

The Comparative Dependence of Human Progress on
Tradition and Invention.

A N A D D R E S S

PRONOUNCED BEFORE

The House of Convocation

OF

TRINITY COLLEGE,

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BY THE

from
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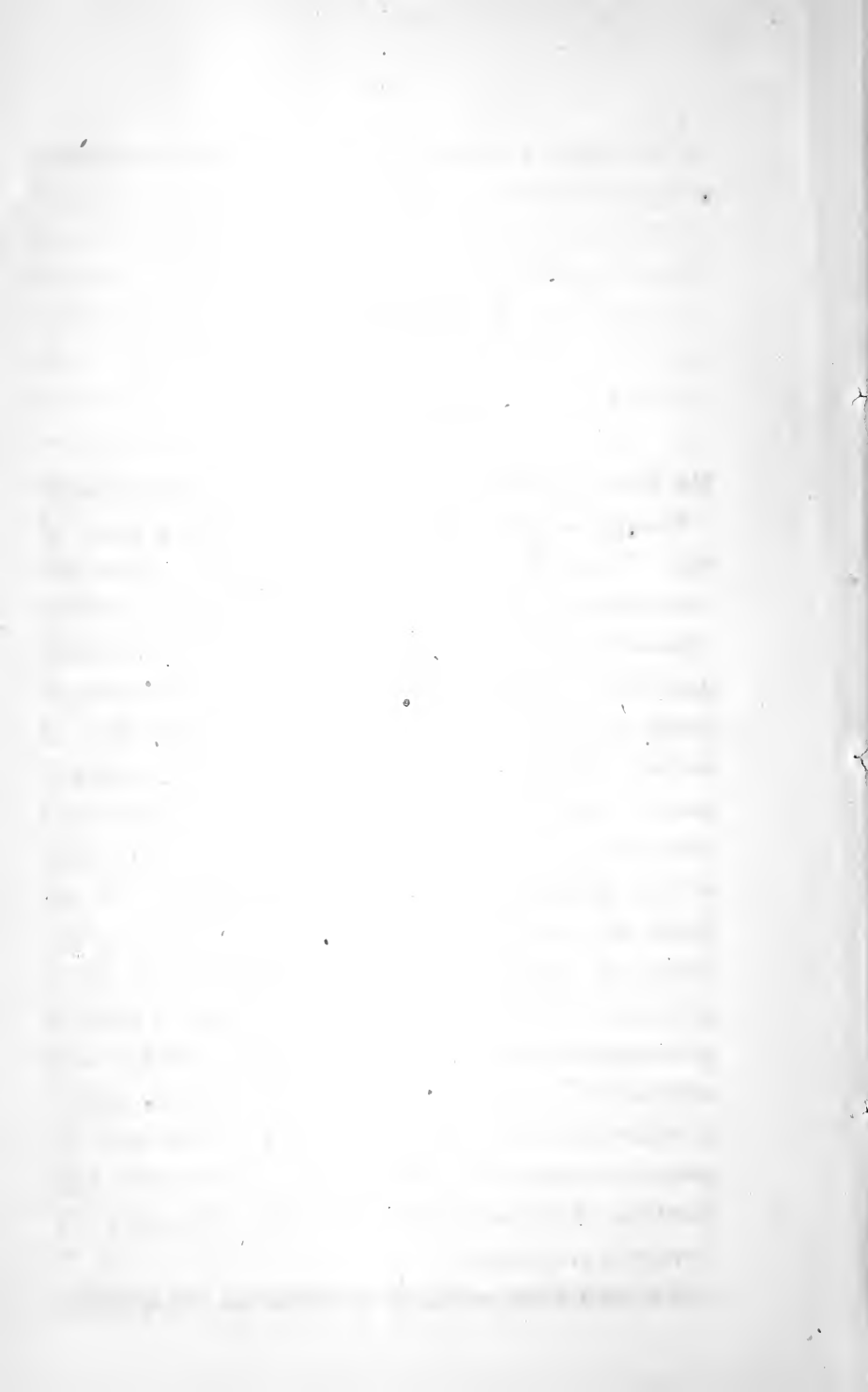
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Compliance with whose wishes it is Printed,
THIS
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BY THE
AUTHOR.



A D D R E S S .

