



VANITY FAIR.

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LORD RAYLEIGH, D.C.I., F.R.S.

JOHN WILLIAM STRUTT who was born on the 12th of November, 1842, became the third Baron of his House one-and-thirty years later; in the natural order of things, his father, the second Baron, having lived to the very wholesome age of seventy-and-seven. But quite unnaturally he has developed himself to an abnormal extent; which can in no circumstances have been due to his birth. He left Trinity, Cambridge, as Senior Wrangler and First Smith's Prizeman. Then they made a Fellow of him, while, fifteen years later, Oxford tried to go one better by making him an Honorary Doctor of Civil Law—a science of which he probably knows nothing. At least seven other Universities have delighted to honour him with degrees; he is Lord-Lieutenant of Essex; he is, or has been, a Professor at all sorts of places; he is an honorary member of countless foreign societies and he is even Adviser to that very conservative body the Trinity House. For he is the great scientist who discovered Argon in the air; thereby exploding the views of all the noble army of Chemists who had sworn that our air was only nitrogen and oxygen diluted with a few impurities. He has also written books—dull learned hooks mostly—on "Sound," "Heat," and such like matters of Physics: which are standard books; for he is a great authority who has long since put his own name in the front rank of Science. He is indeed a very great chemist who has done much for the Royal Society; and he is so earnest that his unaesthetic home of white brick in the wilds of Essex is a glorified laboratory. He runs a milk-walk in London, but for all that he is an honest industrious fellow, and a good Lord-Lieutenant as times go. Though he is generally brewing a vile odour, he is really a great man. He married a sister of Mr. Arthur Balfour; who is quite first-rate at addressing the horny-handed at the unveiling of a statue, a root show, a local charity performance, or any other of those affairs at which the wives of Lord-Lieutenants disport themselves. Consequently, he has the family habit of lolling; but he infinitely prefers the laboratory to the platform: where he generally looks like a tired dog trying to find a corner to lie down in. He is the son of a clever mother, and he is a nephew of Hedley: Vicars of Crimean fame.