

cipal thing, therefore get wisdom : and with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. iv. 5. 7).

No doubt there is a kind of knowledge which puffeth up, that kind of knowledge which is sought for the gratifying of a morbid curiosity, as far removed from the noble ardour of the pursuit of truth as the pale light of the moon struggling through masses of clouds is from the full glory of the sun ; no more like the love of truth and wisdom than the vulgar inquisitiveness which would lead a man to read his neighbour's letters is like an enthusiasm for the highest form of literature.*

There is a kind of knowledge that puffeth up, namely that kind which is sought for the purpose of ostentation, which is seldom real knowledge, and which at any rate is acquired without any sincere desire that it should be genuine and true. Such students—if the name may be conceded to them—would rather have a false or corrupted kind of knowledge, if they could thereby make a greater display of their own superiority than they could by having possession of the truth. If this kind of thing can be called by the name of knowledge,

*Some good remarks on this subject occur in an article in the *Spectator* of Nov. 6, 1886, on "Mr. Balfour's Good Fairy." "We can imagine no worse name for that love of truth in the wide sense, which is the master impulse of human wisdom, than curiosity. Wisdom knows how much there is which a man ought not to pry into, which respect for his own nature forbids him to pry into, but you could hardly name anything 'insatiable curiosity' which renounced the gratification of trying to know anything whatever that it was possible to know, however unlawful the means, and however unworthy the end. Indeed, far from thinking even the higher speculation the noblest of all lives, except in the rare cases in which it is a man's true calling, the one thing in which he can help his fellow men, we should say that every pursuit to which a strong sense of duty drives a man, even if it be, as it sometimes is, the political life, is a higher and happier pursuit than the mere gratification even of the love of knowledge."

then indeed it must be condemned and detested ; and it must be shunned most carefully by those who have the greatest care for the diffusion of that which is knowledge indeed.

There is in some minds a kind of confused notion that the increase of knowledge, especially of the knowledge of nature, tends to irreligion, or even to atheism. If religious men have allowed such thoughts respecting knowledge, we can hardly wonder that the enemies of religion have so far improved upon them as to declare that "ignorance is the parent of devotion." If this were truly so, then indeed the worst things that have been said of religion would be true. But Scripture, reason and experience alike condemn the imputation. Ignorance is, doubtless, the parent of superstition ; but superstition is not only a counterfeit of true devotion, but its deadliest foe. God's service is a reasonable service. He is Himself truth and light, and just in proportion as we live in truth and in light do we live in Him.

And if it be said that knowledge of any kind has a tendency to produce irreligion, we will answer with Lord Bacon :* "It is an assured truth, and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial knowledge of philosophy (he is speaking of natural philosophy) may incline the mind of man to atheism, but a further proceeding therein doth bring the mind back again to religion,"† and he truly

*"Advancement of Learning." Works, (Ellis & Spedding) iii. 267.

†The same sentiment is similarly expressed in his Essay (xvi.) "Of Atheism." "It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further ; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity."