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TWENTY-ONE years have passed away since the last meeting of the British Association in this great central city of England. At the third Birmingham meeting—that of 1865—I had the pleasure of being present, and had the honour of being one of the Vice-Presidents of the Geological Section. At that meeting, my friend John Phillips, one of the founders of the Association, occupied the Presidential chair, and I cannot better introduce what I have to say this evening than by quoting the eloquent words with which he then opened his address :—‘ Assembled for the third time in this busy centre of industrious England, amid the roar of engines and clang of hammers, where the strongest powers of nature are trained to work in the fairy chains of art,