

PHILOSOPHICAL INSTITUTION.

The opening address of the session was delivered (as we briefly stated on Saturday), by Professor Ferrier, of the University of St Andrews, in Queen Street Hall, on Friday evening. The Lord Provost presided on the occasion; and among the directors and other gentlemen occupying the platform were—Charles Cowan, Esq., M.P.; Mr Sheriff Gordon; Professors Pillans, More, and Blackie; W. Smith, Esq., Vice President of the Institution; Dr Daniel Wilson; John Blackwood, Esq.; James Campbell, Esq., advocate; F. Hallard, Esq., advocate; W. H. Thomson, Esq., advocate; Blair Wilson, Esq.; A. Cassels, Esq., W.S.; R. W. Smith, Esq.; J. Tod, Esq., W.S.; Dr Cox; Adam Mossman, Esq., &c. &c. The attendance was, as usual, very numerous.

Professor Ferrier said—The two principal agents in the work of human civilisation are the power of industry and the power of literature. These agencies have been too often divorced and held asunder from each other. Too often has the man of industry forsworn the companionship of letters, and too often has the man of letters withheld his sympathies from the avocations of industry. But the existence of this flourishing institution, a new session of which we are this evening assembled to inaugurate, affords an assurance that a better spirit is abroad, and that these two powers stand in no unfriendly relation to each other, but admit of an auspicious, and, I cannot doubt, a permanent combination. They are, indeed, in themselves connected by close and fine affinities; for if it be true that literature (and I use that word in its most comprehensive sense, as the aggregate of all the emanations of intellect, of all the researches of science), if it be true that literature, by supplying man's spiritual wants, is the power which ministers to the loftiest and purest enjoyments of the soul, it is equally true that industry, by providing for man's physical wants, is the power which first enables literature, with disincumbered wings, to pursue a free flight and put forth all her energies. The obligations which literature owes to industry are greater than perhaps most people are aware of. It is only after man's physical necessities have been adequately relieved, that the loftier cravings of his nature can come into existence; and it is only after these higher aspirations have declared themselves that science and literature obtain a footing in the world. And, therefore, it is evident that industry, which provides for man's bodily wants, and ensures his physical well-being, is also the remote cause, or at any rate the essential condition, of all those blessings and advantages which we enjoy as members of the great commonwealth of humanising letters. No truth is more certain than this, that the dawn of the imagination, and of the scientific reason, always follows, and never precedes, the epoch in which a nation is assured of a commodious physical subsistence; and that not only must a people be supplied with the necessaries, but also with many of the superfluities of life, before its sense of the beautiful and the true can be developed. But by what

and the true can be developed. But by what means can a nation be so supplied except by the hands of strenuous and successful industry. In speaking in these terms, I am not forgetful of those primitive periods of our history which poets have celebrated as the golden age, when poverty was synonymous with integrity—when to live in a hollow tree was evidence of a contented mind, and to feed on acorns and other spontaneous products of the earth was to be innocent and pure. But however pleasing these pictures of man's early condition may be to the imagination, they labour under one great defect—they are not true. Since the fall of our first father, there is no authentic record of any people or of any tribe occupying at once a position of high moral culture and of low physical refinement: on the contrary, wherever poverty has most abounded, wherever man has been worst supplied with the good things of this life, there has he ever been most a prey to his own sanguinary and brutalising passions. It is not in the untamed savage, the hardy hunter of the American wilderness,—“the stoic of the woods,” as Campbell calls him—“the man without a tear,” that we are to look for the pattern and the paragon of our species. If we do so, we shall find, in the language of Wordsworth, “not that pure archetype of human greatness,” but, in his stead,

“A creature squalid, vengeful, and impure;
Remorseless, and submissive to no law
But superstitious fear, and abject sloth.”

