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THE ANNUAL ADDRESS.

THE PRESENT POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY AND
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THIS COUNTRY.

MY LORD SHAFTESBURY, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,—

My task to-night must be a humble one. I have at all times too little leisure, and I have too little learning, even if I had the general ability, to be able to provide for this annual meeting any such a discourse on the present condition or position of science in relation to philosophy or theology as we have been favoured with in several former years. I have, therefore, shrunk very much from undertaking so responsible a task as that which, notwithstanding, has been forced upon me. Nevertheless, other men—men who could have brought valuable contributions to the literature of the Institute, and whose names would have conferred distinction upon our annual meeting—having proved unable to accomplish what had been expected from them, and there being no one else, as it appeared, to whom the Council could at the present moment resort—no one at least who had not already delivered the Annual Address,—I was obliged to leave myself—under protest, I am bound to say—in the hands of the Council; and, at their risk, hardly with my own proper consent, I shall to-night say what I may best be able in regard to the present position of Christianity and the Christian faith in this country.

There is one thing, I venture to affirm, which can hardly be disputed; viz., that such an association as the *Victoria Institute* was very greatly needed at the time when it was founded, that its course has been one of marked usefulness and of undeniable success, and that at this moment the relations of Christian faith to philosophy and science are better settled, and at the same time more satisfactory, than for some years past. Ten years ago infidelity was more confident in its tone, notwithstanding all that has since been published in the way of sceptical argument or speculation, than it is to-day. Ten years ago it was not suspected by many how much support Christianity could claim from philosophy, or how powerfully the defenders of Christianity would be able to maintain their contention against the usurpations

and dogmatism of science. The *Victoria Institute* having, in the name of philosophy and science no less than of Christianity, uplifted the banner of Christian faith, a puissant host of adherents, counting not a few names of undeniable eminence in every department of cultivated thought, have gathered to that banner, and have manned the defences of our faith and swelled the garrison of the Institute.

It appears to me that there was ten years ago, and that there is still to some extent, a danger of allowing exaggerated fears to prevail in regard to the hold which Christianity, in its essential faith and in its spiritual power, maintains upon our country and upon the rising thought and energy of the nation. Not only is there no need for alarm, there is, I cannot but hope, no need for discouragement; although, on the other hand, false security would be a fatal mistake, and there is need undoubtedly for vigilance and energy,—such vigilance and energy as the *Victoria Institute* was created for the sake of enlisting, of organizing, of setting in array.

The position of Christianity in a country is not to be estimated according to the negative gauge of the absence of professed unbelief, but by the positive gauge of the amount of fruitful Christian energy and life among the people, by the amount of living faith as tested by Christian fruits, of faith and life actually found growing and flourishing in the nation. The opposition now, as from the beginning, is between “that which is of the Father” and “that which is of the world,” to use St. John’s language; between “the mind of the Spirit” and “the mind of the flesh” (the *carnal mind*), to use St. Paul’s language. “That which is of the world” the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life,” comprehending in this last the pride and self-sufficiency of the natural understanding—may, at the present time, include much more of professed and active unbelief than in many former ages; but it does not, therefore, follow that the fortunes and hopes of Christianity are lower now than in the ages when professed orthodoxy was too often associated with all that is evil in the world’s appetites and passions. “The mind of the flesh”—the “carnal mind”—may not now, as in some former periods, find it necessary, or at least convenient, to disguise its “enmity” against the spiritual “law of God” and the nature-humbling faith of Christ; but it would surely be a mistake therefore to infer that the faith of Christ and “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” have less power now than in those former periods: it is an old maxim that an open foe is less dangerous than a hypocritical professed friend.

Sixty or seventy years ago there was little public profession of unbelief,—indeed, the state of the law made such public profession hazardous; but society was honeycombed, nevertheless, with an infidelity not the less deadly because it was contemptuously cold, an infidelity which was to all faith or religious earnestness as a malaria, which seldom showed any respect for morals—often, on the contrary, making a boast of immorality—and which habitually employed language, whatever might be the occasion, of the grossest irreverence and profanity. Can it for a moment be supposed that there was more Christian faith in proportion, that there was really less unbelief, in this country then than now? Let the Parliament of this land during the first twenty years of the present century, with the advantage, if it were indeed an advantage, of its being as yet unreformed, be compared with the Parliament of the last twenty years, and then let it be judged whether the power of Christianity is less to-day, or its prospects less hopeful, than sixty years ago.

Sixty years ago more anti-Christian energy in proportion among the educated classes went into vice and fashionable frivolity than now; to-day our social anti-Christ develops more energy in the direction of critical infidelity; of intellectual rebellion against the “truth as it is in Jesus.” The advance of Christianity during the last two generations is marked—may be said to be registered—by the moral superiority of the avowed unbelief of to-day to the covert infidelity of the early years of this century. Scepticism and agnosticism can of themselves as little inspire morality, can as little teach nobleness or holy love, can as little sustain beneficence and self-sacrifice, whether in right and authority as a principle, or in force and fervour as a passion, as the tide-washed sands of the seashore could bring forth the growths and fruits and flowering beauty of Eden. It is a marvellous evidence of the power and authority of Christianity, of the victory which it has wrung from its foes in the realm of morals, of its indisputable ascendancy over whatever is highest and best in human nature, that anti-Christianity to-day so far does homage to the Christian faith as to assume its ethical code and to imitate its morality. The power, the inspiration, the example of Christianity have thus availed so far as almost to “create a soul under the ribs of death.”

Or, to go back still half a century farther, can any one imagine that there was more in proportion of Christian faith or of Christian life in this country in the last century than there is now? We have only to refer to Bishop Berkeley’s “Minute Philosopher,” to look again at Bishop Butler’s great

work, to consider the gist and purpose of Paley's writings, in order to dissipate any such idea. It is scarcely possible to conceive of an age more heartless, less Christian, more abjectly materialized, than the eighteenth century in England. Infidelity was then vastly stronger in proportion, more fashionable, more arrogant, in what were regarded as cultivated circles, than agnosticism is to-day among educated Englishmen. It may be instructive and encouraging to mark the agencies which Providence has employed during the last century to raise up the power of true religion in this country. The successive waves of spiritual force will serve, in some general way, to register the interval between the Christianity of to-day and that of a hundred years ago. I can, of course, but indicate these agencies and their operation very briefly.

The first I name was the power of right reason applied to Divine things. The fashionable infidelity of England was reduced to absurdity by the fine philosophic irony of the accomplished Berkeley; the grave doubts on moral subjects of sincere questioners, of honest and earnest seekers after truth, were worthily dealt with by the profound intellect, equally candid and humble, of Butler; the metaphysical scepticism of Hume, prototype of the sceptical idealism—shall I call it, or nihilism?—of Mill, was ably refuted by Dr. George Campbell in Scotland, and in England by the luminous common-sense of Paley. Thus infidel intellect was foiled at its own weapons, and Christianity remained mistress of the field of argument.

