

truth convinced by the general reception of his *mot*—"Well, that is what I like—no affectation—no, not even the affectation of Christianity," commentaries on Scripture which cut away the very ground they pretend to clear; books on logic, philosophy, or so called history which attack openly or by implication not only the outworks but the very citadel of faith and reason,—all such will not be at least more clearly understood. They will not pass unchallenged. The haze is dispelled. Men see each other's faces clearly.

So much will scarcely be disputed. Many have, indeed, been brought into contact with what they might otherwise have escaped, but the gain has on the whole been great. Some, and amongst these a few, but only a very few, of the ablest men of the University, remain, as might be expected, perfectly and scornfully unmoved by the exposure and condemnation of the views they have adopted; but the great majority have been decidedly strengthened in sound principles of faith. External causes have, no doubt, had much to do with this result—the condemnation of the book by the Bishops—the proceedings of Convocation, which, by-the-by, are much studied here by others than those mentioned by the Bishop of Gloucester—the articles in the *Quarterly*, *Christian Remembrancer*, *Literary Churchman*, and other papers and reviews—the letters which have appeared in your own columns, especially Dr. Pusey's—the tone taken even by a body so entirely secular as the House of Commons—the general consensus of the clergy—and the pretty generally expressed opinion of the well-educated and religious throughout the country. But there have been more direct agencies at work within the University, and of these the most prominent have been the numerous sermons preached regularly before the University or at different pulpits to larger or smaller portions of the whole body in the course of the Lent lectures. The churches were densely thronged to hear these sermons, especially when it was expected that the subject of the day would be handled. Men had heard opinions which seemed to be subversive of Christianity put forth by those in authority, and who retained that authority; they wanted to hear what competent judges would say. Not that any of these sermons professed to give elaborate answers to the views of the Essayists. The absurdity of claiming that any such thing should be put out on the spur of the moment has been summarily shown by Dr. Pusey and others. One must point the reader, not the auditor, to a long array of defences of Christianity extending from the times of the early Christians to our own. These preachers, each from their own particular point, cut away the root of the plant which has sprung into such portentous growth. The difference of the authority on which we receive the Holy Scriptures and all other books, the nature of faith, the causes and consequences of indulged scepticism, the right use of reason, the limited nature of our intellectual faculties, the constant recurrence in all ages of the sort of attacks which now excite so much alarm, the powerlessness of all rationalistic schemes to meet the real wants of our nature—these, and such fundamental points as these, were chiefly selected by the preachers already alluded to. And it has been shown forcibly and in detail that the criticism so unsparingly applied by the Essayists to the Old Testament goes in so many words to deny the Divinity of our Lord, who has himself asserted the literal inspiration of so many parts of it. Perhaps, indeed, no view is more advancing at Oxford than that the ancient heresies, which struck in one form or other at this cardinal point of Christianity, are these which in a subtler form are at the bottom of the essays.

Much has been done by sermons at Oxford,

much by the influence of causes external to the place, yet still more has been effected by the opportunity which the controversy has afforded to tutors and others for dealing with individual minds. The number of those who hold opinions like those of the Essayists has never been great; and the old cry of mere sympathy with any cause which happens to be run down for the time has become nearly worn out. It is felt to be very well for school boys, or freshmen, but is hardly worthy of those who are old enough to understand both sides of a question. And some, with keener perceptions than others, ask themselves whether it is quite certain that the Essayists are the weaker side, nothing, as they do, the ominous alliance, which seems to be springing up between these writers and what we must designate as the coarser and less educated world outside, to whose intellectual tastes the *Times* accommodates itself, and the bulk of the newspaper-press. Besides the antidotes already enumerated, the circulation of two or three new books, which, though not intended as regular answers to the essays, contain most important matter in regard of them, has been eminently useful to the reading, and therefore the leading men. Dr. Moberly's beautiful Sermons on the Beatitudes, with his Preface on the Essays, have made themselves felt all the more from the intense interest which some of them preached before the University last year, excited at the time, and Professor Eliott's Hulsean Lectures have come most seasonably to show how a profound scholar, thoroughly acquainted with German theological literature, can challenge all comers and walk in the old paths with a reverence for the complete inspiration of the whole un mutilated canon of Scripture never exceeded in ancient or modern times.

