

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 1878:—*President*—W. N. Blair, C.E.; *Vice-Presidents*—Professor Hutton, W. Arthur, C.E.; *Council*—Professor Shand, G. Joachim, Professor Macgregor, Professor Scott, D. Petrie, E. Elliott, J. C. Thomson; *Hon. Sec.*—G. M. Thomson; *Hon. Treasurer*—H. Skey; *Auditor*—A. D. Lubecki.

The President delivered the following

ADDRESS.

It is difficult to gather exactly what may be expected from the retiring President of such an institution as the one which I now address. No doubt in the older institutions of other countries, which can boast of containing among their members numbers of individuals eminent for their attainments either in special departments of science or in a wide range of subjects, it is natural to expect that the President will have been selected on account of his ability to deal authoritatively with a particular subject, or to present a review of the latest results of scientific research and to point out their significance. It would be nothing less than presumption in such an one as myself to attempt either of these courses.

One who is debarred by the ceaseless pressure of other duties from conducting a course of independent enquiry, and who can do little more than skim the pages of a scientific journal amid the inconveniences of a coach journey or the difficulties of a lively railway carriage, though honoured by having been placed in the Presidential chair, can hardly on that account venture on so ambitious a flight.

Nor do I think that any sketchy reference to the subjects brought before the Society during the past year would be likely to be fraught with much either of interest or advantage. A considerable proportion of those present this evening heard those papers or lectures when read before the members of the Institution, for though it is true that in the early part of the session, when we first took possession of the new home of the Institute, many were slow to find their way into it, and the attendance was not so good as when the more centrally situated building was occupied, yet we have now so fully adopted our quarters in these halls of science that the fear is we have been too modest in our calculations of the space which would be required to give accommodation to the members of this Institute.

One of the considerations which led me to accept the office of President was that I felt that my having been selected for it was in some sort the assertion of a principle. Connecting the circumstance with the discussions which had shortly before prevailed, I did not think it vain or unjustifiable to conclude that, by this action, the members of the Institute generally were willing to have it understood that, whatever their opinions as to questions of detail and modes of operation, they, students of science as they are, acknowledged one great and beneficent First Cause, if I may not go further and believe that it is hereby testified that we have more still in common—viz., that, at least in its broad outlines and all-hallowing principles, the Christian Religion is held to be entirely consistent with all that nature has unfolded. I do not propose to make use of this occasion for the discussion of any of those questions which are held by many to bring the declarations of scripture into conflict with the declarations of the book of nature. Some of them I hold to be questions which ought never to have risen, which at least would never have attained the importance which has been attached to them if mutual respect and forbearance were more generally exercised, if there were not on the one hand oftentimes too strong an assertion of matters as being facts, which after all may be only