This was a great and needful success, without which the position of Christianity, at least among educated men, must have been left very insecure. But yet the labours of these masters of argument only gave Christianity a negative triumph. Speculative argument may subdue the aggressive foe, may keep him back, may beat him down; but for Christianity to gain positive triumphs other weapons are needed, not the armour and arms of intellectual defence, but of spiritual onset—the *sword of the Spirit*, the *Word of God*, and, as the only protection against “fiery darts” of doubt and unbelief which no chain-mail of logic however complete and cunningly wrought can always avail to “quench,” the *shield of a living faith*. These other weapons were provided in connection with successive movements of spiritual revival which arose during the century following the rise of Methodism.

These movements may all have been traceable, more or less remotely, to the same fontal influences, but the waves broke successively in different directions. The earliest Methodism—

that of the Wesleys, of Whitefield, and of "the Countess"—found its field chiefly among miners, ironworkers, handloom weavers, upland agriculturists, and northern dalesmen; among certain circles of "high life," in fashionable watering-places, and in some of the larger towns, especially in the west of England; it made scarcely any impression on the southern and eastern counties, and, except for the eccentric Mr. Berridge's work in Bedfordshire, took but a feeble hold of the midlands south of the Trent. But at length, in its Low Church Calvinistic form, Methodism gained a footing in Cambridge about fifty years after it had emerged from Oxford in its High-Church and Arminian form, to receive its true baptism of faith and power from Moravian Germany. Cambridge was the real source of the Low Church Evangelical movement. Whitefield and "the Countess"—for want of a University school of the prophets—diffused their influence, especially in the later periods of their work, rather beyond than within the pale of the Church of England; but Charles Simeon, entering into the field at Cambridge which his erratic predecessor, Rowland Hill, had helped to prepare, gave form and direction to the Evangelical Low Church movement. In this he was greatly aided by the authority and influence of Dr. Milner, Dean of Carlisle, and Master of Queen's College, Cambridge. Anthony Milner's Church History—he was the brother of the Dean—Scott's Commentary, and even the Olney Hymns, had furnished a necessary apparatus and basis for the work of leavening the Church of England with Evangelical ideas and life which Simeon organized. Earlier still, indeed, the preaching of Romaine in London and Venn in Yorkshire had also helped to prepare the way for an Evangelical revival in the Church; but of the Evangelical movement in its permanent organization Simeon's preaching at Cambridge and his personal intercourse with the undergraduates maintained the central energy and impulse, whilst his unbounded liberality in the use of his private fortune for the planting throughout the country of Evangelical clergymen, and the foundation of well-guarded trusts in the interests of Evangelical orthodoxy, especially in the most influential town centres and the most frequented places of fashionable resort, enabled him to lay wide and firm the basis of Low Church Evangelical revival and extension. He died little more than forty years ago, just, indeed, as the earlier preludings of the High Church revival were beginning to produce a sensible effect, not only in Oxford, but through a widening circle. During

* So Lady Huntingdon was familiarly called throughout all "Methodist" circles in her own day.

fifty years preceding he had been doing his work at Cambridge. John Wesley, for six years before his own death, had known him, and had hailed him as an earnest fellow-labourer. His labours thus occupied the interval between John Wesley and the rise of the Oxford High Church party. The movement, of which he was the leading organizer, must be reckoned as the second wave of religious influence which, during the past hundred years, has spread widely through the land.

The third great wave of Christian influence, mingling with and reinforcing the second, was that with which the name of Wilberforce is identified. Though this movement was closely connected with the Evangelical Church of England movement of which I have just spoken, it was not altogether limited or defined by it. A well-known religious book by an eminent Nonconformist divine—Dr. Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion"—the companionship of Isaac Milner on two continental tours, and, finally and above all, the study of the Greek Testament, were the visible links in the chain of causes by which William Wilberforce was brought to spiritual faith and true conversion. His conversion was no corollary of a movement, can be no boast of a section or of a school,—it was of God; and his personality and personal influence were not capable of being limited to any particular school,—nor indeed to any one Church or denomination. Wilberforce was a Catholic Evangelical, and found his friends and allies among all those "who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." He was, in many respects, the forerunner of Lord Shaftesbury. He was father of the modern lay Church of England, founder of the great English lay brotherhood of Christian philanthropy and home mission work. He was himself a preacher of no ordinary power. Of his "Practical View" fifty editions were sold within fifty years after its publication. He carried his Christian influence straight and full into Parliament, and there confessed Christ as a legislator. Thus was another wave of vast scope and mighty influence, another wave of Christian life and love, launched on its career of blessing. The work of which Wilberforce was during his lifetime the soul and centre has been carried forward since his death by a host of noble men and devoted women—the most distinguished of all these ministers of mercy in the influence he has been enabled to exercise having been, as I have already intimated, the honoured nobleman who now presides over this Institute, and who looks back over forty years of philanthropic and Christian enterprise.

The last movement of life in English Christianity which

in this slight sketch I have to notice is that which began in Oxford rather more than forty years ago. Cambridge had been the nurse, at least, if not the parent—had for nearly half a century been the acknowledged centre—of the Low Church Evangelical revival in the Church of England. Oxford was to be the parent of revived Anglican High Church zeal and devotion. It cannot, indeed, I suppose, be doubted that in a sense the Oxford revival was the result, humanly speaking, of the Evangelical movement during the half-century preceding. It was not merely in great part a reaction from that movement, it was in part a direct fruit of it; at least in this sense, that some of the leading souls in the Oxford movement were first quickened into spiritual life under Evangelical doctrines and in Evangelical homes. Dr. Newman, in his "Apologia," has told us the facts as to himself, and he has never disowned or spoken slightingly of his "conversion" whilst still under what are currently described as Evangelical influences. Similarly, we learn from Canon Liddon's sketch of the life of the late Bishop of Salisbury, Dr. Hamilton, that his conversion took place whilst he was under Evangelical Low Church influences. These instances occur to my memory as I am writing. It is likely that if I were to search I should find others of the same kind; but these two are enough to cite for my purpose. Dr. Newman was in its earlier stage the arch-leader of the High Church revival. Bishop Hamilton was, to the end of his life, one of its brightest and most reverend names. How the movement has advanced during the last forty years I have neither need nor wish to describe in this sketch.