Indeed it stands to reason that mankind can make no progress in the arts of civilisation, but must remain susceptible of moral culture, so long as they are weighed down to the earth by the anxieties inseparable from a condition in which the very humblest means of subsistence are scanty, precarious, and hard-wrung. What moral and intellectual advancement can be expected from a man whose every hour is filled up with solicitude in regard to the alleviation of his lowest bodily wants, and whose condition forbids that he should exercise his ingenuity in any other way than in contriving expedients—expedients clumsy, and often unsuccessful—by which the ever-returning pangs of hunger may be appeased? In such circumstances it is obvious that the moral and intellectual improvement of our species is altogether out of the question; and hence it has been remarked by one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity, that the origin of science and of art, of literature and philosophy, and also, it might be added, of correct moral sentiment, was to be dated from the time when a considerable portion of the community being discharged from the necessity of toiling daily with their own hands for their daily bread, were left free to cultivate those liberal and intellectual pursuits on which the amelioration of our race and the true prosperity of nations so essentially depend. But no such emancipation is practicable until the powers of industry have been organised and her energies put forth in such a way as to ensure the abundant production of the various commodities of which human beings stand in need. When this organisation has taken place—when industry has been systematically exerted and successfully applied, the accumulation of wealth is the result: and then, but not till then, do men become inspired with a taste for intellec-

then, do men become inspired with a taste for intellectual pleasures, and desirous of substituting for mere sensual gratifications, enjoyments of a nobler, a more refined and a more enduring character—then, but not till then, has genius free scope for the development of her powers, and is enabled to exchange manual toil and the servitude of the hand for intellectual activity, and the servitude of the mind—a servitude not less laborious than the other, and certainly more conducive to all the higher interests of humanity. You may thus perceive how industry lies at the very root of human civilisation; how, by providing in an abundant measure for man's lower wants, it affords occasion for the manifestation of the higher exigencies of his nature, which, but for these inferior satisfactions, would lie dormant and inert; how it is, as it were, the lever which originally set in motion the machinery by which society is carried forward from one stage of improvement to another; in a word, how it promotes not only the physical welfare, but also paves the way for the moral and intellectual advancement of mankind. In these remarks, I have endeavoured to acknowledge, although I have done so in very insufficient terms, the debt which literature owes to industry. May I now be permitted to offer a few observations on the spirit in which literature, as personified in this institution, and in other establishments of a similar character, has endeavoured to discharge that obligation, and to fulfil her duty towards those who, on the one hand, are prevented by their active employments from dedicating their lives exclusively to literary and scientific pursuits; and who, on the other hand, are unwilling to permit themselves to be wholly engrossed by their professional avocations, or to pass away their existence unilluminated by the light of knowledge, and unadorned by the amenities of learning. The circumstance to which this institution owes its origin, and the objects which it has in view, are the topics on which I shall now have the honour of addressing you. Of late years a large amount of controversy has been expended, and a wide diversity of opinion has prevailed, on the question of education. But whatever views any of us may entertain on that very debateable topic, whatever innovations any of us may be disposed either to advocate or to resist, there is one change which has lately come over the public mind on this important subject, which, I think, cannot fail to command our cordial and united approbation. I allude to the conviction—a conviction which is every day gaining more and more strength—that a man's education, let it be carried to whatever degree of advancement it may, is a process which never is, and never can be completed. It was formerly thought that when a youth was emancipated from the restraints of school and college, his education was finished—that the discipline of the mind was a thing which naturally came to a stand-still when people had reached a particular period of their lives. That sentiment is no longer entertained. It is now very generally felt and understood, that although there may be periods of life better suited than others for the reception of knowledge, there is no season of our earthly sojourn which is shut out from the benefit of her vivifying influences; that if youth be the proper time for kindling the lamp of truth, still the sacred flame de-

