

are convinced that human life is insufficient for universal science, yet the puppy of the present time is one who knows every thing, or says he does so, which with him is much the same thing. He holds this indeed as a point of honour, and is so tenacious of it, that the most respectful mode of setting him right, is construed into a rude contradiction, which he is bound to resent; and hence it is that so many argumentative positions are now-a-days adjusted by means of a bet, or a case of pistols.

An unhappy accompaniment of unacknowledged ignorance is a certain degree of confidence, which, in matters of this kind, is peculiarly offensive and forms one of the justest objects of ridicule. On the contrary, it is one of the happiest consequences of a legitimate desire for knowledge, that it lessens a man's confidence, because the more he knows the more he finds it necessary to be unassuming, and hence, in company, we universally find that the best informed men are the least presumptuous, and that all that disturbs social conversation and renders it useless, as to the purposes of knowledge, arises from the pert forwardness of those who know nothing, or but a little at second hand, and who are permitted to deliver their opinions only because modern politeness requires that they should not be desired to hold their tongues.

The consciousness that knowledge is difficult to be acquired, and that the employment of the longest life can give but the advancement of a few steps, would cure this propensity to reach the end without availing of the means. "A little learning," says Pope, "is a dangerous thing"; and it is more dangerous in our days than in his, because superficial knowledge is more easily acquired, and from the forward habits of the age