concern here, but rather his private life, particularly as it related to John Henry Newman. That life was a less than ordinarily happy one, and to the unhappiness Newman largely contributed. A close friend not only of William's but also of Mrs. Froude's, Newman corresponded regularly with them, and the topic most frequently discussed was not unnaturally religion. While Newman remained an Anglican his long letters to the Froudes dealt with his position in that faith, and some of them, as will be seen, were of a most intimate nature. After he became a Roman Catholic, Newman introduced into his letters a subtle proselytizing which was not without effect. First one and then another of the Froude family were converted by Newman's influence to Catholicism, until finally William alone remained a Protestant, spiritually isolated from his family. During these years Froude carried on with Newman something of a philosophical inquiry into the nature of the evidence for religious belief.

Mrs. Froude was the first to be converted. She confessed her faith on March 19, 1857. Her action was a great blow both to William and to Archdeacon Froude, who threatened to cut his son out of the inheritance of his considerable fortune, saying he would not

leave his property to Catholics. William offered to resign his place at Dartington in favor of Anthony and to return to his engineering career. But Anthony's militant agnosticism was even more unacceptable than Mrs. Froude's Catholicism, and in the end William inherited the entire estate of £35,000. To Newman's constant influence was now added that of Mrs. Froude, and eventually four children became Catholics, and one of them, Robert Edmund, for a time considered entering the priesthood.

Froude bore his spiritual trials most patiently, never allowing his feeling of isolation to impair his love for his wife and family. He continued to discuss frankly and openly religious questions and their relation to scientific thought. He appreciated the beauty of the Anglican church service and knew from memory many of the poems of the *Christian Year*. In the family circle he read the Bible in a spirit at once sympathetic and understanding, seeking out always the depth of meaning in the most beautiful passages. Upon the birth of his first daughter he had given to the parish church a memorial window. When in later years there was left to him only one child, Mary, who was not a Catholic, he engaged for her a Protestant governess. Even this last spiritual consolation was lost to him upon the child's death in 1863.

Archdeacon Froude died in 1859, and the Froudes moved to Torbay and later built a house, Chelston Cross, near Torquay. Here a brilliant society, English, French, and American, often gathered. Arnold, Jowett, Ruskin, and Brunel were frequent guests. To William Froude foreign governments sent representatives, among them Popoff of the Czar's navy, for consultation on matters of naval design. Froude was a member

of the Athenaeum Club, and by reason of his personal charm and intellectual distinction a popular figure in London society.

In spite of his softness of personal manner, Froude never relinquished his "tough-minded" attitude, and to the end of his life he remained firmly agnostic, sceptical even of the possibility of absolute certainty in secular as well as religious matters. The intimate contact of Newman and Froude, the one passionately believing and the other fiercely sceptical, the influence of one upon the other, and their personal relationship form the subject of the following correspondence.

Mrs. Froude died in 1878, and that winter, Froude, who suffered greatly by the loss, accepted the invitation of the Government to cruise to South Africa on the *Boadicea*. As he was preparing to return to England, he was taken suddenly ill and died at Simon's Town June 4, 1879. He was buried in the military cemetery with full honors on June 12.

Froude's sincere and devoted friendship had been invaluable to Newman. Bound by such close ties of personal affection, Newman felt free to talk to Froude as he could to no other of his friends who were not Catholics. Enjoying such intimacy and appreciating fully the intellectual acumen of his former pupil, Newman found in Froude one with whom he could discuss problems of religious belief which were either unknown to or beyond the grasp of his own circle. Froude was an outstanding thinker in the particular field wherein lay the greatest danger to Catholicism, and from Froude Newman gained a wealth of information and a new viewpoint which served him well in solving the difficulties presented to himself and other Catholics by their beliefs.

Froude may be said in a measure to have served Newman as a testing block upon which to beat out a solution to some of his difficulties, and evidences of Froude's criticism may be found in the *Grammar of Assent*. Froude was of so much assistance to Newman in attempting to solve intellectual problems largely from the very fact that his cast of mind was very different from Newman's. He always believed that he had developed legitimately the principles of thinking Hurrell had instilled in him, and when later he became a complete sceptic, it was, he said, because his thinking had been so largely in the domain of "practical science, where, more than elsewhere, the principles and results of reasonings are confronted with the test of direct experiment."<sup>2</sup> And when as often as not the results of his careful thinking suffered correction from still further investigation, it is not astonishing that he came to believe the establishment of any permanent truths a fruitless endeavor. Repeated experiences had made him reluctant to accept any proposition not supported by overwhelming evidence of the most practical sort, and even in those cases where he seemed to have arrived at certainty, Froude allowed always for the possibility that the ultimate assumption, small or axiomatic though it might be, upon which every argument rested, was itself wrong. From continued application to problems of a practical nature Froude drew two related rules for his thinking: there is a moral obligation to doubt every proposition and conclusion; the achievement of permanent certainty is impossible. In his own words, "Our 'doubts' in fact appear to me as sacred, . . . more strongly than I believe anything else I believe this—that on no subject whatever, distinctly not in the region