kindling the lamp of truth, still the sacred flame demands a sustaining fuel during all the years of our mortal pilgrimage, and that our middle age and our declining days require to be supported and cheered by the acquisition of new intellectual resources. Out of this conviction has sprung the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution. It is founded on the truth, now so generally recognised, that education is continually progressive—progressive not only in the race, but in the individual—that it is not finished at school, that it is not finished at college—that, by a very law of nature, every period of human life craves enlightenment, and that, amid the engrossing pursuits of his professional life, a man cannot be happy unless he has the liberty and the opportunity of cultivating those more liberal and enlightened tastes, which find their gratification only in subjects of universal interest to mankind. To meet that natural demand, to satisfy those intellectual affections and aspirations of the people, this institution has arisen; and it has endeavoured to fulfil its vocation in a spirit commensurate with those wants on the part of the public, to which it owes its existence and its prosperity. We should form a mistaken estimate of the purposes of this institution if we were to suppose that its only, or even that its main object, was to furnish the means of instruction to those who, by the accidents of their position, have lacked, or have enjoyed to but a limited extent, the advantages of a scholastic or academical training. That, no doubt, is one of the beneficial aims which this society endeavours to overtake. To impart useful and interesting information to those who, in early life, may have been placed in circumstances unfavourable to the acquisition of knowledge, is one of the objects which it keeps constantly in view; and surely I am not wrong in affirming that, under the judicious administration of its Directors, and through the efficient services of its lecturers, that object, in the years that have already run, has been abundantly secured. But that is not the only or principal purpose which it labours to accomplish. It embraces a wider design: it rests on a broader foundation. Its intention is not to repair the intellectual deficiencies of any single class of the community, but to kindle in the hearts of all classes, and, above all, to keep alive in the breast, even of our most highly-educated citizens, that love of literature and science, that desire of knowledge and intellectual culture, which are the sources of the purest pleasures, but which the pressing avocations of their active life (unless benignly counteracted) tend to deaden or repress. The Philosophical Institution entered on its labours animated by the determination to adapt its instructions to the wants of the whole community, and not to limit them to the necessities of any particular section; and, following out this enlarged conception, it has hitherto run so prosperous a career, that there can be now no doubt as to the wisdom of its plan, and no misgivings as to the success which, in future years, will accompany its exertions. The details which the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution comprehended in its plan are worthy of our highest approbation, and must command the applause of every well-wisher to a

scheme of education which, while it embraces, also looks beyond, the horizon of mere utilitarian interests. On one point in particular it is entitled to especial commendation. It appears to me that the wisdom of its Directors is nowhere more conspicuously shown than in the large amount of literary, historical, and philosophical disquisitions which diversifies the system of instruction here pursued. In this respect our Institution is creditably distinguished from many other scientific associations of a popular character. This is no school of mere physical science; but it is something far better. Appreciating at their full value the claims and the importance of the natural sciences, and assigning to them a due place in its organisation, it nevertheless throws a large share of its attention on subjects of higher and wider interest. And this is undoubtedly the right course to pursue; because, eminently distinguished as the present age is by the splendour and variety of its scientific discoveries, by the usefulness of its mechanical contrivances, and by the beauty of its industrial productions, it is all the more necessary, on that very account, that we should continually bear in mind that it is not by the sciences alone, whether abstract or applied, that the growth of man's moral nature is essentially promoted. These, no doubt, contribute their share, and ought to receive a due amount of our attention; but not, certainly, to the exclusion of studies of a still more elevating tendency. The great men who have been instrumental in carrying forward the progress of physical research and of mechanical power are entitled to a proud position among the benefactors of mankind. And have not they or their inventions received the reward to which they have so just a claim? Has not the plough, humble implement though it be, been lifted up by reverential hands from earth to heaven and enrolled, by the gratitude of mankind among the constellations of the sky? And if any higher honour than that could be lavished on the steam-engine and the electric telegraph, we may rest assured that it would be bestowed. Physical science, then, runs no risk of being neglected or underrated. The danger is all the other way. It is to be feared that the temper of the times is madly bent on magnifying into exaggerated proportions the importance of the physical sciences, of causing them to supersede a discipline more essential to the cultivation both of the heart and of the head, and to usurp the place of a more genial and ennobling tutorage. It is well, therefore, that we should be taught, both theoretically and practically, to know that an acquaintance with something more than physical truth is required to make a nation great and her children wise. The mechanical arts are worthy of all admiration, and our comfort tells us that their cultivation cannot be dispensed with; but history and reason alike assure us that ~~these~~ they are not the main causes which give vigour to the heart of a people, and render their memory immortal.