But I wish to point out how these various movements or agencies of which I have been speaking have combined, in a very remarkable manner, to cover the whole ground of English society, and to bring Christianity to bear upon every field, every province, every class. The Methodism of Wesley took hold of colliers, miners, ironworkers, handloom weavers (both in the west and north), upland farmers, northern dalesmen, and some of the larger towns in England, especially where there were manufactures, or an independent shop-keeping middle class. Whitefield's labours stirred up a considerable number of Dissenting congregations, and in conjunction with the "Countess" he gained for his Evangelical doctrines a good lodgment in the leading watering-places of England. Alike at Bath, at the Hotwells at Tunbridge Wells, and at Spafields, Whitefield and her ladyship—one or both—left influential congregations behind them. The Low Church Evangelical movement in the Church of England developed

largely in the same direction in which the Countess had broken ground; its strongholds were found chiefly in fashionable places of resort and in considerable towns, its adherents belonged chiefly to the middle class, especially the upper middle class. The numerous and powerful circle of which Wilberforce was the centre was of the same class. His most generous and influential supporters were found among the highest ranks of commercial life. Thus it resulted, that notwithstanding all that had been done by Methodism in its various forms, by the Low Church Evangelical movement, by the philanthropic efforts of which Wilberforce and "the Clapham sect" were the centre, there were left wide spaces and important sections of England and English society almost untouched by the new life which had flamed so far and so wide through the land. Leaving out of account the west and south-west of England, there was little sign of earnest religious life in any purely agricultural region south-west of the Trent; there was quite as little in the eastern counties; nor was there any more sign of fervency or life in those districts of country north of the Trent where the politico-ecclesiastical alliance of the Church and the hereditary landed interest was strictly maintained. In short, in the England of which Oxford may be said to have been pre-eminently the representative—alike in general culture and in political and ecclesiastical tendencies—there was no movement of religious revival and aggression, whatever amount there may have been of steadfast orthodoxy or of religious reverence.

Now it is precisely these regions of England and the corresponding sections of English life which have at length been reached by means of the Oxford High Church movement. I am far from meaning to intimate that within these limits only that movement has been confined; I know that it is far otherwise. Nevertheless the High Church revival was applied first of all to some of the rural parishes, and took hold first of some of the sections of society which I have attempted to describe, and it took hold of them with authority and directness. While elsewhere it encountered organized opposition, here, for the most part, it obtained entrance with comparative ease, and in these spheres of influence the High Church revival has made a powerful impression, whereas the other forms of religious life and organization had, for the most part, failed to strike any root of power.

But High Church zeal has besides applied itself to the reclaiming and converting of the lowest classes of our large towns with great earnestness, and not without success. It works more by specific missions, by brotherhoods and sister-

hoods, than the Evangelical section of the Church ; it makes less of doctrine and much more of ritual ; it is great in services and in public demonstrations ; it cultivates attractive music, and makes the Church the theatre of much symbolism and much decoration ; its donations are most generous and its charities profuse.

Thus equipped the Anglican High Church has entered into the fellowship of revivals, and has completed the circle for England of religious awakening. The whole land is now full of religious movement—every county, every town, of whatever class, every section of society. Church and Dissent, High Church and Low Church, vie with each other in revival services and in homely mission work. In all this revived energy and activity there are not wanting features which even Christians, each from his own point of view, cannot but regard with doubt and even fear ; but surely also there is much on all sides in which Christians of a catholic spirit cannot but rejoice. For myself, I would say with St. Paul, “ By all means Christ is preached, and therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” To many Christians—as to myself—the characteristic tenets of High Church Anglicanism seem to savour of serious and even dangerous error, while extreme Ritualism is regarded by such Christians with a feeling not only of dislike, but of alarm. Yet surely no Evangelical Protestant of a catholic spirit, however strong in his Protestant and Evangelical convictions, can fail to recognize much good in a party which numbers among its leading men such preachers as Canon Liddon, and such working clergy as the newly-appointed Bishop of Lichfield. There is large common ground between such men and earnest Evangelicals. Whatever their High Anglicanism may mean, whatever it may imply from which an Evangelical Low Churchman or a Nonconformist is bound strongly to dissent, it is certain that Evangelical doctrine forms the main staple in the ordinary public ministrations of such High Churchmen as I have named. Therefore, even those who utterly dread all hierarchical claims, especially as touching confession, penance, and the sacraments, may, notwithstanding, thank God for such men, and for such revival work as that with which they are identified. So, on the other hand, I would fain hope that all large-hearted and truly cultivated High Churchmen cannot but rejoice in the labours and influence of such men as Dr. Vaughan and Dean Howson, however they may differ from them as to points of great importance. Nor would I allow myself to doubt that, although to many Churchmen Dissent as such may be an offence,—Nonconformity, even in the mildest form of Metho-

dism, a grievous delinquency,—and the doctrine preached in some at least of the pulpits of Baptists, or Congregationalists, or Methodists, especially by the least instructed and refined among the preachers of these sects, may appear as perilous an extreme as the most highly developed and emblazoned ritualism appears to be to an old-fashioned Protestant Dissenter, yet, on the whole, earnest and thoughtful Churchmen cannot but thank God for the Christian work done by such men as Thomas Binney in the last generation, as Dr. Stoughton through a life still happily continued among us, as the powerful preacher of the Surrey Tabernacle, strong Dissenter though he may be, during the last five-and-twenty years. In our controversy with infidelity the Christian union of forces, virtually represented by our *Victoria Institute*, for ours is an omni-denominational, or else an undenominational, union, cannot afford to ignore our common Christian basis of faith, or the common Christian life which ramifies through all our various organizations and developments, and which leavens with Christian conviction and feeling the different classes of our English population.

In the presence of the common foe of us all—the terrible blight of agnostic unbelief which has withered so much fair promise in our Universities, which has so strongly infected our civil service all over the world, which makes so considerable a figure in our social circles, which seeks to inspire all our periodical literature, and has deeply tainted not a little of it—it seems as if there were just now a special need for cultivating in all Christian circles, and among all professors of faith in Christ, a liberal and loving spirit; for seeking, apart from mere forms, to realize “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life.”

My object, however, in this address is not, even incidentally, to read a homily on Christian charity, however brief, and however noble may be the theme, but to attempt a sketch of the progress which Christianity has made in this country since the time of George II. and his favourite minister Walpole; to note, as I said awhile ago, the agencies which Providence has employed during the last century to raise up the power of Christian faith and religion in the country; to mark the successive waves of force and influence which have carried Christian energy and life into all parts of the land and into all sections of society, and which serve, in a general way, to indicate, to register, the interval between the Christianity of to-day and that of the first half of the eighteenth century. It is for this reason that I have referred specifically to different sections of the Church of England in their several

influences and operations, and to the work respectively of the national Church, as such, and of the various great Dissenting bodies. All these may be said, with insignificant exceptions, to agree as Christians on the common basis of the Apostles' Creed; all recognize as their common foe that infidelity which it is one of the special objects of this Institute to resist and refute; in their combined operations they represent the total Christianity of our land as organized for aggression against sin and evil, and for defence of the Divine revelation of truth and life in Christ Jesus.

