

deny any and everything, no matter by what evidence supported, at the mere nod of modern science, which imperiously lays down what is and what is not to be accepted as truth. For not only is this liberty conceded to its disciples, but there is forced upon them the necessity of abjuring every belief which is not of a certain type and tendency. It is, in truth, a merciless tyranny under the spurious name of Liberalism and freedom of thought.

Again, *we should not reject old truths because they are old, nor embrace new principles as being therefore true.* There is a disposition in these latter days to look with contempt upon everything that is old and which has upon it the stamp of time. This is sufficient reason with many, especially of the advanced school of thought, for the rejection of truths whose birth-time dates in the ages gone by. Unless there is about them an air of freshness indicating that they are the product of modern minds, they are rejected as necessarily effete and obsolete, and unworthy even of examination. While, on the other hand, theories and principles will be accepted with a wonderful alacrity, if they have just emanated from the imagination of some renowned advanced thinker. They are *so* fresh, *so* original, *so* philosophical, that they at once commend themselves to the scientific mind and are immediately and unhesitatingly embraced.

And here lurks a danger for us. We should not, if we are wise, accept truth *solely upon authority*, be it old or new. It would be higher wisdom to be more sceptical (in the best sense of the word), and to receive only that which has reasonable evidence as its credentials. Its reception should be the result of a thorough examination of its claims to *be* truth. But often we forego this scrutiny. We too readily accept without question that which comes to us from others, if only it have the inspiration of a distinguished name. With native modesty, we ask no questions, we accept it, not because we ourselves have good grounds for believing it, but solely because it has been held by others. We use too much the passive side of the intellect, whose acquisitions are of very little value. The less we admit through that door the better. We hold most firmly, and make our own that only, upon which the mind has exerted its analytic force and discriminating power, and which has stood the test of a thorough and impartial examination. Even truths which are generally accepted it will repay us to examine by the clearer views and firmer grasp in which such a process will result. And still more necessary is it to subject new truths to a searching investigation. Novelty is so apt to bias the judgment and cause it to give greater weight to what makes its appearance in court for the first time than is legitimately its due. It requires careful sifting, and submission to the most crucial tests. Whether a truth be old or new, the only ground on which a rational acceptance can be based, is the existence of such evidence as to its credentials as shall force conviction home upon the mind which has given it an impartial examination.

Farther, *we should not be deceived by the superficiality of the present age.* The literature and science of the present century are not distinguished for their depth or profoundness. Writers and scientists there are of brilliant parts and undoubted genius, but they cannot in general be characterised as men of deep thought or strong, intensive grasp of mind. And as a consequence we find that beauty of language and an artistic finish of style take the place of sound reasoning and solid argument, and that followers are won by metaphor rather than by logic. Let us not mistake one for the other; nor allow what pleases the fancy to influence the judgment, more than what carries conviction to the understanding. The former will prevail with the unthinking, the latter only has weight with the considerate and thoughtful mind.

Once more, there should be a *discriminating sympathy with progress, combined with a generous acknowledgment of what the past has accomplished.* That the world moves is a well recognized fact. But it was equally true in the past, and we expect it to be so in the future. So it is with truth. There *has* been progress in the past, it continues still, it *will* continue. No one will ever imagine that the whole field has been explored and all its treasures brought to light. No one will ever delude himself with the belief that truth is a fixed quantity, which has been discovered and handed down to us by the sages of the past, and which we in the present have only to passively receive. We may not indeed underestimate what they have accomplished, yet we must remember that, however

much we are indebted to them, *we have a work to do for ourselves.* They indeed have put us in a position to prosecute the work to advantage. We may reap the benefit of their experience, we may be guided by our predecessors, but we must not be their slaves. We enter into their labors, while we cannot rest in any of them.

The past has not done, and could not do, the work of the present. There is a present duty to fulfil, an impulse to obey which urges us on into the possibilities of the future. "Truth in its ideal entirety is a process of becoming, the far reaching issues of which are most dimly seen—it is a movement towards a result which can never be wholly reached." *Forward* is the cry which will never cease to ring in the ears of the inquirer for truth. He is borne on by a stream which never for a moment halts. Stopping places are not found in the pathway of truth. Hence we find that changes are persistently occurring, that theories and systems, and schools rise and fall, as new aspects of truth are discovered and recognized. But progress is ever marked by movement and change; and so from century to century the outposts are advanced into the illimitable future. The great tidal waves of human thought and feeling and action sweep onward with the revolution of the ages, each succeeding wave rising higher than the preceding, and leaving its imperishable record which shall be deciphered by the generations yet to be, who may trace the intellectual progress of our race.

But, let us not disparage the past. It ill becomes us to decry that which has made the present to be what it is. While we should not overlook present duty and possibilities, we should not forget that the centuries which have gone have gathered vast treasures which have come down in all their fulness, a rich legacy, to our own day. Yet it *may be* that this is but an earnest of what is to be accomplished. There lies before us much that is unfathomed and unknown. With what spirit shall we enter upon its exploration, and by what principles shall we be guided? Shall we leave the trodden highway and strike out in unknown paths, resolved at all hazards to forsake the beaten track, deeming it better and wiser, and a proof of originality of mind, if we lose sight entirely of the footprints of others? Shall we not rather avail ourselves of the experience of other men, and, while not following them slavishly, be guided by the deep-drawn outlines which it has been their privilege to lay down in the chart of knowledge? We need take nothing, however, on mere authority. If we are not satisfied with the soundings of others, let us verify them for ourselves. Perhaps we shall come back and proclaim "all right," and if so, we shall then hold with greater confidence the truth which has been delivered to us. And if, again, we do not find it as indicated on the chart, if we find a discrepancy or defect, we shall have added to the store of knowledge—to its accuracy or extent.