MR. DEAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF CONVOCATION:

GENERATIONS like individuals usually know more of their virtues than their faults. They are quick to discern their advantages and to make the most of every supposed element of superiority. The lights rather than the shadows of life engross them. They linger fondly around the tokens of growth, but avoid those of decay. Pride has its root in the sense of expanding power and advancing greatness. Blind conceit and vain-glorious boasting are the spontaneous outgrowth of eras distinguished for novel combinations of old forces, for restless activity and brilliant results in the sphere of national achievement. It is natural for a generation that finds itself mated with great plans in government, industry, and science, and identified with unexampled triumphs in every field of human energy, to claim more for itself than it ought, to overrate the present as compared with the past, and to adopt false standards of judgment in order to give currency to extravagant pretensions.

Our own time certainly furnishes no exception to

remarks of this character, but rather a most apt instance of their truth. Its strength is vitiated by vanity. Its glory is soiled and degraded by indiscriminate boasting. It is an age of wonders and an age of platitudes, remarkable at once for good sense and folly, vigor and weakness, realities and shams. Judging from much of the published thought of the day, to say nothing of the animus of social and industrial life, one would suppose it to be among the established convictions of this generation that the human race had just broken its shell, and begun to comprehend the machinery of progress, that civilization and literature, humanity and brotherhood were original creations of the present, and that the past survived only as a treasury of interesting historical incident. It can not be doubted that such views have much to do with the admitted self-sufficiency of the age, and that they prevail to a degree which renders the working million well nigh insensible to the debt they owe preceding generations. With such a spirit abroad it becomes the duty of all representative thinkers and speakers whom occasions like this elevate, for the hour, into organs of a more just and sober reflective sentiment, to call attention to a truer idea of the relations of the present to the past; and while overlooking no real merit of the living to do strict justice to the labors of the dead. It is this motive that will guide and govern me in the line of thought I now intend to pursue.

Taking for granted, then, the superiority of the

present to the past, it is my purpose to ascertain the grounds of that superiority, to discriminate those elements of it which have been inherited from other times, from those which the age itself may claim to have produced, or more briefly, Tradition from Invention. This being done, I shall consider some significant inferences justified by the results of the inquiry.

This earth is an old farm which has been stocked with toilers from the beginning. Harvest has followed harvest in response to their laborious energy. The riches of to-day have come from no single reaping. They stand rather as the aggregated fruit of the labors of the race through the continuous flow of its generations. The owner of this world-farm, under whom all mortal workers are tenants at will, has occasionally intervened to prevent its utter impoverishment and desolation, by changing the seed as well as the mode of tillage. These interventions have created the eras of history—crises when new forces have entered the soil, and new hands been introduced to plant and gather. The civilization, the wealth, the power, the glory of the present are essentially the alluvium of the past, drawn from decayed and now vanished masses of life. Each generation, as it passes on, hands in its deposit, and for the time is invested with a trusteeship of the mighty inheritance. If there be any superiority of one age over another, it must consist not in the superior size of the inheritance intrusted to its care, but in the relatively superior value of its additions to that inherit-

ance. It is this, and this only that gives significance and worth to any age, regarded as an integral part of history. If, then, our own time be in advance of others gone before it; if it have more force and meaning, it must be because it has done more to increase the common patrimony of the race. An inquiry, then, into the nature of its contributions to the world's stock, will be virtually an inquiry into the nature of its conceded superiority.

To give immediate shape and point to this inquiry, I shall anticipate its conclusion by affirming the general proposition, that the contributions of this age, and in the main of every age since the beginning of the Christian era, have consisted not in multiplying the permanent and essential instrumentalities of progress, but in results accumulated by an energetic use of such instrumentalities. I go back to the Christian era because God then interposed for the last time to reconstruct, on a distinctively divine basis, the whole machinery of human progress. The Incarnation was the inlet of forces not only new, but mightier than any before known to the world. It was in such a sense the seminal principle of human advancement, that all other agencies were graduated by their relation to it. Some of these agencies dated back to earlier covenants between God and man; some were drawn from the decayed fabric of pagan life; while others came into being as spontaneous products of the new principle. Whatever their origin or grade, they were all advanced

by the Incarnation, or the Gospel system, of which it was the living root, to a higher platform, and adjusted to a vaster sphere.

