

our own experience and observation, and in many cases we are dependent upon the testimony of others for our full or further intelligence of that which is within the range of our own observation and experience. I may have a pain in my heart or head. I am dependent on the testimony of others for the cause or the removal of it. I may witness a remarkable phenomenon in the earth or sky, and be dependent on the testimony of others for the explanation of it. Whenever I wish to extend the limits of my own knowledge in any direction, I am dependent in some way or other on the testimony of others. To discredit testimony therefore in general is to perpetrate an act of moral or intellectual suicide ; and to decline to act upon it physically may even be followed by results that would be tantamount to actual suicide. Just as faith, therefore, is one of the prime essentials of life without which society could not exist, so is testimony a prerequisite without which faith would languish and come to nought. If testimony were universally unreliable, the fool only would rely upon it. If it could not be trusted, who would not cease to trust it, that is, cease to believe? The consequence would be that in this domain a condition of absolute scepticism would ensue. No man would believe his neighbour, and society would be resolved into a mass of incoherent and antagonistic atoms.

It is plain that such a condition would be contrary to the essential principles of our constitution. If we can with any truth reason from results to causes, we may with confidence affirm that this is not the condition under which we were intended to exist. Nature intended us to be dependent upon testimony for the advancement of our own knowledge and happiness, and intended us, in this as in other things, to refuse the evil and to choose the good. It is part of our duty, therefore, to discriminate in our use of this as of other things. We have the faculty of choice, and we forbear to exercise it at our peril, to our disadvantage and our loss.

Though testimony, however, manifestly extends to every department of human knowledge, the only branch of it with which we need concern ourselves at present is historical testimony, and