

"Although the position be good, *oportet discentem credere* [a man who is learning must be content to believe what he is told], yet it must be coupled with this, *oportet edoctum judicare* [when he has learned it, he must exercise his judgment and see whether it be worthy of belief], for disciples do owe unto masters only a temporary belief and a suspension of their own judgment until they be fully instructed, and not an absolute resignation or perpetual captivity."¹

"Those who have read of everything," says Locke, "are thought to understand everything too; but it is not always so. Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is *thinking makes what we read ours*. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections; *unless we chew them over again*, they will not give us strength and nourishment. The memory may be stored, but the judgment is little better, and the stock of knowledge not increased, by being able to repeat what others have said, or produce the arguments we have found in them."²

It unfortunately happens, that those who are firmly convinced of the accuracy of their opinions, will never take the pains of examining the basis on which they are built. They who do not feel the darkness will never look for the light."³ "If in any point we have attained to certainty," says a profound thinker of our own time, who has gone to his rest, "we make no further inquiry on that point, because inquiry would be useless, or perhaps dangerous. *The doubt must intervene before the investigation can begin*. Here then," he continues, "we have the act of doubting as the originator, or, at all events, the necessary antecedent of all progress. Here we have that scepticism, the very name of which is an abomination to the ignorant, because it disturbs their lazy and complacent minds; *because it troubles their cherished superstitions*; because it imposes on them the fatigue of inquiry; and because it rouses even sluggish understandings to ask if things are as they are commonly supposed, and if all is really true which they, from their childhood, have been taught to believe."⁴

"EVIDENCE," says Locke, "is that by which alone every man is (and should be) taught to regulate his assent, who is then and then only in the right way when he follows it."⁵

But there exists a class of men whose understandings are, so to speak, cast into a mould, and fashioned just to the size of a received hypothesis. They are not affected by proofs, which might convince them that events have not happened quite in the same manner that they have decreed within themselves that they have. To such persons, indeed, may be commended the fine observation of Fontenelle, that the number of those who believe in a system already established in the world does not, in the least, add to its credibility, but that the number of those who doubt it has a tendency to diminish it.⁶

To the want of reverence for antiquity—or, in other words, tradition—with which I have been freely charged, I shall reply in a few words. "Until it is recognized," says one

¹ Bacon, Works (Advancement of Learning), edit. Spedding, 1857, vol. iii., p. 290.

² Conduct of the Understanding, § 20 (Locke's Works, edit. 1823, vol. iii., p. 241).

³ Buckle, History of Civilisation in England, edit. 1868, vol. i., p. 335.

⁴ *Ibid.* Locke observes, "There is nothing more ordinary than children receiving into their minds propositions from their parents, nurses, or those about them, which, being fastened by degrees, are at last (equally whether true or false) riveted there by long custom and education, beyond all possibility of being pulled out again" (Essay on the Human Understanding, chap. xx, § 9).

⁵ Conduct of the Understanding, § 84.

⁶ Cited approvingly by Dugald Stewart in his "Philosophy of the Mind," vol. ii., p. 351.

⁷ The Rev. A. F. A. Woodford in the *Freemason*, *passim*.