

—and fell when he was no longer sustained by its voice. Such is the power of opinion.

We repeat, therefore, it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this subject—the foundation of opinion. Wrong opinions must necessarily lead to wrong actions, must, in fact, make all our life wrong; and this even when we are acting conscientiously. Nay, we may even say that oftentimes the more conscientious men are, the more mischievous they may be. Few will be found to question the religious sincerity of Philip II. of Spain or Queen Mary Tudor of England, yet the evils which they inflicted on church and state in Spain and England are incalculable. It is one thing to do that we think is right; and quite another to do what is right.

ii. Passing on to the consideration of the principles to be observed in the formation of opinion, we should say that here, as in the acquisition of knowledge, the two great qualifications must always be *humility* and *devotion*. By *humility* we mean the sense of our own fallibility, the knowledge of the great difficulty of arriving at truth and the fear of falling into error. By *devotion* we mean the steadfast resolve to spare no pains in our endeavor to discover what is true and right and good, to yield to no temptation of 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 on which our happiness and even our own 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 be able to buy it. Does such a requirement seem to make too large a demand upon ordinary men and women? Well, at least we may say that on no other terms can opinions be formed that shall be of any permanent value. The labour expended on the search is the exact measure of the value of the result. A man's opinions are worth to him exactly what they have cost him. If we take them up without criticism or reflection, even if they should happen to be mostly 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—our opinions, acquired in this manner, will yet have an immense practical value for us because they will be real; and, even when partially mistaken, they will help to lead us out of our imperfections and errors into fuller truth.

We should indeed bear in mind, in this connection, that different kinds of opinion make different demands upon our mental energies. Thus it is comparatively easy—as we might almost anticipate—to form judgments in regard to the commonest actions of our life. Our every day duties are ordinarily plain enough. "The wayfaring man, though a fool" need not err in these. The great moral and religious distinctions by which men's actions are determined are, for the most part, plain enough. If we go beyond these, if we will judge and act (as we sometimes have to do) in matters of difficulty, we must be ready to undergo greater labour. As a general rule, the matters which are least imperative as duties are those upon which we