

sides a number of separate societies, "concentration was needed in one association in order to give more systematic direction to scientific inquiry, and that the first thing needed would be to procure reports on the state and the desiderata of the several branches of science." Babbage, at the Oxford meeting in 1832, "expressed the general feeling that meetings should be held in places likely to bring science into contact with that practical knowledge on which the wealth of the country depends." There is also no doubt that in the course of half a century the British Association has done a very extensive service to science in the direction of supplying the wants which its early founders clearly defined, and in bringing about that concerted action and scientific co-operation which so highly distinguishes the great academies and universities of France and Germany.¹ It has done so without altogether destroying that peculiar feature which characterises not only the scientific but all the forms of the higher mental work of this country. In no country has the voice of public criticism been so free to unveil the shortcomings which attach to all—even the highest—human effort. In England there has existed for a long time the habit of promoting advance in every department by the cultiva-

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Babbage, Henry, Barlow, South, Faraday, Murdoch, and Christie; nor need we have any hesitation in adding that within the last fifteen years not a single discovery or invention of prominent interest has been made in our colleges, and that there is not one man in all the eight universities of Great Britain who is at present known to be engaged in any train of original research" ('Quarterly Review,' vol. xliii. p. 327, 1830). He then suggests "an

association of our nobility, clergy, gentry, and philosophers" (p. 342).

¹ The British Association has from the beginning had two features which did not exist in the German society—first, the Reports on the position of various branches of science, delivered by specialists of the highest ability; and, secondly, the Committees, which undertake to do special work requiring concerted action.