

staunch because it was ethical and rational ; because he clung always and before all things, in the clash of creeds, to "those things which are certain still, the grand, simple landmarks of morality." "If," said the greatest preacher in the Church of England sixty years ago, "if there be no God and no future state, yet even then it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be chaste than licentious, better to be true than false, better to be brave than to be a coward." Lord Acton would have been unable to conceive the protasis. The apodosis he would not have denied.

Sir Richard Acton died while his son was a child, and at the age of nine Sir John was sent by his mother to the Roman Catholic College at Oscott, of which Dr. Wiseman was the head. Wiseman, until Mr. Wilfrid Ward published his excellent biography, was chiefly known to English Protestants as the instrument of papal aggression, and the subject of Robert Browning's satirical poem, "Bishop Blougram's Apology." He was in truth an able and accomplished man, a really great organiser, thoroughly well qualified to preside over an educational establishment like Oscott. He was not in any sense of the word a Liberal, and in later years the pupil did not always agree with the master. But of Oscott Lord Acton always spoke with affection, and the five years which he spent there in the pursuit of knowledge were among the happiest in a happy existence. It was the young man's own desire to enter the University of Cambridge. For he did not, like some Catholics, hold it sinful to receive education from a Protestant source. The law would not even then have prevented him from matriculating at Cambridge, as it would at Oxford, and yet the colleges, more bigoted than the law, refused, on what they doubtless considered religious grounds, to receive a student as hungry for learning as ever sought admission within their venerable precincts. Sir John Acton, so peculiarly fitted by nature and education to adorn and illustrate a University, may well have asked with Macaulay, what was the faith of Edward the Third, and Henry the Sixth, of Margaret