And what a marvellous contrast does the Christianity of England as thus regarded present to the condition of this country at the period to which I have referred! What the moral and religious state of England was in the early part of the last century may be learnt from Mr. Leckie's "History of the Eighteenth Century" better even than from the reports of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, as published during the very period. We complain to-day of the wicked rudeness of our street boys in certain parts of London, insulting passengers, and especially women, as they move to and fro. But what are the worst excesses of our street scum to-day compared to the daring and customary outrages of the fashionable Mohocks of London, in the most frequented west-end thoroughfares, during the first third of the last century? To have put down with a strong hand those gentlemen Mohocks was counted one of the high merits of England's greatest Minister of that age. Those were days in which famous highwaymen were favourites in fashionable society, kept their lodgings publicly in St. James'-street and Jermyn-street, were privileged to fight duels with military officers, and openly played bowls on the best-frequented greens and in the company of the most highly titled of the nobility. Intemperance—the intemperance of the masses of the people—is often spoken of as one of the special curses and disgraces of our time; and curse indeed it is, beyond power of words to describe its shame and its horrors. Gin-drinking, in particular, is the peculiar disgrace and ruin of London and of our larger cities. Nevertheless, the gin-drinking of to-day is positively inconsiderable in proportion when compared with the gin-drinking of 1750. Even our lowest classes accordingly, the classes which we sometimes think have defied so obstinately and so hopelessly the ameliorating influences of our Christianity during the present century, have notwithstanding shared, more or less, in the general improvement. It cannot be doubted that the language, the morals, the manners to-day of the Seven Dials or Ratcliff-highway are

very far less lewd, less coarse, less violent and offensive, than the language, the morals, the manners which prevailed in the days of Swift and Bolingbroke among the profligate classes of fashionable life in St. James'-street and Mayfair. And as to all sections of reputable society to-day—the better artisans, the middle classes, the higher ranks—who can doubt the immeasurable advance and improvement which has taken place?

Nor would the contrast of to-day with former times be greatly less striking if the comparison were taken with the early years of the present century instead of the first half of the last century, with the age of Fox and of the famous Westminster elections, the period preceding the wider development of the Evangelical movement in the Church of England and the matured influence of Wilberforce and his fellows. Infidelity, vice, and intemperance were at that time fearfully prevalent in English society.

We seem, indeed, to be living comparatively in a new world. Let us think of the world surrounding Walpole; let us think of Jack Wilkes and his times; or, again, of the moral and social aspects of the Regency and of the ten years preceding; and then consider the progress of the last fifty years, and the Christian tone and aspect of the present age. There are many drawbacks now—there is much inconsistency, there is flagrant immorality, there is not a little daring unbelief; but yet, as a whole, how immeasurably superior is the present time! I have referred already to the contrast between the Parliament of to-day and the Parliament of those former periods. Now, among our foremost statesmen, on either side of either House, how many are there of the highest Christian character, men of Christian profession, Christian zeal and activity, Christian life and spirit. Let us only think of the three men who in succession have held the great seal of the kingdom. Three successive Lord Chancellors have been earnest, devout, and active Christians; two of them having been engaged for more than one generation in such works of lowly and practical Christian service as, in the case of men of such position and accomplishments, best represent the example of Him, who, in stooping down to wash His disciples' feet, left to His followers the injunction that they should do to others as He had done to them.

Perhaps there is no fruit of the complex civilization of our age which so fully, so faithfully, with such delicate accuracy of representation, reflects the character of the age, as our leading journalism. Judged by this test, as there is no country in the world which, measured by a Christian standard, can compare with our own, so there has never been an age to

compare with the present. Our leading daily and weekly journals, our most influential monthly and quarterly vehicles of opinion and discussion, are distinguished by a standard of moral principle, by a sense of moral responsibility, by a generosity in the construction of conduct, by a tenderness in dealing with motives, by a reverence of tone in regard to religious subjects, which can only be properly described as Christian, and the beauty of which can only be appreciated by reverting to the journalism of former generations, or by reference to that of other countries even at the present time. In these results we see the Christian progress, the Christian culture and influence of England compendiously represented. There are, of course, journals more or less disreputable; but then they are disreputable, they have comparatively little influence, they in no way lead the country. In a sense, therefore, they may be referred to as exceptions which prove the point on which I am insisting. There may also in one or two journals of considerable pretensions, and of influence among an important though limited class, be a strong taint of unbelief; but as yet this is mostly disguised, and the journals are not very widely read.

Some, indeed, there probably are who, passing over more than two centuries at a bound, would take us back to the earlier part of the Carolan age, whilst others would take us to the Commonwealth, for a time when Christianity, as they believe, held a far superior position in this country to that which it holds to-day. Doubtless, there may at first appear to be some plausibility in such a view, but it certainly will not bear investigation. If a high form of Christianity had really taken a strong hold of England as a whole in the first half of the seventeenth century, England could never have become what we know it to have been for thirty years before the close of that century. Doubtless, there were great divines, and noble Christians, heroic men and heroic women, brave, pure, and gentle, both among Anglicans and Puritans, among Cavaliers and Commonwealthmen. The names of Jeremy Taylor and John Howe, of Bishop Hall and Richard Baxter, of Lucy Hutchinson and Mrs. Evelyn, of Eliot and Fairfax and Falkland, are sufficient to bring this truth home to our recollection and appreciation. But what of the ordinary parish priest, the ordinary squire, the ordinary farmer or yeoman, the ordinary peasant of those times? It is certain and most evident that the elaborate sermons which remain to us from that age, ponderous with abstruse theology and lavishly brocaded with learned allusions and Greek and Latin quotations, could never have been prepared with the thought

of yeoman, or farmer, or peasant, or even country squire, before the mind of the preacher. They were the works of the learned few for the learned few—for men of scholarship and parts and high position, in an age when the novelty and the comparative rarity of learning made almost all learned men to be more or less pedantic. The average country parson had but a slight tincture of such learning—often, indeed, as extant records show, had none at all. He was mainly such a parish priest as had been the ordinary type in King Henry's reign, save that the forms and offices which he used had been changed. And as for squire, or yeoman, or farmer, or peasant, there is no reason to suppose that their manners or morals had greatly altered since the days of Chaucer, whose *Canterbury Tales* so vividly reflect to us both the manners and the morals of his age. The shires and parishes of England in the days of Charles the First showed a form and a degree of Christian culture, such as it was, immeasurably inferior to what is now to be found in church and chapel and meeting-house, in Sunday-school and day-school, under the instructions and influence of tens of thousands of ministers of all denominations and hundreds of thousands of devoted men and women, fellow-helpers of the clergy, throughout all the towns and villages of England.

Such, then, is the result of Christian progress in this country. Christianity has leavened the whole life of the nation; it has given a high tone to society, to the press, to Parliament; it has filled the country with life. In one form or other it has entered every parish and regulates every public organization. It has moulded our institutions; it has inspired and organized our philanthropy—an all-embracing philanthropy; it makes its voice heard in every detail of local government as well as in every great passage of public life; it has raised England to an unparalleled eminence among the nations. Its most rapid strides of progress have been made during the past fifty years; its most energetic efforts, among all sects and classes, have been put forth during the generation now drawing towards a close; it was never so universally active, so zealous, so thoroughly organized as at present; never did it carry its energies and its efforts so boldly and so successfully into the most neglected quarters as now.

Why, then, if all this be true, or if anything like it be true, should we hear every now and then words of despondency, should we be able yet oftener to detect tones of misgiving, in what some Christian men have to say, in what they venture to forecast, about the future of our religion and

our faith? Let us review what appear to be the causes of these words of despondency, these tones of misgiving, and endeavour to judge how much there may be of reason for the doubts and fears of these Christian men.

