

# MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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MANCHESTER cannot but feel a certain pride in the very interesting ceremony that took place at Oxford yesterday. Amid a great number of friends and supporters of the institution, the Dedication Stone of Manchester New College was unveiled, and it was thus solemnly declared to all the world that the institution which was born in Manchester, and had its local habitation here for many a growing year, had taken up its home for good in the beautiful city whence the spiritual ancestors of the men of yesterday had been driven forth over two centuries ago. “They had suffered,” said Dr. DRUMMOND (the Principal of the College), yesterday, “two hundred years of exclusion and of wrong; yet it was in no spirit of triumph or of hostility towards others that they came now to Oxford, and found themselves with none to make them afraid, able to rear that beautiful temple of learning upon the very spot from which their forefathers were driven forth to wander in the wilderness.” The home which Oxford denied was given, on a considerable scale, for the first time by Manchester, where the Manchester Academy was founded in 1786. That foundation has been aptly described as a bold and prescient attempt to give to a not very important town in the North (Manchester in 1786 was hardly more), the advantages of an ancient seat of erudition, accompanied by a liberty of teaching and learning which hardly any ancient seat of erudition possessed. In 1803 the institution was transferred, as the Manchester College, to York. It was restored to the city of its birth, as the Manchester New College, in 1840, and has kept that title ever since, though it left Manchester for London in 1853, and London for

Oxford in 1889. For two years the work of the College has been carried on in temporary premises at Oxford, with no less a man for Principal than Dr. DRUMMOND, the writer of that famous book on PHILLO which has done much to make English Theology favourably known abroad; and with Tutors as distinguished as Mr. UPTON and Mr. J. ESTLIN CARPENTER. Now its permanent home has been secured not far from Mansfield College—a fit position,—and all but £6,000. of the necessary £50,000. has been subscribed. The subsisting conditions of the University, we are told, apparently still forbid Manchester New College from inscribing her name on its roll. Those conditions will, doubtless, shortly disappear, and both “Mansfield” and “Manchester New” will figure in the degree lists. But for the present, at all events, there is no attempt either at Mansfield College or at Manchester New College to give the ordinary lay education. There used to be nine professors at Manchester New College. There are now only three, and all of them belong to the one “faculty” of Theology, ready themselves, in their turn, to disappear when the Oxford school of Theology and the theological professorships are set free from all dogmatic ties. When—if ever—that day comes, Dr. MARTINEAU himself has told us, “Manchester New College will welcome death, for its death will be its transfiguration and final passage into larger and higher life.”

But why Oxford, out of all possible towns in England? Why is Oxford to be preferred alike to London and to Manchester? Because, as Dr. DRUMMOND put it some years ago, “in all its migrations—to York, then back to Manchester, and finally to London—the College has still desired a wider culture,” and because, with all its faults, Oxford is still Oxford. A famous son of Oxford, who would have by no means been wholly unsympathetic to yesterday’s proceedings, has said: “Oxford, the Oxford of the past, has many faults, and she has heavily paid for them in defeat, in isolation, in want of hold upon the modern world. Yet we, in Oxford, brought up amidst the beauty and sweetness of that beautiful place, have not failed to seize one truth—the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection. When I insist on this, I am all in the faith and tradition of Oxford. I say boldly that this, our sentiment for beauty and sweetness, our sentiment against hideousness and rawness, has been at the bottom of our attachment to so many beaten causes, of our opposition to so many triumphant movements. And the sentiment is true, and has never been wholly defeated, and has shown its power even in its defeat. We have not won our political battles, we have not carried our main points, we have not stopped our adversaries’ advance, we have not marched victoriously with the modern world; but we have told silently upon the mind of the country, we have prepared currents of feeling which sap our

adversaries' position when it seems gained, we have kept up our own communications with the future." In the same spirit, though from a different point of view, Mr. R. D. DARBISHIRE has written, that for Manchester New College, also, "the memories and traditions that haunt the cloisters of Oxford have a charm more than ideal; and her ambition is that, nurtured amid the same scenes as the famous scholars and divines whose names and works are a continuing glory of the University, her students may gather a richer culture, and grow to a more many-sided intellectual and spiritual life, than commonly accrues to men shut up in segregated academies apart from the centres of national thought and feeling, and cherishing chiefly the several traditions and the outlook peculiar to seminaries." MATTHEW ARNOLD said much the same thing from his point of view, when he said that "the Nonconformist is not in contact with the main current of the national life." "To culture," he went on to say, "the Nonconformist has no great institutions not of his own making, like the Universities connected with the national Church, to invite him; but only such institutions as he may have invented for himself." And all those drawbacks, in MATTHEW ARNOLD'S view, inevitably favoured "provincialism." Now we need not stop to inquire how and why the Universities were thus exclusively connected with the "national Church," and whether such exclusiveness was not an unjust and wrongful usurpation and monopoly. Nor need we consider how far institutions like the Manchester New College were, even in the old days, "provincial" in any sense in which the term conveys reproach. After all, those were the days in which it produced men like Dr. DRUMMOND and Dr. MARTINEAU, the one in the front line of English scholarship, and the other in the front line of English philosophy. None of these points need discussion, for their own action shows that the men who have transferred the Manchester New College to Oxford acknowledge the supreme place of Oxford in the intellectual life of England, and admit that in working elsewhere they have worked at a comparative disadvantage. It is only to be hoped that the College will do as good work under the new advantages as it did under the old difficulties.

It will be interesting to watch the effect of Oxford upon the Manchester New College; but, perhaps, still more interesting to watch the effect of the Manchester New College upon Oxford. According to Mr. HUXLEY, Holland and Germany are "the only two countries in which, at the present time, professors of Theology are to be found whose tenure of their posts does not depend upon the results to which their inquiries may lead them." Now the tenure of the professorships in the Manchester New College has never depended upon that. Not, at all events, in theory. The case has not, we believe, arisen of a professor of that College adopting what are commonly called orthodox views,

and so testing the theory at its weakest point. But, apart from that hypothetical case, the professors have certainly had a perfectly free hand. They have been enabled to treat Theology like geology or any other science, and to work at it without any regard to ulterior consequences. "Interpret the Scripture like any other book," said the present MASTER of Balliol long ago, and that is exactly what they have always sought to do. They believe that in the long run that attitude will be favourable to religious faith, and certainly it would be a profound error to regard men like MARTINEAU as mere critics and destroyers. In intention, at all events, they are builders as well. Now the Manchester New College at Oxford will throw its doors open to all students. Its lectures will not in any sense be confined to young men preparing to be Unitarian ministers. Will the rigid school of Anglican Theology be able to hold its ground against such an institution? How if men of the intellectual rank of a PFLEIDERER or a REUSS were to be lecturing in the Manchester New College, while men of the intellectual rank of a PUSEY were lecturing at Christchurch? The position would be at least curious. On the other hand, what may be called, for want of a better word, Unitarianism, has its vulnerable sides as well as Anglicanism, and there will be plenty of sharp critics to point them out at Oxford. In many ways the new Oxonians will, no doubt, be at once teachers and taught, and we have every expectation that the policy of transporting the College to Oxford will turn out to be a benefit alike to Oxford and to the College.