The term progress, when correctly defined, stands for a perpetually increasing result, always representative of the labors which have produced it. Those labors are directed and molded by certain forms or instrumentalities. These instrumentalities are some of them institutions for nurture and discipline; some of them principles and modes of influence organized into systems; some moral in their nature, and some physical; some more or less immediately from God, some solely the product of human invention; some essential as to function and permanent as to time, and some contingent and mutable. I confine myself in the proposition which I have advanced, to the essential and permanent—to those which appeal to and are operated by the reason, the conscience, the moral and social affections—to those which shape character for both worlds, and address the spirit as well as the intelligence of man; binding together as with sinews of God's own making, each present age with the final term of progress, viz., the restoration of God's image in the human soul.

Instrumentalities so defined may be divided again into primary and secondary. The primary are from God, either in the sense of specific revelation and enactment, or in the sense of resting upon divine sanction, and acting with the universality and force of necessary law. These are coextensive with the

domain of all true civilization, and are subject to no other fluctuations than those which arise out of the administration of divine powers by earthly agents. Of this class, to name here only institutions, are the Church, the State, and the Family—the three leading spheres of human development—the three perpetual points of contact between individual and organic life. Of the secondary sort, on the other hand, are those which consist of native powers of humanity—of forces whose origin and control are strictly within the sphere of human agency, as Reason, Sensibility, Imagination, Conscience, and their correlative modes of expression, Philosophy, Art, Literature, and Ethics. These instrumentalities, and such as these, are a tradition, an inheritance. They are not an invention of any one age, or any one series of ages. Each generation, as it enters on its work, finds them in being, and submits itself instinctively to their molding power. They supply the arterial blood of each living present, and baptize into their own mighty inspirations, the successive labors of mankind. At one time they appear as foundation stones to the structure of civilization; at another, as perennial fountains of cleansing water; at another, as movable arks, within which are shrined the best treasures of the race. They may be modified. They may be developed into new applications and invigorated by new accessions of force. It may be difficult to separate them from the results which they produce, or to discriminate their essential functions from their contingent

effects. Like all profound agents, whether of matter or spirit, they may, after reaching certain limits, pass off into a vagueness of shape and relation, which can neither be described nor measured. Still their identity remains. They have a definite place in the laboratory of progress. Compared to the minor and auxiliary influences which they originate, they are as the natural elements of air, light, fire, and water, to their several uses by man—subject to endless modifications, productive of boundless power, and working changes wide as the vast theater of being, and yet the same in substance, relation, and design.

With this explanation of the instrumentalities of progress, I return to the proposition affirmed at the outset, viz., that the contributions to the world's stock of this age, and in the main of every age since the Christian era, have consisted not in multiplying the essential powers of progress, but in results accumulated by the use of those powers; in other words, *that the essential powers of human progress are a gift, an inheritance, a tradition; not an invention of any single present or series of presents.*

Time would fail me to run this discussion into details. And, indeed, no elaborate argument or minute analysis is necessary. The truth of the proposition will sufficiently appear from a bare enumeration of those permanent and essential factors of a progressive life. Having already alluded to most of them, I need not repeat them. Not one of them can be named that

does not carry us back to the sources of history; not one that does not, in its contact with the living, remind them of long lines of the vanished dead, on whom they once breathed the spirit of might, and flashed the glory of an immortal destiny; not one that does not, upon a brow of strength, and a form of elastic youth, wear the frosts of venerable age.

But proof quite as tangible and conclusive may be had from a cursory inspection of what our age has really done. And I may here remark, that the view I advocate does not make it necessary to hide or depreciate any thing which our time has produced. As a generation it has done well with its inherited riches. It has put out its talent at a rate of interest almost usurious. It has ploughed deep and gleaned close. A more thrifty generation has never lived; nor one of more varied and ceaseless activity. It has, to a degree which has no parallel in history, conquered obstacles, discovered methods, and multiplied opportunities for brain, and heart, and hand. In Art it has done something; in Letters more. In Philosophy, while it has not been without displays of vigorous genius, it has on the whole done little else than interpret and organize results already attained. It is in the department of Physical Science, and on the material, external side of civilization, that we must look for its truly memorable achievements. And here, indeed, we find them in diversity and grandeur, distancing all competition. And yet, were a full and fair summary of the labors

of our time attempted, it would show that, while it has made, in kind and amount, rich additions to the world's treasury, it has left unaltered in number, and but slightly modified in tendency, the higher factors of moral progress. It may be objected that as results one day, become causes the next, any period that is prolific of effects, must have a place more or less distinguished, in the sphere of positive causation. This may be granted, and yet the claims of the time will not be thereby advanced beyond the estimate here given. It is not contended that it has done nothing to increase the momentum of the world's movement: The contrary is freely conceded. It is only urged that it has not multiplied those original and essential factors of human advancement which every modern age has received at the hands of tradition.