I have no sympathy with the shallow, self-styled liberalism and advanced thought of the present day, which is imposing itself upon superficial thinkers, and the weak-minded, and which is so much applauded by many. But *I believe in progress*—that new light and clearer is being shed upon the pathway—that the shadows are lifting from many a mountain top, and that truth, but dimly seen by former ages, is emerging into clear-cut and well-defined outline in the horizon of the present. But, at the same time, I believe *just as firmly* in what the past has done, and reverence as sincerely her sages who have transmitted to us such a rich legacy. The cry against the past is unnatural and foolish. Well will it be for the present if she proves a worthy successor of the ages that are gone, and use aright her glorious patrimony. What of truth belonged to the past she bequeaths to us to-day, unchanged and unchangeable. All things else waste and perish. Pillars of granite and temples of marble—all by slow process crumble and decay. But not so with truth. It is ever living, and while the dead shell in which it is enclosed drops off and perishes, the inner kernel retains for ever its freshness and vitality.

*Error must die, and they who love her most,  
And suck the poison from her venomous lips,  
Will find her vaunted strength an empty boast,  
And share the horrors of her last eclipse.*

*But truth is strong, and worthy of our trust,  
And truth shall stand when time no more shall be,  
And man is levelled to his native dust,  
For God is truth to all eternity.*

We are called to a great and glorious work—to build

upon the foundations laid by the toilers of the past, and to preserve and defend—if not to enlarge—our sacred heritage. The times are perilous. Our intellectual struggle is going on, and we must look forward to be combatants. It is a battle to be fought with all earnestness and watchfulness—a single hasty or false step may bring unretrievable disaster. *The present is our training time.* Let weapons be sharpened and harness girded on. Let the mind be braced for the conflict, and every advantage secured that will aid us in the day of trial. It is oftener the previous discipline and preparation, than the momentary exercise of courage that win the day. With rusty weapons our blows will be wasted, with empty guns our ordnance will be useless and an encumbrance. We have everything to encourage us. We have our faces towards the dawn, and fuller and clearer will shine the light of truth as we march on. With lofty aims, and a sincere love of the truth, holding it dearer than gain or glory or life, be it ours to prosecute the work in a sincere, humble, and reverent spirit, and our efforts shall not be in vain.

#### NARROW ESCAPES.—A DREAM.

The writer's brother, William Mackay, a native of Thurso, Scotland, successively Ensign, Lieutenant, Lieutenant and Adjutant, and Captain of the 3rd regiment of Foot, besides the escapes common to fellow-soldiers in the many battles in which he was engaged, when the bullets in quick succession laid low in agony and death dear comrade and fellow-soldier, on the right hand and on the left—or, whizzing past to leave similar woeful results behind—had some escapes, though they did not occur in the actual battle, particularly noticeable. At one time, in Spain, when two or three officers and himself were together conversing, a bombshell descended close up to them, but, instead of exploding in its usual manner, which to them, from its nearness, would in all likelihood be death, it bounded past them entire, as if receiving its commission from heaven to do no harm. At another time, during the investment of Bayonne, in his quarters for the night, after the firing on both sides for the day had ceased, just as he had risen from his seat, and had gone to a by-room to attend to some trivial matter, a cannon ball, a random shot, came in at one side of the house, passed through the back of the chair on which he had been sitting, and out through the house on the opposite side. At yet another time, while the fleet conveying the troops was becalmed in the Bay of Biscay, he and a number of officers went off in a boat to bathe. While occupied swimming about, those on board-ship with a spy-glass saw the head of a huge shark rise above the water, at a short distance beyond the swimmers, and knowing what the rapid result would be, at once through a trumpet orders were given to come instantly on board, otherwise the fleet would go away without them. To men accustomed to military discipline this was enough. With all the speed possible they made their way back. But the subject of these remarks, being farthest off, was last to arrive—and as his legs were coming in over the side of the boat, up to them, that moment, came the jaws of the monster. Saved again.

The fleet carried the troops and him to Canada, to aid in defending the country against an unfair and unnatural attack. The 9,000 veterans who, in the Spanish peninsula and South of France—fighting with Napoleon's Marshals, under Wellington, so often conquered—fighting with their brothers of the States, in 1814, did not cover themselves with fresh laurels. Amongst all that can be said in explanation one thing is sure, that He who rules in the armies of earth as well as in the armies of heaven, and can carry out his designs, and give ultimate deliverance, as much by withholding success for a time, as by giving continued success, did not employ the influences necessary for immediate success. During part of the time of his remaining in Canada, he lived in Toronto, then York, in the house of his uncle, Chief Justice Campbell.

The Adjutant of the "Bufs" had another narrow escape, not from the destruction of the body merely, but from the destruction of the body and soul for ever. Under the religious training of his parental home he was not only kept free from open vice, but learned to show an outward respect to the things of eternal moment; and sometimes became the subject of religious impressions. After entering the army the impressions were effaced—and amidst the atmosphere of thorough worldly aims, scepticism and infidelity, at