Perhaps, too, the members of Oxford and other Universities have an advantage over those who dwell elsewhere in the wider knowledge they possess of the state of these controversies in other places and days. It was said of the influence exerted by *Tracts for the Times*, that it was owing to a few men who had read taking by surprise the mass of their fellows who had not read. There was a grain of truth in this superficial view. There is much more force in it when applied to the present case. The acquaintance with German and English theology is fortunately not very widely spread, and the study of theology has so declined at our Universities that even there is far less readiness at using the weapons which really exist ready forged than there should be. But it is there better understood than elsewhere how entirely the Essayists have been indebted for their ideas to the English of other days and the Germans of the present, and this conviction is doing its work in stripping the book of its pretensions to originality and ability. The better informed are no less astonished than indignant at the manner in which statements already amply refuted abroad are here paraded as if nothing had ever been said against them. In the present state of German literature, it is said, so strong has been the defence of the faith, it would be impossible to assert in that country much that has been thus unblushingly put forth in our own.

Such are some of the current thoughts of a very large portion of the Oxford world. But along with this increasingly clear perception of the true position of the controversy has gone a very deep and wide feeling of tenderness towards opponents. A very liberal construction has been put by many influential people upon the statements of the Essayists, and there has been a great shrinking every where from any overt action against them. This is no doubt the result of the painful struggles through which the University passed some years ago; it is a part of the hesita-

tion which wise men feel when they bear the responsibility of engaging their country in a terrible war. It is also probably connected with that activity of speculation which the peculiar studies of Oxford have tended to foster, and which accustoms men to tolerate great diversities of opinion; while very much of it may be attributed to the strong hope, which is scarcely even yet relinquished, that some of those among the Essayists whose errors Oxford most deplores would, when they discovered the mischief they had occasioned, act the noble part of confessing their fault to the world. The position taken up by the writers of the forthcoming *Aids to Faith*, most of whom are Oxford men, will probably exercise great influence on the future acts, as well as tone of thought, of the University.

It may not unfitly conclude these remarks to observe that, as if in tacit defiance of the withering tendency of unwholesome speculation, never were the distinctive signs of a devotional spirit more visible at Oxford than throughout the Lent which has just passed away. At no time have the services of the parish churches—and what city can boast so many churches in which the services are conducted in the best manner—been better attended; the Lent sermons, of which we have had an admirable course, more generally listened to; the spirit of the season been more widely influential. This Easter has found some things worse among us, but very much also that is sounder and more hopeful than at any former recurrence of the joyous festival.

#### REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION

*Editorial of the Guardian, April 3rd.*

The Report of the Education Commission, which has long been looked for, was presented to both Houses of Parliament on last Thursday week. It is, therefore, now before the public, and is a document which to most of our readers will be full of interest.

The Commission has sat nearly three years. It was appointed under Lord Derby's Ministry, in June, 1858, and appears to have been selected with great care, and with a view to give a fair representation of all parties interested in popular education. Its members were the Duke of Newcastle, Sir John Coleridge, the Rev. W. C. Lake and the Rev. W. Rogers, Mr. Goldwin Smith, Mr. Senior, and Mr. Miall. The fairness of such a selection is indeed undeniable, for every kind of education, and almost of opinion, may be said to have had its representative. It was another question, whether a mass of such independent atoms was most likely to coalesce in practical conclusions, or to sum up their results in a series of unmeaning compromises. This danger appears to have been avoided. It is plain, indeed, that there were two parties in the Commission—nor could it well have been otherwise in a body which comprised Sir John Coleridge and Mr. Miall—and a minority sign the Report with the reserve that "more solid and lasting good would have been done had the Government abstained from interference with education." They add, however, that "they have felt it their duty to regard the question as it stands after twenty-nine years of a policy opposed to their own; and on the rejection of their own view, they cordially adopt in the second resort, the scheme of assistance approved by the majority of their colleagues, which they regard as better in every respect, and, above all, as a far nearer approach to justice than the present extremely partial system." In this protest the Commissioners seem to have managed to merge their differences; and the Report has undoubtedly the merit of grappling boldly with the numerous