

## LECTURE TO THE STUDENTS.

race, as some allow themselves to think or say, the proposition sounds supremely absurd to most men of fair minds, whether they are Christians or not. Thomas Carlyle did not believe in Christianity as a supernatural religion; but he said of it: "The Christian religion must ever be regarded as the crowning glory, or, rather, the life and soul, of our whole modern culture." So Matthew Arnold, though very far from being an orthodox Christian, had such words as these to say of the Christian religion and its influence: "Men are not mistaken in thinking that Christianity has done them good, [are not mistaken] in loving it, wishing to listen to those who will talk to them about what they love, and (they) will talk of it with admiration and gratitude. . . . Christianity is truly . . . the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection. Men do not err, they are on firm ground of experience, when they say that they have practically found Christianity to be something incomparably beneficent."

Then again, Mr. Lecky, the rationalist historian, has these observations: "Christianity, the life of morality, the basis of civilization, has regenerated the world." "It (the Christian religion) softens the character, purifies and directs the imagination, blends insensibly with habitual modes of thought, and, without revolutionizing, gives a tone and bias to all forms of action." "As a matter of fact, Christianity has done more to quicken the affections of mankind, to create a pure and merent idea, than any other influence that has ever acted upon the world." "The great characteristic of Christianity is that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe, and that it has discharged this office, not so much by the inculcation of a system of ethics, however pure, as by the assimilating and attractive influence of a perfect ideal. The moral progress of mankind can never cease to be distinctively and intensely Christian as long as it consists of a gradual approximation to the character of the Christian Founder. There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the history of the human race than the way in which that ideal has traversed the lapse of ages, acquiring new strength and beauty with each advance of civilization, and