But to place in a yet clearer light the central thought of this discourse—the superiority, namely, of Tradition to Invention; of inheritance to present accumulation—let us take in a wider circuit than that of the present, and inquire to what extent, if any, the great instrumentalities heretofore named have been modified, enriched, and expanded by modern life. Let us begin with the first in rank, as it is the first in power, the Church. Having regard to its first estate, it will not be claimed that it has undergone any change for the better. It may be urged, indeed, that as it is divine in its origin, constitution, doctrine, and offices—that as it is God's immediate representative in human

affairs, it is incapable of improvement by man. It were well if the generations whose hopes it has animated, and whose sorrows it has soothed, could stand at the bar of history and successfully claim, not to have enriched and ennobled it; but *only not* to have mutilated and degraded it. But so far from modern life, or mediæval life, or any other life of man, having secured for it any absolute increase of strength, or advanced it to a higher excellence of spirit or structure, it is now, as it has been for three centuries, the leading problem of the best minds and hearts, to recover its lost unity, to revive its early discipline, to reproduce in living forms, its once profound and all-embracing charity. The piety and the learning of divided Christendom, at this moment, after taking counsel of history, and of the Church's original charter, are fast coming to the conclusion that all unity is impossible, except as we revert to its original terms, and return to the point of departure from it. The waters of healing are behind us. The great master-lights which are to reveal the true glory and lasting supremacy of the Spouse of Christ, flame up over our backs. They burn still, where God kindled them. They can be found only amid the splendors of the first sunrise of the Christian Faith. And thence, if at all, must drop the fires which shall illumine the darkened altars, and burn away the diseases of our palsied, dismembered, and stammering religion. Human agency, then, has done nothing to invigorate, but much to injure and weaken this most

potent as well as potential of instrumentalities—itself entirely a tradition from God to man, owing nothing to mortal suggestion or invention.

Let us now see what modern life has done for the State. Its work here has been undeniably great. A wide gulf separates the citizen of to-day from the citizen of the early centuries. An immense advance has been made in the guarantees and facilities of justice, in the protection of rights, and the extension of civil franchises. The mutual relations of the State and the individual, are better defined, and more harmoniously adjusted. Appropriating the experience, as well as the materials furnished by the decline and fall of ancient empires, and gathering into itself the patient and elastic vigor of new races, modern life began the work of political construction. It carried the State through the anarchies of feudalism, and then through the tyrannies of absolute monarchy. Holding fast the precious burden, it toiled and wrestled along a path of storms and revolutions, until it substituted governments of *law* for governments of *will*—governments administered for the good of the many, for governments administered for the glory, or at most, the welfare of the few. And as a result, we see to-day more beneficence in the State, and more freedom in the individual. We bow to the majesty of constitutions, not to the haughty grandeur of thrones and scepters. We are ruled by the mandates of the representative principle, and not by the caprices of monarchs. Modern

life, then, has done a vast work for the State. It has modified it in favor of law, liberty, and intelligent obedience. It has enriched its resources and expanded its legitimate powers.

It must be borne in mind, however, that it began this work when one section of the world's life was dying out, and another was entering into being. It began it, too, with a full knowledge of the State as an instrumentality for enforcing order and exercising discipline. It found the State existing under various forms, but in all of them claiming to represent that fundamental and necessary principle out of which all government is evolved—the unity of reason amid diversity of wills. It succeeded to modes of political administration which acknowledged responsibility for the possession of power, and employed symbols of moral authority fitted to command respect and enforce submission. It moved on, too, under the guidance, and armed with the sanctions of a system, which, while it proclaimed government to be an ordinance of God, taught clearer and sublimer views of the rights and destinies of individuals. Modern life, then, though it has done much, has not done all for the existing State. It has largely modified and variously improved, but not created it. And, if now, the best governments of the world exercise their functions on a higher plane of influence than those of the old Pagan era, it is due, not so much to any inventions, or labors, or experiments of man, as to the resistless power of those Christian prin-

ciples—themselves a tradition—which have asserted, through all changes, and with every form of authority, every resource of persuasion, the sacredness of law and the grandeur of the individual; the necessity for concentrated power and inevitable accountability for its use.