I pass over with a bare mention one source of despondency and misgiving, which, however, is very real and affects a considerable number of Christian people—I mean a certain pessimism of tendency or of theory. Some good people always look on the dark and dismal side. They do so in business and in their family affairs. Naturally, therefore, they look on the dark side and are full of despondency as to the affairs of the Christian Church and the future of Christianity. No other aspect would attract them; no other expectation would be congenial. Others there are who hold a pessimist theory as to the future of Christianity. Their exegesis of Scripture, their interpretation of the prophecies, are settled according to this theory. A “sanguine despondency” is their habitual temper, gives animation to their life and inspiration to their eloquence. The influence of these classes of Christians is by no means small, and has helped more than a little to diffuse a tone of gloom over certain circles of earnest Christian people in their anticipations of the future.

Passing, however, over such influences as these, it will probably be agreed that the causes most likely, and likely with the most reason, to awaken foreboding as to the future of Christianity in this country are connected with the condition of our Universities, of our literary circles, of our schools of philosophy and science. It is believed by many, and not without some apparent ground, that the outlook for the future in the directions I have already indicated is really alarming. I wish to adduce some considerations which, I hope, may avail to mitigate, if not to remove, that alarm.

I must, however, first make an admission. I admit, then, that in the independent intellectual activity of the country there mingle powerful tendencies towards unbelief, tendencies which incline men to assume an attitude of antagonism to Christianity. I have already in the opening paragraphs of this address intimated some of the reasons for this tendency. Anti-Christian feelings, alienation of mind from the Christian revelation, which in former times would have taken other forms of opposition, are now free to take the form of professed unbelief.

Infidelity is no longer regarded by the law and society as a form of sedition. Persecution, secret or open, legal or social, is at an end. Criticism, moreover, and intellectual questioning, in all departments, are the passion of the age.

Under these circumstances Christianity, which touches every department of thought and lays its blessing or its ban on every act and circumstance of life, could least of all expect to be exempt from the keen scrutiny of awakened, daring, self-willed intellect. And the schools of intellect, the workshops of inquiry, I mean our Universities, themselves emancipated from all tests and from all restraints, could not but be chief centres of such questioning as I have described.

What is still more to be noted is that the very prevalence of the Christian life could not but lead to the spread of critical and unfriendly questioning as to the claims of Christianity, and to the development of an infidel propagandism. There could not be such intense action without corresponding reaction; such peremptory and all-invading claims without rebellion of spirit being stirred up in the "carnal mind"; such missionary aggression and propagandism as that of Christianity among all classes during the last half-century without provoking infidel aggression and propagandism in return. When Christianity was torpid, and only known by its creeds and forms, infidelity was a latent foe. The intense life of Christianity has stirred and quickened its enemies into activity. The signs, therefore, which some construe as ominous of future danger and reverse to the Christian Church are themselves, in great part, only the consequences and evidences of the triumph of active Christianity in this modern age of stir and life. Like the wash and the wake which the swift steamer leaves behind her as she rushes through the sea, and which seem to be sweeping backwards as if in resistance to the grand vessel's advance, these signs of antagonism serve, in effect, to measure and to mark the line and rate of progress to which they are opposed. Like the backwater or counter-tide on some portions of our southern coast, they are themselves the result of the great and true tide-sweep to which the law and set of their own movement seems to be opposed.

These considerations, however, would not avail to quiet our apprehensions for the future if there were reason to fear that the school of critical or philosophic or scientific thought in our Universities and elsewhere would be permanently alienated from Christianity and the Christian faith. I cannot admit such a fear. I think there are clear reasons why we must come to a contrary conclusion. *Philosophy*, in certain schools, and at certain times, has seemed again and again to revolt from the Christian alliance, but it has always come back again. The recent revival and spread of a masquerading materialistic scepticism in this country was due to special causes, and is already beginning manifestly to decline. The

noblest sons of *science*, again, as has been shown in former Annual Addresses before this Institute, have almost always, perhaps always, been men of reverent faith. They are so to this day. *Criticism*, also, has now and again seemed to threaten precious portions of our Christian inheritance of Holy Scripture; but up to the present time it has really done us little but good. It has been far more our friend than our foe. It has furnished marvellous historical confirmation to the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments. It may possibly hereafter remove some difficulties from our faith, but it will never impair its integrity, nor the integrity of the record of God's revelations to man. The Acts, the Fourth Gospel, as well as the great Epistles of St. Paul, will come forth, are coming forth, from the crucible of criticism brighter than ever; they stand immovably firm, the impregnable pillars of our historical faith in Christ. The Gospel by St. Luke stands unassailable by the side of the vindicated Acts. The other Gospels are abundantly safe when St. John and St. Luke are safe. The Old Testament is better established by far as historically true and authentic, taking it in all its length and breadth, than it was fifty years ago, when modern criticism had only just begun its course. Let us, as believers in divine revelation, be content to wait in steadfast, patient faith. Let us not be cramped by *à priori* notions. We do not understand the meaning of all the sacred words which have been handed down to us. "He that believeth shall not make haste" and shall "not be confounded." Let us precipitate no controversies, above all no controversies with science. When texts seem to contradict each other, we are content to leave the apparent contradiction unsolved, and yet we retain our faith. Christianity does not depend for its evidence on particular texts, nor on the interpretation of any special passage or paragraph; its evidence lies in grand historical lines of argument, and in broad illustrations of fact and truth. By these its principal books and its main outlines of fact and doctrine are conclusively established, and the faith which may have needed first to learn to stand on these, and which has thus been enabled to embrace the spiritual truths which they establish, is thereby afterwards strengthened and enlarged spiritually to appreciate and to receive with a sympathetic and growing assurance other points of divine truth, the harmony and beauty of which shine forth more and more to the believing soul. But when dealing with unbelievers, as one of our own number, Prebendary Row, has so ably shown in his "Bampton Lectures," it is with the citadel we have to do. If we hold that, we, in effect, hold all; that commands all the rest, both *enceinte* and *precinct*; while

it is, in itself, uncommanded and unassailable from every point. The historical evidence of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is the citadel of our fortress.

It is remarkable, after all, how little, notwithstanding all our modern controversies, the ground of the evidential argument, the basis of our Christian defence, has been shifted. Essentially in his "Bampton Lectures" Mr. Row stands on the selfsame ground as Paley in his "Evidences of Christianity." Both defenders disencumber themselves of whatever is non-essential, of whatever to the eye of mere intellect is incapable of evidential proof, and then address themselves to their argument; and both argue on virtually the same principles. So also Paley's argument from design, instead of being torn up, as we were told it was to be, and cast away as worthless, has been effectually rehabilitated. Having been modified in accordance with the language of modern thought—by such writers, for example, as the Rev. Brownlow Maitland, in his excellent manual entitled "Theism or Agnosticism," and by the Rev. Eustace R. Conder in his Congregational Lectures entitled, "The Basis of Faith"—that grand common-sense argument holds good its ground, unanswerable as before. And as respects science and philosophy—to recur now to these points for a few moments—there is, I venture to believe, no reason for panic, no reason for despondency.

