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## HUMANISM.

*Lecture by Professor Watson to the Philosophical Society.*

I fear that the title which I have selected for my lecture may have inadvertently given rise to misunderstanding. The term "Humanism" is usually employed to designate that great revival of learning, which, in company with the Reformation, put an end to the Middle Ages, and ushered in a new era in the world's history. The humanist, in the old sense of the term, was distinguished, on the one hand, by his claim to culture and refinement, and, on the other hand, by his antagonism to external authority and the fictions of an unreal abstraction. The former characteristic he displayed in the passion and enthusiasm with which he threw himself into the study of classical literature, and by his interest in all that concerned the higher life as lived here and now; the latter characteristic he displayed in his claim for freedom of thought, involving as it did a liberation from unintelligible dogmas, cramping superstitions and slavish submission to political or ecclesiastical authority. But it is not to Humanism in this older sense of the term that I propose to direct your attention, but to a brand-new philosophical doctrine, which has usurped the name and claims to possess the features of the older Human-

ism. The spokesman of this newest thing in philosophy is Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, at present a fellow and tutor in the University of Oxford, who only the other day contributed an article to a volume of essays issuing from that ancient seat of learning entitled "Personal Idealism," and who has also published a collection of essays of his own under the title "Humanism," which set forth in a popular, not to say a highly rhetorical, style, the main articles of the new faith. In justification of his forcible appropriation of the old name for the new thing, the author claims that his philosophy, in contrast to the prevalent Absolutism, which at least in Oxford has for some thirty years held almost undisputed sway, is distinguished, like its predecessor, by its opposition at once to barbarism and to scholasticism. As to the first point, he declares that the older philosophy is barbaric both in its temper and in its style. "The former," he says, "displays itself in the inveterate tendency to sectarianism and intolerance, in spite of the discredit which the history of philosophy heaps upon it. For what could be more ludicrous than to keep up the pretence that all must own the sway of some absolute and unquestionable creed? Does not every page of every philosophic his-