I come now to the last of the three organic institutions of society—last as we pass from society down to the individual—the Family. In the Family, the Church and the State have their perpetual generation, as they exist there also in perpetual solution. The discipline of the Family anticipates and prepares the way for the discipline of the Church and the State. It is the true *officina gentium et ecclesiarum*. Modern life has added to the graces and multiplied the refinements of the domestic relation. It has removed some unjust inequalities between the sexes. It has secured for woman a more liberal and intelligent appreciation. It has provided new and important auxiliaries in the work of youthful training. I apprehend it to be clearly demonstrable, however, that the Christian family of the Nineteenth century, is in all essential regards, no better governed, nor its best interests better cared for, than the Christian family of the Fourth century. And it may be doubted whether domestic influence is now more salutary and powerful upon national and individual character than it was then. Christian mothers and Christian fathers are certainly not more devoted to the nurture of the young, nor are Christian children more

dutiful. It is impossible to come to any other conclusion, when we remember that it was in the third and fourth centuries that an Athanasius, a Basil, a Chrysostom, and an Augustine grew to strength and glory. It can not be forgotten what mothers were theirs, nor in what homes they were nurtured, for greatness here and immortality hereafter. We may not claim, then, that the domestic virtues have gained any thing in value or beauty; nor that the marriage vow is more sacred, nor that home is a purer and happier place than they were far back in, what some progressives would style, the twilight period of manners and refinement.

Leaving institutions, I would extend this inquiry to the human mind itself, and to the highest range of its efforts. In accordance with a favorite speculative fiction of our day, which teaches that the world in all its phases of conscious life, has advanced by regular stages, from the physical to the moral, and from the moral to the spiritual, it is often confidently maintained that the human mind is now a stronger and keener instrument than in early days; that it is not only more versatile and discursive, but more intensely and profoundly reflective; that it holds questions of subtlety, and mystery, and remoteness with a firmer grasp; and, briefly, that in the thin, bottomless, and starless region of pure metaphysics, it walks with a firmer tread, and sheds a clearer light. The whole supposition is as untrue as the general principle which suggested it is ab-

surd. It is a question of fact, not of speculative conjecture. To the facts then let us go. It will not be denied by any one familiar with the forms and objects of ancient thought, that we received from it the very science, as well as art of thinking, or that from it has been gathered the seed-wheat of every subsequent harvest. The wise ancients anticipated us in all the great problems of thought. So that if we would seek the essence and relations of things, we must follow the Egyptians; if we would know their power and harmony, we must go to the Greeks; or if we would rise to their origin and end, we must mount to the sovereign heights occupied by the Hebrews. On all these themes, (and there is none in metaphysics that may not be resolved into one or the other,) they exhibited an intense, self-sustained, and sublime reflective capacity, which the moderns have in vain tried to parallel. If we move at all along that shifting horizon which divides the visible and invisible, the finite and infinite, here shadowed with earthly mists, and there gleaming with heavenly light, we must move in paths hewed out by their solemn and patient toil. They thought not as a gymnastic exercise for the mind, but under the stress of an imaginative and spiritual melancholy, which forced the mysteries of life into contact with the pilgrim soul, and tinged the deepest processes of the intellect with the sad seriousness of a religious emotion. Introversion, contemplation, depth, intensity, and continuous grasp, were their characteristics, as

discursive investigation, critical analysis, and laborious induction are ours. They made object, subject. We make subject, object. They sought to know nature, that they might wonder and adore it. We seek to know it that we may use it. They labored down to the root, we up to the fruit of the tree of life. They toiled for the ultimate, and often the unattainable, we for the proximate and always attainable.

Whether, then, we measure the strength of the human mind by its capacity to soar into those far-off, shadowy, golden heights, where thought and feeling fold their wings, and brood over the infinite treasures of faith; or by its ability to wear the armor and wield the grosser weapons of demonstrative reasoning, we must admit that its past is in no danger of an eclipse. Plato is yet without a rival in the first, as the great Stagirite is in the second. It has been said that an Aristotle might have been formed out of the rubbish of fallen Adam. So I had almost said the sinews of modern intellect have been drawn from the graves of the ancient dead.

If we pass from the mind itself to those grand repositories of its thought, Literature and Philosophy, we shall be brought to a similar conclusion. We shall find that their advance in direct power, over life and character, is not so great as we are wont to suppose. We shall find, too, that whatever may be that advance, it must be traced to the influence of a divine tradition, to the energies and resources of Christian thought,

rather than to the independent labors of man. It may be affirmed of Literature, Philosophy, and Art, as it has been affirmed of Government, that if they stand on a higher platform, and sweep a loftier range, it is because they have been lifted to them by a power extraneous to themselves.

