

which have occurred, and I am perhaps better able to appreciate the vast strides that have been taken in the direction of that complete and all-pervading culture in science which he has so ably advocated.

No one could have anticipated twenty years ago that a Birmingham manufacturer, in whose youthful days there were no schools of science for the people, was about to endow a college, not only worthy of this great city, but one of its brightest ornaments.<sup>1</sup> Nor could any-one have foreseen the great development of local scientific societies, like your Midland Institute and Philosophical Society, which are now flourishing in every large town and in many of those of less magnitude. The period of twenty-one years that has elapsed since the last Birmingham meeting has also been an era of public museums and laboratories for the teaching of science, from the magnificent national institutions at South Kensington and those of the great universities and their colleges down to those of the schools and field clubs in country towns. It has, besides, been an era of gigantic progress in original work, and in publication,—a progress so rapid that workers in every branch of study have been reluctantly obliged to narrow more and more their range of reading, and of effort to keep abreast of the advance in their several departments. Lastly, these twenty-one years have been characterised as the ‘coming of age’ of that great system of philosophy with which the names of three Englishmen, Darwin, Spencer, and Wallace, are associated as its founders. Whatever opinions one may entertain as to the sufficiency and finality of that philosophy, there can be no question as to its influence on scientific thought. On the one hand, it is inaccurate to compare it with things so entirely different as the discovery of the chemical elements and of the law of gravitation. On the other, it is scarcely fair to characterise it as a mere ‘confused development’ of the mind of the age. It is indeed a new attempt of science in its maturer years to

<sup>1</sup> It was in 1865 that Sir Josiah Mason was, quietly and without any public note, beginning to lay the foundation of his orphanage at Erdington.