

PROFESSOR EDWARD A. FREEMAN.

We are unwilling to pass over in silence the loss that Archæology in general, and our own Institute in particular, has sustained by the death in the full vigour of his literary life of Professor E. A. Freeman. The public press has not been wanting in notices of his character and career, and in fully appreciative criticism of his style and manner of writing history, and it is, without doubt, as an historian that he was most widely known, and that his name and fame will be transmitted to posterity. From that point of view we have nothing to add to the opinions so generally expressed and so entirely justified, but looking upon him with reference to our own special pursuits we cannot but feel that that technical knowledge, the display of which in his writings, his critics are inclined to regard as their weak point, is that to which we are bound to attach especial value; for Mr. Freeman was not only a great historian, but what is seldom if ever the case with great historians, he was also a great archæologist. That happily obsolete phrase "the dignity of history," which forbade personal anecdotes and a description of details, though disdained by Arnold and Macaulay, was never so completely set aside as by Freeman. He not only visited and examined with care the scenes of such events as he proposed to describe, but he had deeply studied topography and architecture, and made great use of this knowledge in his writings. He was an accurate observer not only of the broad features of a country but of its ancient roads and earthworks, its pre-historic monuments, and its earlier and especially its ecclesiastical buildings. No man was better versed in the distinctive styles of Christian architecture, or had a better general knowledge of the earthworks from the study of which he might hope to correct or corroborate any written

records, and by the aid of which he often infused life and reality into otherwise obscure narrations. These remarks especially apply to his history of the Norman Conquest and of the reign of William Rufus. He visited every spot upon which the Conqueror is recorded to have set his foot, compared many of the strongholds of his followers with those they left behind them in Normandy, and studied the evidence of Domesday for their character and possessions. When writing upon Rufus he spent some time in examining the afforested district of the New Forest, and sought for traces of the villages and churches said to have been depopulated or destroyed. And for us archæologists he did more than this. When he attended a provincial congress and had listened to the description of some local antiquity, some mound, or divisional earthbank, or semi-Saxon church, he at once strove to show the general evidence to be deduced from them, and how it bore upon the boundaries or formation of some Celtic or Saxon province or diocese, if not upon the general history of the kingdom itself. Take for example the Exeter meeting where the walls, earthworks and castle having been elaborately described, Freeman took up the theme, and connected them with the history of the City from the entrance of William the Conqueror to that of William the Deliverer in a most brilliant address, afterwards the staple of a very well known little volume. He thus did much to elevate the pursuits of the archæologist, and to show the relation they bore to the far superior labours of the historian.

Freeman was always at his best when in the field. It was then that the full force of his personality came into play: his sturdy upright figure, sharp cut features, flowing beard, well modulated voice, clear enunciation, and fluent and incisive speech. None who have heard him hold forth from the steps of some churchyard cross, or from the top stone of some half demolished cromlech, can ever cease to have a vivid recollection of both the orator and his theme.

Something has been said, not unkindly nor unjustly, of his combative disposition. Without doubt he was a very formidable antagonist. There was no malice in his blow, it was honestly and truly delivered, but it was given with all his might, and that might was tremendous. But it was only against a sham or pretence of knowledge that

his wrath was wont to be directed. To mere unpretentious ignorance he was tolerant. To those, however humble, who were honestly and industriously seeking knowledge he was more than tolerant, he was sympathetic. No doubt there were many who feared and had reason to fear him, and who spoke freely of his roughness, but no man had a closer circle of friends who knowing him well, respected him truly, and loved him dearly, and who feel that in him they have lost one with whom it was an honour and a pleasure to have been intimate.