If we compare the new with the old, it will be found that Literature has acquired a greater variety of powers, without, as a whole, becoming more powerful. What it has gained in diversity and affluence, it has lost in simplicity and harmony. Modern genius, while rioting in a very profusion of the richest materials of imaginative creation, has often confessed itself unable to improve, or even to rival the enchanting grace of the old forms. History and Religion have opened new worlds for the dreaming soul, where all aspects of life and nature put on a more awful grandeur, and yield a more quickening inspiration. But the larger field, the sublimer theme, the stronger stimulant have not secured truer copies of the hopes and fears, the joys and griefs of our common nature, or tenderer appeals to the finer sentiments of the heart, than those which thousands of years ago, drew weeping and wondering crowds at the Grecian Olympiads, or woke from the captive Hebrews, that loud wail of expiring nationality, which swelled the waters of Babylon with the tears of an exiled race. I repeat, then, that notwithstanding the multiplied forms of genius, and the vast expenditure of effort which have entered into Modern Literature, if it be a

better and nobler force than that of the olden time, it is because the Man of Nazareth hath lived and labored here. If a Dante has made the lower world more an open secret; if a Shakespeare has walked the dark and turbid round of human passions, with a more familiar step; if a Milton's "adventurous song" has dared .

" Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,"

it is because the Word of Life gave them a surer lamp and a stronger staff; not because they were cast in a finer mold or were made of better stuff than

" The blind old bard of Scio's isle ;"

or he who sang in stern and sinewy verse, the torture and the freedom of Prometheus, or yet "sad Electra's poet."

The same judgment will hold good if applied to those other departments of æsthetic effort, Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. Without dwelling on these, I proceed to ask what modern life has done for Philosophy, considered as representative of the labors of speculative reason. If we make a true answer it must be a sad one. It is melancholy to read the record of this giant faculty. For of what waste of strength, of what fruitless toils and bootless agonies does it not tell us? Tied by its own instincts to questions of vastness and obscurity, which, though baffling, have exalted and invigorated its powers; forced by its own pride to

grapple with the secrets of being; driven by its own passionate curiosity to repeat over and over its worst failures, it has seemed through all the ages like another Titan chained to the rock, a prey to the vulture, a sport to the winds and waves. Unaided, it has not taken a single one from the list of unsolved metaphysical problems. It has drawn distinctions, traced boundaries, exploded errors, and thoroughly sounded the channels of speculation. But on all ultimate questions, it is to-day sure of a haven of rest only as it ceases from its own solitary strivings, and floats on buoys thrown to it from the Ark of Revelation. System has followed system, each in turn claiming the power to solve the difficulties and conciliate the antagonisms; but each, as it has touched them, has sunk away in mist and air. The labors of speculative reason have been those of the treadmill, showing abundance of motion, but no real advance. Like the prodigal son, it has never strayed far away from Christian tradition, that it has not squandered its heritage, and returned in hunger and nakedness. It were not well to speak loosely on a theme so momentous, or to sacrifice an iota of truth to the symmetry of a figure. I prefer, then, to close my own remarks on this point, with the weighty and well-considered words of one whose candor and erudition will not be questioned. I refer to that most illustrious metaphysical intellect of the century, Sir William Hamilton. With all his enthusiastic love for this region of thought, he is obliged to confess, that "the past his-

tory of Philosophy has, in a great measure, been only a history of variation and error."

Did time allow, it would be easy to show substantially the same of Ethical Science, so far as it has claimed to be an independent invention of the human mind.*