“ Egyptian Thebes,

Tyre, by the margin of the sounding waves,

Palmyra, central in the desert, fell;

And the arts died by which they had been raised.”

And the arts died by which they had been raised." These nations excelled in all kinds of mechanical skill; if they could boast of no crystal palaces, the grandeur of their solid architecture was unsurpassed, and the produce of their looms dazzled the eye, as if it were woven out of sunbeams; but they, with all their gorgeous workshops, have passed away, and have left behind them no shining traces of renown; because the greatness of a people when living, and their glory when dead, depend on causes which these nations did not sufficiently respect. Finer influences, and a more genial training than mechanical science can supply, are required to nourish and support the moral characters of men—to illuminate their intelligences—to refine their imaginations—and to mould their hearts to the standard of heroic virtue. Let me not be misunderstood. I speak in no disparagement of the natural sciences; as branches of a liberal education they are worthy of all honour and of all encouragement. But not more so than many other departments of learning—not more so than the dead languages of Greece and Rome, with all their immortal legacies of beauty and of truth—not more so than history—not more so than philosophy, moral, political, and metaphysical. It is against the study of these sciences, to the exclusion—and this, I fear, is the extreme into which the present times are running—the exclusion of other pursuits of so useful and improving a character, and which, as a discipline of the mind, are even, in my humble opinion at least, entitled to take rank before the natural sciences—it is against this partial or one-sided system that I protest; and I venture to assert that, unless men are destined for professions in which an acquaintance with physical truth is a matter of paramount necessity, or unless the bent of their genius leads them in that particular direction, they ought not to be required to cultivate the natural sciences to such an extent as to defraud of their due other studies which equally solicit, and are at least equally worthy of their regard. It is, therefore, with peculiar satisfaction that those who are interested in the cause (as I conceive it) of right education, must contemplate the enlightened spirit in which this institution has set about its work, and the enlarged scale on which it endeavours to minister to the wants and enjoyments of the community. Historical research very properly engages a large share of your attention. Listening within these walls to the history of the early Asiatic nations, you shall superintend, with the intrepid Layard, the explorations of the old cities of Assyria, and be present, as it were, at the disinterment of mysterious relics, long submerged under the devouring sands, but now laid open to the light, and compelled to render up their meaning; and thus showing that, just as man, by the aid of the telescope, can subdue the territories of immeasurable space, so can he, by the resources of his skill, triumph over the spoliations of all-consuming time. Greece, with her imaginative mythology, her poetry, her history, and her philosophy, has already passed in review before your eyes—her radiant shrines, garlanded with flowers by the hands of the officiating graces, at a time when our northern altars were reeking with human blood. In Roman history you shall study, on the noblest scale,

Human history you shall study, on the noblest scale, the moral osteology, if I may so speak, of colossal characters, and may learn to know, from the bones and sinews of her old dictators, what the true foundations of genuine manhood are. The history of the middle ages—a subject on which lectures are promised at some future period—is a theme replete with interest to every one who would trace the moral and political progress of society. It was then that the elements which compose our present political system, though still in a state of fusion, were beginning to shape themselves into order. It was then that the spirit of traffic and industrial competition, after a long period of depression, began to revive and to enter on a vigorous course of action. It was then that the towns of modern Europe took their rise, not as the ancient cities had done, as strongholds of violence and depots of military strength, but as emporia of trade; and these towns were the salvation of Europe. They steadied the steps of advancing civilisation, and helped to extend its blessings to all classes of the community. Nurseries of free and industrious men who prosecuted useful callings, the towns of modern Europe were the cradle of our civil liberty, and, gradually diffusing this blessing beyond themselves, they were of the utmost service in lightening or in breaking the bondage of the feudal vassals, and in repressing the independence of the great barons, whose turbulence threatened to perpetuate the evils of anarchy or despotism. By degrees these towns came to form a third estate in the realm, and their deputies to take rank in the assemblies of the nation, along with the nobles and the clergy. Industry had produced municipal prosperity; prosperity stimulated municipal industry. A new class of society had been called into existence by mercantile occupations, and, in proportion as it thrived, the whole social order was improved. In so far as the anarchy of the times permitted them, the Sovereigns lent their aid in establishing the towns. They endowed them with important privileges; and the inhabitants of the towns, becoming rich, through their industry, dedicated in turn their fortunes and their arms to the service of the Sovereigns, and to the support of the royal authority—which they were aware could alone act as an effectual protection to them against the rapacity of the nobles. That amalgamation tended more than anything else in those troubled times to bring about the reign of tranquillity and good order. Industry and commerce had given birth to a species of wealth different from that arising from territorial possessions. The progress of legislation necessarily kept pace with the development of the new national activity. A new kind of property demanded new laws and better organised courts of justice; and thus, it may be said, that the civil liberty, the political privileges, the national wealth, the ameliorated laws of modern Europe have all, in a great measure, proceeded out of commercial enterprise. Another confirmation of the truth, that industry is the main-spring of civilisation, and has been in modern times, and during the period of the middle ages—for it was then that this new spirit announced itself—the grand regenerator of society. Another instructive theme which this Institution proposes, on a future occasion, to embrace in its course of lectures, is the history of the 16th century.

