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PROFESSOR HENDERSON'S LECTURES.

BROWNING'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

The sixth and last of Professor G. C. Henderson's series of lectures was delivered in the Town Hall last night. The attendance was again gratifyingly large, there being no unoccupied seat. The Governor, Sir F. G. D. Bedford, presided.

"We have now," said Professor Henderson in introducing his subject, "come to the last of our lectures, and I will ask you to consider with me the man who represents what many people would call an extremist in his ideal interpretation of life. The British character is pre-eminently practical, and it is not, generally speaking, credited with a tendency to theories or ideals. Yet I would have you believe that a practical man is not necessarily one who has no sympathy with high ideals. Though the British people are so practical, and Robert Browning was British, he has, in my opinion and as far as my process of thinking is concerned, said the last word on many questions of idealism." Continuing, Professor Henderson said he would in that night's lecture consider Robert Browning's philosophy of life, and would only touch upon his poetry incidentally and only so far as it affected his subject. Browning was too little read, but see his philosophy understood, his works would have more readers. The poet was a man with a strong grasping intellect. He was not so sweet a singer as Alfred, Lord Tennyson, but the latter paid tribute to the intellectual superiority of Browning. A dramatist, it might be said, was not to be credited with the opinions and convictions he put into the mouths of his creations. In the case of Shakespeare, however, they could discover by the trend of his thought, by the incidental references to contemporary events, what he himself believed regarding certain problems of life. There was a moral system in Browning's philosophy, and it was with that he wished to treat. Apart from his dramatic writings Browning had, at the request of his wife, composed certain didactic poems, and in these they had material for the consideration of his views.

Browning believed that they could not understand life unless they believed that human beings had souls—and Robert Browning believed that there was nothing so important in the world as the development of the soul. Late in his life as 1863—he was born 1813—Browning wrote to T. Milnes of Dijon: "My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul little else is worth study." Let us inquire into those points concerning the development of the soul which Browning had always before his mind. There was the heroic quality. His thought was heroic. It was heroic because he believed profoundly in the presence in the inward life of men and women of a certain principle which gave the individual power to say "I shalt" or "Thou shalt not." Browning had been called a modern Platonist. What, then, did Plato believe about this heroic principle? They read of the controversy between Socrates and some of his disciples. The disciples would prove that man's soul was no thing more than the product of sensation. "No," said Socrates, "as he came back upon some principle in the mind which, instead of being merely the result of sensations could rise up in defiance and overcome these sensations. If the mind or soul was the product of sensation, how came it that there was something in the mind and in the soul which could rise up and defy that sensation, and say, 'No, I will not yield.' That something was the inner man, which was the spirit of the soul—and it was essentially heroic. It was on that principle that Browning fixed his attention, and it was because of that they got so many of his characters representing men who would not yield to circumstances, who were ready to defy circumstances; and they knew from the words he put into the mouths of these characters that he admired such men. Literary men in England had dwelt upon the presence of the principle which made men dissatisfied with what they had already done, and drove them on to make further conquests. Unless he could uplift himself, how poor a thing was man, because he had been given a spark within him which had not been kindled into a flame. I see whatever appeared as a place of

soul. Browning went so far as to say that evil was stuff for transmuting. He declared in Abt Vogler—

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound; What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more.

Their antagonist became their helper, because he made it necessary that they should keep their wits about them, and be on the alert. That which, was a hostile force at one time, being conquered and overcome, was a further means by which an individual and a nation rose to positions of supremacy. They could not attain to the highest good except by not only fighting evil, but by transmuting it into good. The individual had the power of making evil an instrument for the development of his highest nature. To forcibly prove his point he would conclude with a reference of a sacred nature. When the crucifixion happened in this world's history it happened in relation to One who, instead of yielding to the pressure of circumstances could so far rise superior to malignant influences that He could pray for the souls of those who were inflicting pain upon Him. The crucifixion was a terrible thing, taken in the absolute sense, but it was sanctified by its relationship to One who could overcome to One who could make it a means of grace. Take it out of history, and they would lose one of the most powerful symbols in the development not only of national, but of human history. (Loud applause.)

THE CLOSE OF THE SERIES. VOTES OF THANKS.

At the conclusion of the lecture, His Excellency the Governor said that it was his pleasant duty to propose a vote of thanks to the lecturer. Before doing so he wished to congratulate the committee of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute on having initiated a most interesting and instructive series of lectures. It must have been a great pleasure to that committee to have found the lectures so successful, but he was afraid that if they had not found the right kind of lecturer the Town Hall would not have been so full as it was that night. He was sorry he had not been able to be present at the other lectures of the series, and he envied those who had. Professor Henderson had held them in rapt attention, and he was sure they all felt they owed the lecturer a debt of gratitude for the views he had placed so clearly before them. He called the lecture a good deal better than most sermons he heard. (Laughter.) He proposed a cordial vote of thanks to Professor Henderson. (Loud applause.)

Mr. J. Longmore, President of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute, in seconding the vote of thanks, said that the large audiences which had listened to the lectures spoke highly for the citizens of Perth. The lectures had been an inspiration. (Applause.)

Professor Henderson, speaking in acknowledgment of the vote of thanks, said he was extremely grateful for the remarks made by the Governor and Mr. Longmore. It was a high honour to receive commendation from the highest representative of the State—(applause)—and he took it as a great compliment that His Excellency and Lady Bedford should have been pleased to come and listen to what he had had to say. His thanks were also owing to Dr. J. W. Hackett, the chairman of the University Extension Committee in this State. The two committees had, he believed, united in order to bring these lectures, so far as organisation was concerned, to a successful issue. He could assure Dr. Hackett and Mr. Longmore that never in his career as a lecturer had so much been done in a kindly and generous way and back up his efforts and make the lectures a success. The audiences had been most encouraging and helpful. They had been generous in their sympathy, and he thanked them very much. (Applause.)

Dr. Hackett, who proposed a vote of thanks to the Governor, remarked that His Excellency had always come forward to encourage such movements, and many a time they had felt that but for his interest and presence, their efforts would have fallen flat, and their endeavours would have yielded no fruit. He tendered their sister committee of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute their congratulations on the success of these lectures. The efforts they were making to supply a series of scientific university extension lectures might possibly be without result, but the position had been well filled by the Swan River Mechanics' Institute and Professor Henderson. (Applause.) His Excellency briefly acknowledged the vote of thanks.