<sup>2</sup> December 29, 1859.

of the ordinary facts with which our daily experience is consonant, distinctly not in the domain of history or of politics, and yet again *a fortiori* not in that of Theology, is my mind (or as far as I can take the mind of any human being), capable of arriving at an absolutely certain conclusion."<sup>3</sup>

With such intellectual principles Froude was unable to accept orthodox religious tenets, and in this inability he was representative of a large class of serious thinkers. His arguments against existing creeds, being susceptible of a high degree of demonstration, carried a corresponding preponderance of conviction among those who faced squarely the problem of religious belief. As a scientist interested in reaching the truth, whether in physical or metaphysical questions, he was a distinguished exemplar of that tough-minded school of philosophical liberalism against which Newman spent a life in combat.

Yet in personal relationship Newman did not find Froude tough-minded, but, on the contrary, a sincere and kindly critic of orthodoxy whose great desire was not so much to destroy accepted opinion as it was to establish as far as possible a truth against which no force of untruth could prevail. If he held liberal views, he held them only as a result of a patient sifting of the evidence which produced them. His zeal for repeated correction and his sceptical attitude were a source of some confusion to Newman, who held that only minds religiously disposed were capable of discovering religious truth. Sincerity of purpose was to Newman indispensable in a seeker. Although Newman did not find Froude naturally religious, he did recognize in him a sincere desire to discover whatever truth there was in

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

religion. He saw in him neither a rude scoffer nor an iconoclast, but an English gentleman (and the gentleman counted much with Newman) who for some reason could not convince himself of the truth of religion. Since the fault did not lie with Froude's sincerity nor entirely with the disposition of his mind, Newman was forced to believe that it lay with the state of Christian apologetic, and he set about discovering some polemical means for overcoming Froude's intellectual difficulties. The task was all the more congenial since Froude himself enjoyed serving as a target for the arrows of Newman's dialectic by which they both hoped to solve the great problem presented in the nineteenth century by the clash of religion and science.

It was, therefore, much in the spirit of philosophical inquiry that during the years between 1838 and 1844 Newman and Froude had a number of conversations on religious topics which they frequently continued by letter. Newman seems for a time to have regarded their inquiry in the old relationship of tutor and pupil, and he occasionally had some fears that his younger friend might be "unsettled," a feeling he himself appreciated only too keenly. Newman did not have the same hesitation in outlining his thoughts to Mrs. Froude, whose cast of mind was more disposed toward religious belief, for she had repeatedly urged him to write to her on such matters. Hence the practice grew up of including her in the correspondence, Newman intending that she should always show his letters to her husband.

No conclusions seem to have been drawn immediately; rather, the question became, for Newman at least, yearly more complicated. His intellectual progress from 1838 to the writing of Tract 90 in 1841 is too well known to review here. From 1841 to 1845

Newman was only waiting for the decision which could not have come sooner than it did. The state of his mind was suspected by many of his friends, and it was commonly thought that soon he would "go over". Nevertheless, no one dared intrude questions upon him until at last Mrs. Froude, in July, 1843, was so bold as to write asking directly whether or not he was contemplating a change to Rome in the very near future. To her question Newman replied:

Littlemore.

July 28, 1843.

My dear Mrs. Froude,

I wish I could write you such an answer to your letter as it deserves. I mean a real open letter, saying first what I think, but I feel it so difficult to bring out what I would say, that when I attempt it, I become unreal. One difficulty is the analysing and knowing one's feelings—but another is to be able to exhibit them on occasion. I do not carry them in my hand, and, much as I wish it, I cannot put you in possession of them on the mere asking.

There is no doubt at all that I am approximating towards Rome; not any doubt that those who are very much about me see this little as I wish it. These two facts, coupled with the very significant and corresponding fact of the Bishops, Heads of religious parties, and organs of religious opinion having disowned me, have determined me on resigning St. Mary's, though as yet I have not made this known, nor shall I till the time comes. I feel I am no longer able to fulfil such a *trust*, as a pastoral charge in our Church implies; and, as on the whole I have hitherto ever been aiming at obeying and supporting her rulers, to the best of my ability, so, when I can no longer do this, and especially when they refuse my assistance, it seems a call upon me to release myself from the obligation. As time has gone on, I have become more dissatisfied with the established system, and *its* *conductors* have become more dissatisfied with me; I do not see what good