course of lectures, is the history of the 16th century. Passing over the Reformation—the great event certainly of this period—it was about this time that the struggles among the different nations of Europe gave rise, and by degrees gave consolidation, to the system of political equilibrium, known under the name of the balance of power. The aim of this system is to secure every state in the full possession and enjoyment of its rights, by making its safety and independence objects of interest and guardianship, not only to itself, but to all its neighbours. According to this system, if any one nation, actuated by ambitious views or aiming at undue aggrandizement, threatens the independence of any other, it is the duty even of those states which are not immediately menaced to take up arms against the aggressor, and to defend the weak against the strong. And the policy of this course is plain; because unless the first encroachments of ambition, whatever quarter they may be directed against, are successfully resisted, they will never stop; their tendency is to open up a pathway to the establishment of a universal monarchy, which would engulf the liberties and the independent existence of all the nations of the world. To prevent that consummation, as far as human means can prevent it,—to avert the possibility of that catastrophe—the system called the balance of power exists; and on the basis of this system the foreign policy of all nations, in so far as they pursue a righteous and enlightened course of policy, is now-a-days administered. Its principles regulate the formation of treaties, the contraction of alliances. This system was understood by the Italian politicians of the fifteenth century; and, prevailing throughout Italy, it shed a bloom and a glory over an otherwise very depraved time, and raised the Italian States of that particular era to the highest rank among the civilised nations of mankind. Spreading itself by degrees over the rest of Europe, its deep importance was fathomed—its value was appreciated—it was matured and practically developed in its whole extent by the consummate political genius of the Prince of Orange, our King William III.; and, finally, after being endangered, and, I may say, overthrown for a time, at the commencement of the present century, before the irresistible onslaught of a great nation, led on by the genius of Napoleon Bonaparte, it was again restored and reanimated under the fostering auspices and indomitable energies of a still greater man—our own invincible Duke—him whom we have so recently lost—a man whose character, in its might and in its moderation, was itself a type of the European equilibrium which he was so instrumental in readjusting. Should the equilibrium of this balance be again threatened with overthrow, we have not, indeed, his strong arm to trust to; but let us carry in our minds this reflection and this consolation—that, after the majestic dead shall have been lowered, amid England's thunder, to his final resting-place, to sleep beside his illustrious brother, the victor of Trafalgar, that not even then is his power departed, or his stay withdrawn; for, as has been nobly said, the bodies of our buried heroes are the sunk anchors which, lying unseen below, hold the good ship of the State to

her moorings, and enable her, aided by the vigilance of those on board, to outride in safety all the perils of internal anarchy, and all the threatenings of foreign aggression. In these observations I have touched—very much at random, I confess—on a few of the topics on which lectures are to be delivered in this Institution, either in the course of the present term, or during some subsequent session. It is unnecessary for me to pursue these details any further. Suffice it to say that I feel confident that the interests of general literature will be attended to equally with those of historical research. The works of Shakspeare and of Milton, and of our other great imaginative writers, will furnish scope for abundant and edifying commentaries. Nor surely will our national pride, our patriotism, permit our own countrymen to be overlooked. The prizes, I doubt not, shall be often and often resounded within these walls,