* Ethical studies, as a whole, have been unwisely and unfairly conducted. Unwisely, because a practical divorce has been suffered to obtain between Ethics and Christianity. Unfairly, because while seeming to borrow nothing from revelation, or rather while professing to follow original and independent methods of inquiry, ethical science has in reality been largely helped by revelation, to every important result at which it has arrived. Indeed, if we examine the topics whose successful treatment it claims as its chief triumph, *e. g.*, the nature of virtue, the ultimate ground of moral obligation, the structure and authority of conscience, its normal and abnormal working, and the means for restoring it to its rightful control over moral life; we shall find that its feet stumbled, and its voice stammered, and its sight was as blindness itself, until it clandestinely appropriated the guidance of an authority above and independent of itself. Ethical science, unless it part with all its dignity, and drop into a barren exercise of speculative power, can propose to itself as a final aim, nothing short of the delineation of perfect goodness, and the production of a perfectly good man. But both these tasks, it finds finished to its hand by revelation. But still it clings to its own fragmentary and one-sided ideal; and in substance declines to avail itself of the only means which can effectively harmonize the real man with the ideal conception. Its relation to Christianity, instead of being one of loyal subordination and grateful indebtedness, has been one of ill-disguised hostility, or at least of proud and injudicious independence. And as a consequence, we have only to look at its record for the last three hundred years, to see the sad proofs of its gigantic but fruitless labors. During that period, it has gone on with here and there an exception created by Christian thinking, boasting and failing, confessing and retracting, altering and amending, until now we see it toiling slowly up to heights of moral contemplation, which a proper humility would have enabled it to occupy at the start. Nor is accountability for this disastrous separation of moral science from religious truth, to be charged solely to philosophers, with whom inquiry loses its charm so soon as it ceases to be, in form, at least, strictly independent. If there be censure, it must be shared by the chosen guardians of theology, whose duty it was to maintain a fixed and determinate alliance between Divinity and Ethics. In the primitive periods of the Church, there was no lack of Christian Ethics. But so

If these judgments, then, be founded in truth—if the testimony adduced on these several points be reliable, then is the conclusion amply proved, that the age in which we live—prodigious as have been its activities—has not added to, or essentially changed the leading and permanent agencies of human progress. For, if the whole of modern life has not multiplied or radically altered them, then it is impossible that any part of that life, as our own age, should have done so. And, moreover, if during so vast a period of the collective life of the race, tradition has maintained its supremacy over invention, then is it certain that it has done so in our own time, which closes up that period. I assert it, then, as a truth, that human progress is mainly dependent on Tradition, and by consequence, subordinately, upon Invention.

Nor is this a barren abstraction, which it is as well not to know as to know. Had I so regarded it, I would not have consumed the hour in its discussion. I believe

soon as the revival of classical learning, and the old metaphysics began to paganize the studies of Christian scholars, so soon began the dissolution between theological and moral science. It was the effect of the scholastic system, so far as it developed itself in fashioning the mediæval methods of liberal education, to place Ethics on a level with the natural sciences, and below Logic, Rhetoric, and Metaphysics. It was in this inferior and degrading position, that the divines of the Reformation found this science. They did nothing to restore it to its rightful rank. Absorbed in questions of doctrine and discipline, they hardly crossed the obvious limits of pure divinity. And so a separation carelessly begun, was permitted to be disastrously continued. In this fact we have the historical explanation of the origin and growth and perilous license of the refined Paganism taught, in the English and Scotch universities, for two or three generations, under the name and form of moral science.

it to be, on the contrary, one of the great hinges of thought and action. If fairly admitted, it would affect the profoundest tendencies of moral and metaphysical speculation, and make itself felt in the most practical questions of education and reform. Once give it play, and it would sweep into nothingness many a fatal delusion and mistaken policy of the time. But permit me to direct attention, more in detail, to a few of its important inferences.

I. It would affect character, and consequently, all that character is concerned in producing. Whatever affects character, affects the highest symbol of influence. For character is above single truths; it is higher than systems, and stronger than tendencies. It represents the present state and actual force of an organized assemblage of living powers. To shape character, then, is to shape that which shapes every thing else. Now there are three classes of men, belonging respectively to the three great divisions of time—the antiquarian, the radical, and the dreamer, or the man of the past, the man of the present, and the man of the future. They are all men of hobbies and fancies—one-sided in their modes of thought, and without balance in their schemes of action—each claiming too much and conceding too little. To make such men useful, they must be taken out of their narrow circles.

The antiquarian must be made to feel around him the surgings of life, and to hear the moans and the shouts of the toiling million, as with militant and un-

conquerable energy, they wrestle for peace and light and liberty. He must be brought to see that all good is not in the past, nor all evil in the present; and to admit the folly of helping the world onward by setting it backward, or of improving any present period, by servile imitation of a dead one. He must be taught the unreality and deception of those moonlight views of the ages which hide the red front of battle, and beautify the dark Gethsemanes of betrayed and abused humanity. The tombs of the prophets, now, indeed, all garnished and covered with verdurous pomp, are places of quiet and wisdom; but he must be told that his years will vanish as dust, if spent at their portals. Now, it is in the power of that great truth which has been urged to do all this. It tells the man of the past that those mighty energies of progress were ordained of God for the living, not the dead—that they have meaning and worth only as they assert themselves amid living issues and strike for present victory; that they bear with them the youth and promise, as well as the old age and memory of the race.

