

their life's end. Whatever else they may think of being and doing, let them do nothing whereby they shall forfeit their self-respect. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." At the same time we ought not to encourage a nervous and excessive scrupulousness which sees evil and mischief in many things which are perfectly harmless, and which is so afflicted by doubts and fears as to the lawfulness of the most common and necessary employments of human life that it can hardly enter upon them without a sense of guilt. Such over-scrupulousness is not evidence of a tender and healthy conscience, but of one which is morbid and perhaps perverted. There are real sins enough without adding unreal ones to the number. There are quite enough deflections from the straight road without inventing imaginary ones. There was great good sense in the reply given by an English Nonconformist minister, when he was told he ought not to smoke. He said he found it quite difficult enough to keep the commandments which God had promulgated. He found none which said, "Thou shalt not smoke." He had no mind to add to the number. If a man sincerely believes any particular calling, such as the manufacture of tobacco or of beer, to be mischievous or useless, then he does well to abstain from it. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." But let him not condemn his neighbour who is unable to perceive the value of his scruples.

Let it not be imagined for a moment that in guarding against over-scrupulousness, we are wishing to encourage unscrupulousness. If the one is a disease, the other is a sin. If the former proceeds from a morbid conscience, the latter comes from a darkened conscience and a perverted will. To refer to our previous remarks, no man can preserve his self-

respect in life and work who does not hear the voice of this inward guide. And, if we are really bent on discovering what work is lawful and useful, we have many aids towards the conclusion which we seek. We have our own conscience, we have the Bible, we have the conscience of the society in which we live. And, although we must never suffer this to override the testimony of our own conscience, we may often receive light from the light of our fellow-men. If we pay proper respect to these guides, if we lay to heart the lessons taught by experience—our own and that of those who have gone before us, and of those who are living with us—we are little likely to go wrong in our choice.

2. A second rule, and one which is very closely connected with the first, requires that our labour should not only be lawful, but that it should also be *useful* to ourselves and others. Lamartine, who about forty years ago, was a very elegant writer of the French language, and a very indifferent President of the French Republic, declared that "it is a matter of very little importance *what sort* of work we are engaged in," provided we do really labour.

Excluding from this notion all unlawful work, we may admit that there is a small measure of truth in the statement. A man who really works will very soon find out whether he is doing well or ill; whether, in short, his work is producing any thing. He will scarcely go on for ever weaving cobwebs or drawing water in a sieve. He will want to have something to show for his labour, and therefore it is far better that a man should get to work, even if he does little good by his work; for he will certainly find his way to useful labour much sooner by work than by idleness.

3. Further, the decision of our work for life may and should be determined, in part, by our personal en-