How far it is from being true that the highest teachers of science have given, or do give, any countenance to the Agnostic unbelief of to-day, you have, as I have already intimated, heard before, on occasions similar to the present, from men eminently competent to speak on the subject. I may, however, be forgiven for referring again for a moment to a point so important. We all know that among the list of devout believers in these modern times have been included such men as Faraday, Sir John Herschel, Professor Phillips, Professor Sedgwick; we know to-day that such men as Professor Stokes, Professor Pritchard, Professor Clerk-Maxwell are among the number. But I wish to ask your attention to the judgment and testimony of the well-known Professor Tait, of Edinburgh. This distinguished man adopts and makes his own a passage from the *Church of England Quarterly Review*, in which, after referring to that branch of science of which Professor Huxley and Professor Tyndall are such distinguished professors, the branch as the writers call it, of scientific phenomenology, as "a most valuable but lower department of" natural science, the reviewer thus proceeds:—

"But the inferior and auxiliary science has of late assumed

a position to which it is by no means entitled. It gives itself airs, as if it were the mistress instead of the handmaid, and often conceals its own incapacity and want of scientific purity by high-sounding phrases as to the mysteries of nature. It may even complain of true science, the knowledge of causes, as merely mechanical. It will endue matter with mysterious qualities and occult powers, and imagines that it discerns in the physical atom the promise and the potency of all terrestrial life."

Professor Tait, in the same work, declares that "science enables us distinctly to say that the present order of things has *not* been evolved through infinite time past by the agency of laws now at work, but must have had a distinctive beginning, a state beyond which we are totally unable to penetrate; a state, in fact, which must have been produced by other than the now [visibly] acting causes." He speaks furthermore of "the *absolute necessity* of an intervention of creative power to form or to destroy one atom even of dead matter," whilst he declares that "it is simply preposterous to suppose that we shall ever be able to understand scientifically the source of consciousness and volition, not to speak of higher things." ("Some Recent Advances in Physical Science," pp. 349, and 22-24.)

Christians need not, therefore, be disturbed by such unphilosophic assumptions and audacities, such unscientific charlatanry as that of Professor Tyndall in some of his popular addresses. Rashness and recklessness such as his, with whatever gifts of exposition and of address they may be accompanied, merely go to show the defect of thorough training and education in the brilliant Irishman, who, having learnt so much while acting as assistant to the great Faraday, unfortunately never learnt from the example of that profound and sagacious master of experimental philosophy that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and that a childlike faith in God and Christ is compatible with the character of the greatest of philosophers.

Nor, if the fear be laid aside of any lasting danger to Christianity arising from "the opposition of science falsely so called," is there any more reason why Christian believers should stand in fear of a lasting feud between Christian faith and the accepted philosophy of the schools. It is true that during the last five-and-twenty years the nihilistic idealism—or nihilistic materialism, for either description would be equally appropriate—of Mr. Mill has infected very largely and deeply the thinking of Oxford and the higher English culture generally. But one chief reason of this was that Oxford, that

England, had no philosophy of its own, and no philosophic culture. There were neither principles of philosophy nor a philosophic discipline and training in our English Universities, whereby a student might be enabled to appreciate, to criticise, or to resist the assumptions and insinuations by means of which Mill undermined all positive faith in any principles either of philosophy or morals. Mill's sceptical phenomenology, his denial of all realism, and all intuitions, moral or intellectual, was not directly taught; not built up into a system, in which form its vast gaps and multiple contradictoriness must presently have become visible to all real thinkers, but was implicated by means of the covert postulates on which was founded the whole fabric of his work on Inductive Logic. It was thus conveyed into the system of his readers' opinions, and into the habits of their critical thought, so that its principles were continually suggested as if they had been axioms. Thus a nihilistic scepticism, in which all principles of religious faith, of morality, or indeed of belief in anything whatever as necessarily true or right, were resolved into mere fallacies, or at best utilitarian conventions, was diffused as a subtle poison into the life-blood of a whole generation of young Englishmen. Mill's Logic, before they were aware, turned many of these men into sceptics of Hume's school. After this they were prepared easily to accept George Henry Lewes—who, indeed, is a very able and, from his own point of view, a very honest historian and critic—as their historian of philosophy, and, under his hands, to become admirers of Comte and professors of the Positivist system of negations. Herbert Spencer, again, seemed to those who had sat under Mill, to be a teacher of a higher order, though fundamentally of the same school. If he could not give them a substantial faith, he at least recognized the utterances of their consciousness and the struggles of their nature after a ground of reality. In some sort, indeed, his seemed to be a philosophy of realism, though of a very nebulous description; and if he did not lead them back to God, he brought them within a dim and distant inkling of the inscrutable mystery of the unknown and unknowable reality, in which subject and object darkly and eternally blend. They accordingly passed with some sense of gain from the school of Mill to the oracle of Herbert Spencer. He became their prophet.

But such a philosophy as that of Mill, such a realism as that of Herbert Spencer, could not, endure for long. If our Universities had possessed living schools of philosophy, and a living succession of philosophers, such teachers could

never have gained such a hold on the English mind as they have gained. Already it is evident that their day is past. It was a subtle inoculation by which Mill infused his principles into the English mind. But now the retribution has come. The fallacies of Mill's Logic, the false assumptions which underlie its skilful exposition, had been more or less exposed by various writers, including Whewell and M'Cosh. But now the University of London, his own University, holds them up to view. Professor Jevons, long himself a disciple of Mill, has come to see how the nihilistic assumptions of which I have spoken, how the ignoring, or how the explaining away of all except phenomena, of all realities, of all intuitions, mental or moral, have vitiated the entire fabric of his speculations, and made large sections of his work a congeries of inconsistencies and incoherences.*

And as to Herbert Spencer, his teaching is being sifted by various writers and after a decisive manner. Professor Green, of Oxford, examines him in the *Contemporary Review*. Mr. Conder and Mr. Brownlow Maitland, to whom I have already referred, have admirably refuted his Agnosticism as related to our Christian Theism.

In short, on all sides round, the forces of Christian orthodoxy appear to be rallying and turning the enemy to the gate. As a hundred years ago, so now, unbelief will be, is being, defeated in argument. The victories of Butler and Paley and Berkeley are being repeated. There is a tone of confidence in the Christian camp such as there was not ten years ago. Our champions have gone out—our unknown Davids—and have met, and, meeting, have overthrown the giants of the Philistines. Ten years ago we hardly knew the intellectual strength of the orthodox side. We are beginning to understand it now, and yet only beginning; in ten years more I doubt not our ranks of defence and, let me add, of aggression will be better filled, better disciplined, and more full of confidence than now.