The radical, too, amid his extremes, is but a bundle of waste forces. Impatient of existing evils, and of the slow remedies applied to cure them; wearied with the tardy growth of the seed himself has planted, and still more with the delay which besets all plans of reform, he becomes the victim, alternately, of despair and presumption. Assured that the world ought to be better than it is, and that he was put here to help make it so,

he one day retires from the field embittered and discouraged, and the next enters it again elated and confident, over-estimating his own inventions, and trusting too little in those central wheels of movement, mortised and adjoined by the hand, or at least, under the direction of God. And soon he chafes away his strength against the hard granite of his pride, or lies down in indifference to sleep and to die. Too much, alas! of earnestness, and sensibility, and hope has perished thus. Now it is the effect of a thorough conviction of the main thought of this discourse, to moderate and guide such a character, to give him poise, and patience, and faith. It tells him that neither God nor his plans are in haste—that in their very motion there is rest, and in the changes they work an appearance of stability. It draws him away from his own schemes, which like air bubbles, successively float off and burst on the sea of life, to those grand instrumentalities—the Church, the State, the Family, and to the records of spoken and written thought—instrumentalities, as he will see, bruised and scarred by battling centuries, and yet fresh with the dew and the light of earth's morning, and bearing onward all that is left of the world's shattered hope of a millenium. It tells him to labor *within and for* these, to purify them if they are corrupt, to restore them if they are decayed, to emancipate them if they are enslaved, and in works like these to find the spirit and scope of true reform.

But not less salutary is the influence of the principle

here urged upon the man of the future, than upon the antiquarian and the radical. This sort of character has a language of his own, vague and swelling in its terms, yet oracular in its tone. He looks down with magnanimous compassion on the failures and errors of other days. He patronizes the measures and labors of the present, but finds nothing in them to secure his faith and co-operation. They are too high or too low; too broad or too narrow; too speculative or too practical. He lays his soft palm on aching brows and wearied arms, and bids them wait for the Coming Church, the Coming State, the Coming Man. Man, he says, can never be inspired through his memory. Genius looks forward, not backward. Power is the child of hope. Those who would be great, must have their ideal in the future, not the past. Living men can not grow on the food of monks and worms. So from his imaginary Pisgah, he discourses to the toiling, heaving masses below. Such men, to be of any account, must be undeceived. Bring them in contact with such views as have been presented, and their dreams dissolve into common vapor. From them they will learn that the future can be seen only through the past, and has interest only because of the past—that the future is a relation, a possibility—the field of God's vision—that the past only is to us a reality, a fact, a force—that it only contains the pattern life, and the regenerative energy of humanity. They will learn, too, from the same source, that whoever would sing, or paint, or

sculpture, or think for the race, must make his own its memory and associations.

II. The relative superiority of Tradition to Invention, is a principle that would modify the leading forms of thought. In Philosophy, it would raise Ontology above Ideology, Being above Consciousness, Object above Subject, Truth above the human measure of it; and doing this would strike at the seed root of moral skepticism.

In Civil Government, it would confirm the authority of law over will, of rational liberty over rebellious license.

In Religion, it would establish the supremacy of Revelation over reason—of organic over individual life—of universal consent over private judgment. It would lead, also, to a higher appreciation of Church life, as the binding ligature of all moral unity; as furnishing, together with a perfect human ideal, the only effective means to realize it; and as keeping simultaneously before the world, its morning, noon, and evening—promises and their fulfillments—prophecies and their verifications—covenants and their objects—in other words, man fallen, man redeemed, and man perfected.

III. As a consequence of such influence in these several directions, it would produce a more living conviction of the Unity of the Race, and of History, its record, as well as of the Providence who works through both.

I believe I have uttered no sentiment alien to the

spirit of this Institution. I believe rather, that I have only interpreted, with reference to a single subject, the principles of its founders and guardians. If so, I shall be content.

I have no words adequately to set forth my sense of the honor, the danger, and the magnitude of the trust committed to us, as inheritors of the mighty past, and living dispensers of the powers of human progress.

God grant that we may have the will and the strength to quit ourselves as men worthy of His Church, worthy of the sacred cause of learning, worthy of the age and the country in which our lot has been cast.

