

Victoria Institute,

OR

Philosophical Society of Great Britain,

10, ADELPHI TERRACE, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

Nov 23

1875.

Hydeauke

I venture to send

a paragraph from a
London paper of today.

The circumstance will
do great harm in England
where Mr Proctor (it seems
misunderstood) works has
are very popular.

It would be of great value
if we could get a paper

upon the whole subject
from someone whom the
whole world would recognize
as an authority. The ~~of~~ ^{best} ~~best~~ ^{best} efforts would be used to
give it circulation, and the
outside of circulation of our
papers is I might almost
say ten times what it was
last year even.

Any suggestion would always
be welcomed from you, whether
on this or any other subject.

Yours very truly

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J. V. Tree
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OUR New York Correspondent, writing on the 13th inst., says:—Mr. Richard A. Proctor, the English astronomer, who is now in the United States on a second lecturing tour, has been taking advantage of his appearance before a Boston audience, to make what we call here a “new departure”:

“My present position,” says Professor Proctor, in a recent statement, “has indeed been reached by progress in one direction all the time; but as, in advancing steadily along a road, new prospects may come almost suddenly upon our view, so the steady progression of the student of science in a definite direction may lead to changes of view, which to others, who have not been following the same road, may appear sudden and surprising. Be this as it may, the views I now entertain on such subjects as the plurality of worlds, cosmic evolution, the supervision and control of the universe, the infinities amid which we are placed, and so forth, are altogether unlike those which I indicated in my ‘Other Worlds than Ours,’ and others of my earlier works.”

This exact “position” is to be indicated in the four Sunday evening lectures he has promised to deliver in the Horticultural Hall, Boston, the first of which, on the “Birth and Death of the World,” was given last Sunday. In this lecture he substantially acknowledges that his views of science are precisely those expressed by Tyndall in his Belfast address. He was surprised at the outburst of anger Prof. Tyndall’s views evoked, particularly when he contrasted their reception with the way similar views of his had been received in New York in 1873, and later at the Royal Institution, London. Mr. Proctor asks how this difference was to be explained, and says:—

“I conceive, simply, that common report had attributed to me certain definite religious opinions incompatible, it was thought, with the doctrine of evolution—at least, with the doctrine in its completest and, as I think, its only satisfactory form. It has thus become my duty—in mere loyalty to truth—not to indicate what is my precise belief in matters religious (for that, as I take it, can never be the duty, if even it can ever be the right, of the science worker), but to reaffirm my views respecting the great doctrine of cosmic evolution which has become within the last few years the touchstone of scientific men, even as it has become one of the ‘conquered stand-points’ of science. I shall only say, in way of further preface, that this doctrine no more seems to me than it does to Tyndall—and no more to Tyndall than it does to me—opposed to the religious sentiment in the nature of man. That religious sentiment, like the desire for knowledge, is a phase of the energy of nature. We may say of it what Tyndall has said of science, ‘its development is as necessary and as irresistible as the motion of the tides or the flowing of the Gulf Stream.’ Its domain is, however, apart from the domain of science—the region of knowledge is commanded by the one, the region of emotion by the other. Indeed, if religion is in any way associated with science, it is in this—it teaches the man of science the duty of loyalty, and that his allegiance is due to the truth as he sees it.”

In commenting editorially upon this lecture, the *Tribune* called Mr. Proctor “a convert of science.” Mr. Proctor writes objecting to the inference that the “new departure” was a sudden movement. “My views in science,” he says, “have undergone no sudden change. The germs of my present views can be recognised in my earliest works, and have since been gradually developed to their present, which is, I trust, their final form. This is true of biological evolution as well as of cosmical evolution.”