

rules. The first Buonaparte, Napoleon the Great, was the representative of the opinion out of which his power arose; but he was at last crushed by opinion, by the public opinion of Europe, expressed in the forces by which he was defeated. The second Buonaparte was the creature of public opinion—wide-spread, if unintelligent—and fell when he was no longer supported by its voice. As we have said, the exceptions to the principle are more apparent than real.

We repeat, therefore, it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this subject—the formation of opinion. Let us reflect that wrong opinions must necessarily lead to wrong actions, must, in fact, make all our life wrong. Nor will a man's conscientiousness hinder the evil effects of such conduct. On the contrary, in such a case, the more conscientious men are, the more mischievous they may be; for, as we have heard, doing what we think right may be one thing, and doing what is right may be quite another.

2. As regards the general principles to be observed in the formation of opinion, we need only say that the two great elements here, as in the acquisition of knowledge, must always be humility and devotion. By humility, we mean the sense of our own fallibility, the knowledge of the enormous difficulty of arriving at truth, the fear of going wrong in our judgments. By devotion, we mean the steadfast resolve to spare no pains in endeavouring to ascertain what is true, and right, and good, to yield to no sloth that would hinder us in our search after truth, to take as much pains in the pursuit of it as though we were striving after something upon which our happiness, our very life, depended. We must buy the truth. We must go after it, as he who sought for the goodly pearl, and parted with all that he had, in order that he might

buy it. Does this seem too large a demand to make upon ordinary persons who have to form opinions on a great many subjects? If this should seem to be the case, let it be remembered that it is impossible to form opinions that shall be of any value on any other principles. The labour bestowed upon the search is the exact measure of the value of the result. A man's opinions are worth exactly what they have cost him. If we take them up without reflection, even if they are nearly true, they will be of comparatively little value. On the other hand, if we go astray after the most earnest and laborious efforts—a thing which may happen to us—these opinions so acquired, even if only partially true, will yet have an immense practical value for us, because they will be real. They will give definiteness to our life; nay more, they will help to lead us out of their own imperfections and errors into a fuller truth.

We are touching here upon one of the reasons which make it so much more difficult to form right opinions in our more advanced years than in our youth. It is more difficult to form those habits of thought which are necessary for the purpose, and which we have neglected to acquire. On this point Locke speaks with great emphasis. He says: "It is hardly possible for men who have grown up in thoughtless ignorance to change in this respect. 'What then!' he asks, 'can grown men never be impressed or enlarged in their understandings? I say not so, but this I think I may say, that it will not be done without industry and application, which will require more time and pains than grown men, settled in their course of life, will allow to it, and therefore very seldom is done.'"<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> "Conduct of the Understanding," § 6. Principles; Compare Büttler, "Analogy," i., c. 5.