

• have least need to make up our minds, and which present the greatest difficulties to the inquirer after truth.

Take, as an example, the forming of a judgment on our fellow men. We might perhaps say that the formation of such opinions is not very often a binding duty; and, when we do form them, this should be done with much care and deliberation. It is related of Queen Elizabeth that, at the end of her long reign, she was able to say that she had never formed a judgment as to the guilt of an accused person upon the first reports that reached her. It was a principle worthy of that great Queen. On the other hand, it is a sign of weakness and incapacity when persons are ready and eager to judge their fellow men on the first testimony that comes under their notice; especially we should be sorry to add, when the judgment is unfavourable.

May we not, then, say that here, as in so many cases, humility and devotion, lowliness and painstaking, are fundamental qualifications.

iii. Let us now see whether there are any approved practical counsels which may in this matter be our guide.

1. And we venture to begin with a very simple piece of advice, which, however, is often greatly needed. It is this: *On many points be content to have no opinion at all.* The philosopher Locke well remarks that "nobody is under an obligation to know everything"; and yet the ordinary run of fairly educated men seem to think that they ought to be ashamed of being ignorant of any subject whatsoever. If we recall what we have heard in places of social intercourse, where men are accustomed to interchange opin-

ions, we shall remember how men, on every side, are ready to give the most distinct and assured opinions of each and every topic that may happen to come up, no matter how little they may really know of the subjects under discussion. Here and there an exceptionally modest or thoughtful man might be found, ready to confess: "I know very little about that question, and I am under no necessity to pronounce upon it;" but he would be an exception. Yet there is no disgrace in being ignorant of many things—especially of those things with which our own work in life is little concerned. It is, therefore, the part of wisdom and common sense, as well as of humility, to be contented in many cases, to form no opinion at all.

It is not of course intended to advise that men should refrain from forming opinions when they have sufficient opportunities and means of doing so; much less that in cases in which they are required to act, they should act blindly, without considering the grounds and principles upon which rational beings should base all their plans and actions. But what we mean is this, that where no clear duty requires us to form an opinion, and where, at the same time, we have no great opportunity of judging, we may refuse to form an opinion on subjects which are matters of controversy, without having any reason for being ashamed of not arriving at any settled opinion on such subjects. There is no folly, no stupidity, no cowardice—on the contrary there may be the truest intelligence and courage in saying: "I have not in this case formed an opinion, because I have had no opportu-