Nor can I doubt, as I intimated at the opening of this address, that the *Victoria Institute* has done something towards bringing about this result. It has presented a rallying-point, a centre of union, not only for Christian thinkers in these kingdoms, but also from America, on which continent

* I am not sure that I always agree with Professor Jevons' own positions; at all events the last paragraph in his last paper on Mill, contained in the *Contemporary* for April, seems to me to be an inadequate statement; but his exposure of the inconsistencies and contradictions of Mill would seem to be complete and crushing.

more than one of our ablest contributors have their home. Let me be allowed here to mention in particular Principal Dawson, of Montreal, and Professor Morris, of Michigan University—very able men both in different lines. Here, in this Institute, some of the ablest defenders of the Christian faith have trained themselves for their work. Two recent Bampton Lecturers are among our leading members. Both Dr. Irons and Prebendary Row have contributed a series of most valuable papers to the Transactions of the Institute. It is just possible even that Mr. Row might not have been Bampton Lecturer but for the *Victoria Institute*. Certain it is that his papers read before this Institute have served as a valuable *propædeusis* for certain sections of his volume of lectures. The Institute which has been enriched by papers from such Christian students of philosophy and science as the gentlemen I have named; as our founder and first honorary secretary, Mr. Reddie, so suddenly removed from us; as that able man of science and exemplary Christian, the late Rev. Walter Mitchell, one of our original vice-presidents; as Professor Kirk, of Glasgow; as the late Professor Main, the *Radcliffe Observer*; as Dr. Thornton; as Professor Birks; as our truly learned and very acute colleague, Mr. J. E. Howard, one of the earliest members of the Institute, and one of the ablest opponents of evolutionary atheism in whatever form, is an association which has not been created in vain. The number of its members has vastly increased during the last five years, and now presents a brilliant and impressive array of names, including not a few of the most distinguished in this and other countries. I venture to anticipate for the Institute still growing success, and that it will proceed from conquering to conquer.

Whilst I was in the midst of writing this address an article appeared in the *Saturday Review* so apposite in its line of thought and in its conclusions to the plan and outline which I had laid out for myself, and had begun to fill up, that I may perhaps be excused for quoting from it some sentences. If I had not already half written this paper before I fell in with the article, it might naturally been thought that I had borrowed from it my main line of thought and some of my illustrations. But in fact the coincidence is a case of independent agreement. The article (April 13) is entitled "Morality and Religious Belief," and the sentences I have selected for quotation are as follows:—

"As to the alleged indications of an approaching collapse of dogmatic belief," says the writer, "it should be remembered that appearances of this kind may very easily be taken

for a great deal more than they are worth. That scepticism, both in its negative and positive forms, is more outspoken than formerly makes it a more noticeable and impressive phenomenon, but does not therefore prove that it is really more widespread or influential than it was, *e.g.*, in the eighteenth century. The open avowal of sceptical views is partly a recoil from the more earnest and explicit avowal of religious convictions, and partly a consequence of it. The plain-spoken frankness or fierceness of sceptical literature testifies among other things to the acknowledged vitality of the religion which it assails. Men do not care to waste their sturdiest blows on a prostrate foe. Those who think religion is really losing its hold on the world might fairly be asked to account for the prominent place occupied by religious considerations in all the great wars and social revolutions of the present century, not excepting the critical struggle in the East which is going on before our eyes at the present moment."

English Christianity may even gather reassurance from the case of France. There is vastly more religious faith in France, I venture to think, at this moment than there has been since the terrible revolution. May I not go further, and say that there is more religious faith and feeling now than for a hundred years past? And yet Christianity in France stands at every disadvantage. It is identified in its popular form with superstitions which are not only idolatrous in their aspect, but heathenish in their character. In popular belief it has been identified with all the wrongs and tyrannies which helped so largely to provoke the revolution.

On the other hand, atheistic unbelief has claimed identity in France with all liberty, whether moral or intellectual, or civil and political, and with all enlightened progress. Nor have the claims of religion been recommended, or its position improved, by the tactics of Ultramontanism during the last five-and-twenty years. Nevertheless, in spite of all these disadvantages, the strongest instincts of national self-preservation have gradually linked themselves into a steadfast array and union against atheistic principles and theories. The strength of Ultramontanism, that which has made it so formidable a power, that which has compelled the nation, though it fears and hates it, yet to tolerate and even to a certain extent to indulge it, is that the nation dreads and loathes atheistic politics even more than it fears and hates Ultramontanism. The nation cannot live without some faith, some religion, some ground of conscience, some basis of morals. It craves a religion which shall not be Ultramontane,

or puerile, or superstitious, or, above all, tyrannical; but, if it must elect between unbelief and Ultramontaniam, it will not, at all events, choose atheism for its creed, and atheistic communism for its civil and political basis. Alas! for the country which has before it such a dilemma. Alas! for the country where the strongest champion against the name and spell of Voltaire is a Dupanloup! Still, notwithstanding such disadvantages on the side of faith in its controversy with unbelief, it is a thing to be noted that, while at this moment the municipal Council of Paris remains unhappily true to its principles of democratic and atheistic irreligion, and had resolved to celebrate, with a statue and all public honours, the centenary of Voltaire, as representing the enfranchisement of the human mind from the yoke of priests and priestcraft, the French Republican Government has intervened to prevent any official action of the nature intended on the part of the Parisian Council. The nation at this point is in sympathy with the Government, not with the municipal officials of Paris—the brilliant but unhappy city of the Commune.

The career of the famous—five-and-twenty years ago the epithet might have been infamous—Madame Dudevant, George Sand, is in this connection full of interest and instruction. That daring and very gifted woman waged war for years against all social decencies and all forms of religious belief. In her later years, however, she greatly modified her views, and altogether changed her tone. She endeavoured to come to terms with Christianity; she professed some form of quasi-Christian faith; she even in the end, it is said, became reconciled to the Church, and died within its pale. Her case seems to me to be in a sense typical. She was eminently a representative woman. Woman though she was, she was as justly representative of the genius of France as any man could have been, perhaps, indeed, more so. On the other hand, the case of Comte, grotesque as it is in some of its aspects, and mournful as it is throughout, teaches the same lesson as that of Madame Dudevant. Even France, even the French mind and character, cannot live without a religion, without a worship. The travesty of faith and worship adopted by Comte is a tribute even to Catholicism. He did homage to the faith of his country even by his own ritual of the worship of humanity. Thank God, English Christianity may command a more reasonable allegiance than French Catholicism. The dilemma of France is not our dilemma, and England will not reject the Christianity of England for the sake of French or even English Comtism or Agnosticism. It will accept no religion of humanity which deprives every man living of

humanity's one hope and consolation, and would despoil the human soul of the essential prerogative of humanity, of that moral character and power which constitutes man's proper definition and being.