“Of him who walked in glory and in joy,
Behind his plough upon the mountain side,”

Robert Burns, whose genius has poured over our Scottish fields a fairer illumination than the sun ever shed on sea or on land—a light which shall never die out either in peasants' hut or in nobles' hall; also of Walter Scott, who, rooted by his beloved Tweed, “like a tree which grows fair planted by a river,” has overshadowed the globe with his branches, and dropped the rich fruits of our rugged but inexhaustible soil into the gladdened hearts of all the nations of the earth; and also of Christopher North, who, unfurling the broad banner of his genius emblazoned with the infinite prose-poetry of the renowned *Noctes Ambrosianae*, and with many other pictures of divine and imperishable beauty, has confirmed (if any confirmation were needed) the title of Scotland to take rank as a first-rate and ruling power in the wide confederation of letters. In conclusion, let me remark that the benefits to the community which this Institution is calculated to produce cannot be over-estimated. Labour is the lot of man. Almost every one of us is under the necessity of pursuing some practical avocation, by which his daily bread has to be won; and this is not to be regretted. No pleasure can surpass the satisfaction which a man feels in the efficient discharge of the active duties of his calling. But it is equally true, that every professional occupation, from the highest to the lowest, requires to be counterpoised and alleviated by pursuits of a more liberal order than itself. Without these the best faculties of our souls must sink down into an ignoble torpor, and human intercourse be short of its highest enjoyments and its brightest blessings. The dedication of the mind—to the largest extent which the circumstances of the case permit—to the service of general literature, is a duty which every man of business owes both to himself and to society; and such a dedication will not go without its reward; it will entwine with roses the fetters of every professional career, the iron of which must otherwise enter into your souls. To supply such alleviations—to afford to our citizens who are engaged in the employments of active life an opportunity of keeping up, or of renewing, their acquaintance with those great branches

renewing, their acquaintance with those great branches of knowledge which form the staple of a liberal education—is the object which this Institution has especially at heart. Its aim is to lift you, at times, above the distractions of your worldly cares, and the pursuit of your professional interests, by spreading before you man's fairer heritage of wisdom and of truth; and to exalt your nature by giving you a community of sentiment with those expansive and legislative minds which have given a direction to the world, and the lasting record of whose combined genius is nothing less than the present civilisation in which we live. Let me conclude by expressing my fervent good wishes for the welfare of this society. As it has hitherto prospered, so may it go on prospering; and may every succeeding year add to the lustre of its fame, and enlarge the sphere of its usefulness.

At the conclusion of the address of the learned Professor,

Mr W. SMITH, in a few appropriate remarks, proposed a cordial vote of thanks to him. It appeared to him, he said, that their anniversary meeting had lost none of its interest on this occasion; and that it must have been peculiarly gratifying to all who had the welfare of this Institution at heart, to have heard the deliberate expression which the learned Professor had given to his thoughts and views of the nature and purposes of literary institutions. The lecture-room was, he feared, associated in the minds of some with places of amusement such as the concert room or theatre; but he trusted the Directors would not encourage this impression, but would always endeavour to guard against raising the Institution into an ephemeral popularity at the expense of lowering the standard of instruction given within those walls. (Applause.) He rejoiced that Professor Ferrier had taken the view of this Institution which he did, as forming a connecting link between the men of literature and the men of industry. (Applause.)

The Lord Provost having conveyed the thanks of the meeting to Professor Ferrier, the assemblage separated.

It will be elsewhere seen that Mr Isaac Taylor, author of the Natural History of Enthusiasm, and other works, is to deliver the first of four lectures on "The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, and its influence on modern literature," this evening.

THE COUNTY TODAY, 1932

The county has a population of approximately 100,000 people. It is a major center of industry and commerce in the region. The county is known for its rich natural resources, including timber, minerals, and agriculture. The county government is committed to providing high-quality services to its residents and promoting economic growth.

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