

that these opinions are by no means a merely German brood. There are many writers of kindred sympathies in England, and some of as outspoken courage. But, in preparing yourselves for the combat of life, I beg you to take this also into your account, that the spirit of denial is abroad, and has challenged all religion, but specially the religion you profess, to a combat of life and death. I venture, however, to offer you a few suggestions, in the hope that they may not be without their use. You will hear in your after-life much of the delight and duty of following free thought; and, in truth, the man who does not value the freedom of his thoughts deserves to be described as Homer describes the slave—he is but half a man. Saint Paul, I suppose, was a teacher of free thought when he bade his converts to “prove all things”—(applause)—but it seems he went terribly astray when he proceeded to bid them “hold fast that which is good.” (Renewed applause.) He evidently assumed that there was something by which they could hold fast; and so he bade Timothy to keep that which was committed to his charge. Another apostle has instructed us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Applause.) But the free thought of which we now hear so much seems too often to mean thought roving and vagrant rather than free, like Delos, according to the ancient legend, drifting on the seas of Greece without a route, a direction, or a home. (Loud applause.) Again, you will hear incessantly of the advancement of the present age, and of the backwardness of those which have gone before it. And truly it has been a wonderful age; but let us not exaggerate. It has been, and it is, an age of immense mental as well as material activity; it is by no means an age abounding in those minds of the first order, who become the great immortal teachers of mankind from generation to generation. (Applause.) It is an age which has tapped, as it were, and made disposable for man, vast natural resources; but the mental power employed is not to be measured by the mere size of the results. To perfect that marvel of travel, the locomotive, has not required—and musicians will understand what I am about to say—has perhaps not required the expenditure of more mental strength, application, and devotion than to perfect that marvel of music, the violin. (Applause.) In the material sphere, the achievements of the age are splendid and unmixed. In the social sphere they are great and noble, but seem ever to be confronted by a succession of new problems, which almost defy solution. In the sphere of pure intellect I greatly doubt whether posterity will rate us as highly as we rate ourselves. (Applause.) But what I most wish to observe is this, that it is an insufferable arrogance in the men of any age to assume what I may call airs of unmeasured superiority over former ages. God, who cares for us, cared for them also. In the goods of this world we may advance by strides; but it is by steps only and not strides, and by slow and not always steady steps, that all desirable improvement of man in the higher range of his being can alone be effected. Again, my friends, you will hear much to the effect that the divisions among Christians are such that they render it impossible to say what Christianity is, and so destroy all certainty in religion. But if the divisions are remarkable, not less so is the degree of their unity in the greatest doctrines that they hold. (Applause.) Well nigh 1500 years—years of a more sustained activity than the world had ever before seen—have passed away since the great controversies of Christendom concerning the Deity and the Person of the Redeemer were, after a long agony, determined. As before that time in a manner less defined, but adequate for their day, so ever since that time, amid all chance and change, it is a mere matter of fact to state that more,

ay, many more, ninety-nine in every hundred Christians have with one voice confessed the Deity and incarnation of our Lord as the cardinal and central truths of our religion. (Loud applause.) Surely there is some comfort here, some sense of brotherhood, some glory due to the past, and some hope for the times that are to come. On one, and only one, more of the favourite fallacies of the day I will yet presume to touch. It is the opinion and the boast of some that man is not responsible for his belief. Lord Brougham was at one time stated to have given utterance to this opinion, whether truly, I know not. But this I know—it was my privilege to hear from his own lips the needful and due limitation of that proposition. “Man,” he said, “is not responsible to man for his belief.” (Applause.) But, as before God, one and the same law applies to opinions and to acts, or rather one and the same law applies to inward and to outward acts—for opinions are inward acts—many a wrong opinion may be guiltless because formed in ignorance, and because that ignorance may not be our fault. But who shall presume to say there is no mercy for wrong actions also, when they, too, have been due to ignorance and that ignorance has not been guilty. The question is not whether judgments and actions are in the same degree influenced by the condition of the moral motives; but if it is undeniable that selflove and passion have an influence upon both, then, so far as that influence goes, for both we must be prepared to answer. Should we in common life ask a body of swindlers for an opinion on swindling, or of gamblers for an opinion upon gambling, or of misers for a description of our duty as to bounty? And if in matters of religion we allow pride and perverseness to raise a cloud between us and the truth, so that we see it not, the false opinion that we form is but the index of that perverseness and that pride, and both for them, and for it as their offspring, we shall be justly held responsible. (Applause.) Who they are upon whom this responsibility will fall it is not ours to judge. These laws are given to us, not to apply presumptuously to others; it is enough if we apply and enforce them honestly against ourselves. (Applause.) Next to a Christian life, my friends, you will find your best defence against reckless novelty in speculation, in sobriety of temper and in sound intellectual habits. Be slow to stir enquiries which you do not mean patiently to pursue to their proper end. Be not afraid to suspend your judgment long, and upon many things, or to feel and admit to yourselves how narrow are the bounds of knowledge. Do not too readily assume that to us have been opened royal roads to truth, which were heretofore hidden from the whole family of man; for the opening of such roads would not be so much favour as caprice. If it is bad to yield a blind submission to authority, it is not less an error to deny to it its reasonable weight. Eschew a servile adherence to the past, yet regard it with reverence and gratitude, and accept its accumulations, in inward as well as outward things, as the patrimony which it is your part in life both to preserve and to improve.—Mr. Gladstone resumed his seat amidst loud cheering, which continued for several minutes.

Criticism in School.

Must teachers be professional and practical fault-finders? It must be confessed that the effect of teaching upon the character of those engaged in it, is, generally, to develop and sharpen a disposition to find fault. This disposition would seem to be the “original sin” of some natures; and the possessors, not content with being “sinners by nature” have rendered themselves much more so “by