German Communism, Russian Communism, are just now showing us the nature of the fruit which cannot but grow from the root of Atheistic or Pantheistic unbelief. Such results as we see at this moment cannot be without their effect on the English mind. They will strengthen the national reverence for the religion of God as revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christianity, therefore, I conclude, is by no means losing its hold of England nor of the world. Less protected by legal defences than formerly, it possesses far more intrinsic strength and energy. It has taken a much larger and stronger hold than at any former period of the great body of the people, including the best-educated classes. It has a life and energy, a zeal and enthusiasm altogether unprecedented. In Parliament it counts far more illustrious and devoted adherents than in any former age. It maintains an array of philanthropic enterprises, it inspires and maintains an amount of practical beneficence such as the world had never seen. All this is done in the face of an active infidel propagandism which is no longer fettered as in former times, but is free to do its worst. Let no one, then, fear for Christianity. Nearly 150 years ago, Butler, in the advertisement to his "Analogy," said: "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious." Accordingly, he goes on to say that those reputed to be "people of discernment," treated it as a subject only fit to provoke "mirth and ridicule." And yet a few years later John Wesley was converted, and Methodism began its race. Butler's faith and Butler's arguments survive, while the "people of discernment," and their supercilious unbelief with them, have passed into oblivion. Writing some years earlier than Butler, the accomplished Berkeley thus describes the infidelity of his day. "Moschon," he says, "hath proved that man and beast are really of the same nature; consequently, a man need only indulge his senses and his appetites to be as happy as a brute. Gorgias hath gone farther, demonstrating man to be a piece of clock-work or a machine; and that thought or reason is the same thing as the impulse of one ball against another. Cimon hath made noble use of these discoveries, proving as clearly as any proposition in mathematics,

that conscience is a whim, and morality a prejudice; and that a man is no more accountable for his actions than a clock is for striking. But the masterpiece and finishing stroke is a learned anecdote of our great Diagoras, containing a demonstration against the being of God. I am assured that it is as clear as daylight, and will do a world of good, at one blow demolishing the whole system of religion." "Our philosophers," it is added, "are the best-bred men of the age, men who know the world, men of pleasure, men of fashion, and fine gentlemen." The fashion of scepticism, indeed, 150 years ago was considered especially attractive and suitable in the case of smart and cultivated young people. "You may now commonly see," remarks one of the speakers in Berkeley's dialogue, "what no former age ever saw, a young lady, or a *petit maître*, nonplus a divine, or an old-fashioned gentleman, who hath read many a Greek or Latin author and spent much time in hard methodical study."

So wrote Berkeley in his "Minute Philosopher." But Christianity survived the fashion of unbelief which that exquisite dialogue so inimitably portrays, and with such serene and beneficent mercilessness reduces to its true colour and character—as a fashion of vanity and arrogance and absurdity, equally empty and demoralizing, as contrary to the reason and well-being of man as to the majesty of God. The *esprits forts* were put to the rout. Christian faith not only rose superior to their impieties, but, what was far more, revived from the lethargy and formalism into which it had sunk. When we look back to the age in which Berkeley and Butler lived, we do not wonder that men should have been tempted to despair of Christianity. But how great and how re-assuring is the contrast now! If even in such an age Christianity asserted its Divine character and claims by the revival which followed, having first refuted and shaken off, even in that dark hour, the attacks of its critics and its foes, how unworthy would it be to doubt for a moment of the vitality, of the advance, of the victory of Christianity in the present age!

C. BROOKE, Esq., F.R.S.—I have much pleasure in moving "That our best thanks be presented to the Rev. Principal Rigg, D.D., for the Annual Address now delivered, and to those who have read papers during the session." I think Dr. Rigg's Address is especially valuable, as showing that the rise of Christianity in our own land has been coeval with the advance of learning; and it fittingly comes after those valuable papers which have been read during the past session (cheers). Most will probably agree with Dr. Rigg,

that, notwithstanding much open and avowed infidelity and atheism, the present time is marked by a much deeper, as well as more divergent tone of religious thought, than the preceding and early part of the present century, the chief feature of which might rather be termed indifferentism. The abundance of personal ministrations in the present day contrasts favourably with its conspicuous absence at the former period. The hunting and sporting parson of that day in scarlet and buckskin would now be an anachronism, and probably would not be tolerated.

D. HOWARD, Esq., F.C.S.—I have much pleasure in seconding this resolution, thanking Dr. Rigg for his most interesting Address. It is well for some of us, who are perhaps too much inclined to take a gloomy view of the sceptical tendencies of Modern Thought, to be reminded of the brighter side of the question, of the triumph and progress of Christian thought and feeling; and it is specially well to be reminded, by the eloquent passage quoted in the paper, that the assumptions of unbelief that we have to meet nowadays are but the old weapons with which Christianity has been attacked for centuries past, and which neither have prevailed nor shall prevail against it (cheers).

The resolution was then unanimously agreed to.

J. THORNHILL HARRISON, Esq., M. Inst. C.E.—I have been requested to move the next resolution, which I feel confident will be affirmed by you with great pleasure:—It is, “That the thanks of the meeting be presented to our President, the Earl of Shaftesbury, for taking the chair upon the present occasion.” I have but recently become a member of the Victoria Institute, for I was only lately aware of its existence. I am delighted to be connected with it, for it is an exceedingly valuable Institute, and I thoroughly approve of its objects. It is most gratifying to have the support of such men as our noble President, who takes so great an interest in these objects.

H. CADMAN JONES, Esq.—The task of seconding this resolution is an easy one, for no words of mine can be wanting to persuade this meeting to express its feelings towards one whom I many years ago heard well described as “a nobleman of God’s own making.” This Society must feel gratified at seeing in the chair one who has done so much to justify aristocratic institutions by using the advantages of his high position to help those whom circumstances made unable to help themselves.

The resolution was then carried with applause.

THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY, K.G.—My lords, ladies, and gentlemen:—I am sure you will readily believe that I accept with much gratitude the vote you have been pleased to pass. I believe I was present at the very birth of this Society, when an address was delivered by my friend Mr. Walter Mitchell, in a small dark room. I had no conception at that time of the work which the Society would do, and of the position which it would hold, not only at home, but also, as it is now beginning to do, in America and our colonies. I had no expectation whatever of seeing the Society assume such magnificent proportions, and from the bottom of my heart I thank

Almighty God that He has so prospered our efforts (cheers). We are greatly indebted to Dr. Rigg to-night for his interesting Address, written in so masterly and literary a style (loud cheers). The object with which this Society was formed was, not merely to beat down the views of others, not to be antagonistic to the progress of Science, but to do all that we could do for the development of Truth, and, if I may use the phrase, to give Religion "fair play." This Society was not founded to establish either one opinion or another. It was not started for the purpose of setting up the Bible against Science. THE OBJECT OF THE SOCIETY WAS, THAT SCIENCE SHOULD HAVE FAIR PLAY, THAT THE TRUTH SHOULD BE TOLD ON ALL SIDES, and that we might get rid of the despotism of certain scientific men (hear, hear). Because it is perfectly well known that men of science, with all their sublime and mighty notions, are as despotic as the weakest of the human race, and they are exercising their despotic sway to a remarkable extent over a very large number of rising young men, who are either fascinated by what they have read and discovered, or are crushed by the authority of a few great names. It was in order, as I have said, that Science should have fair play that this Institute was established, and the blessing of God has so rested upon it that it has at last taken a hold in public estimation. Before I sit down I want to say that great credit is due to our Honorary Secretary, Captain Petrie, for the patience, affability, zeal, tact, and energy which he has displayed; and from the manner in which he has acquitted himself in regard to the Institute, I doubt not that, should he be called upon to serve his country elsewhere, he will be quite equal to any emergency.

[The Annual Meeting being concluded, the members, associates, and their friends assembled in the Museum, where refreshments were served.]