

puberty—what prospect is there for the clearest truth, as against the stupidest falsehood which may have theretofore, in some way or other, got into your head?

I am not blaming you, although for like offence you are constantly turning up your intellectual nose at other people. I am not even saying that you, in your individual list of beliefs, have subscribed to a single false one. All that I am intending is to "beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it *possible* that you may be mistaken"—in some small but specified one of these beliefs, if you cannot admit as to two of them; it will do you good as a commencement. You can look back over the little history you know, and grant that had other people doubted in any smallest measure their inerrancy, oceans of blood, and infinitudes of misery, would have been spared; but for yourself you see no lesson there, for were they not all wrong, and is it not clear that you are right? Ah! there's the rub, *you* are right—be it a "melancholy notion" or not, "all generations of men *were* lost and wrong, only that your little section of a generation might be saved and right." You and your "ultimate infallible *credo* are *not* bound for the ditch. I pray you, do try and remember that all these poor Schweidnitz fellows had likewise, every one of them, seen a clear route across the Pagan and Mahometan stupidities, but nevertheless were plainly, as we now see it, every one of them, ticketed for the ditch. Aye, and did veritably go there, they and their hypotheses, and are now plainly *not* right. And when you come to think of it, why should you be infallible, and all the ditch occupants, and perhaps a large majority of those still outside of it, be indubitably wrong? Tell me that you have studied more deeply, more diligently, and with greater ability than they, and I shall accept your answer. Tell me merely that you "know" that you are right, and I shall merely translate your "know" into

"my father told me," and wonder that you did not know enough to do that for yourself.

Will you let me tell you something. Here is a fundamental and, you think, easily solvable question, viz., that relating to toleration of contrary opinion, religious or other. Let me shortly review it for you.

Plato<sup>(a)</sup> prescribed thus for unbelievers: "Let those who have been made what they are only from want of understanding, and not from malice or an evil nature, be placed by the judge in the house of reformation, and ordered to suffer imprisonment during a period of not less than five years. And in the meantime let them have no intercourse with the other citizens, except with members of the nocturnal council, and with them let them converse touching the improvement of their souls' health. And when the time of their imprisonment has expired, if any of them be of sound mind, let him be restored to sane company, but if not, and if he be condemned a second time, let him be punished with death." *Plato was wrong.*

Pagan Emperors (knowing that *they* were right) persecuted and put to death thousands of Christians, and Christians did the same for Pagans in proportion to their power. *Pagans and Christians were wrong.*

Roman Catholics (knowing that *they* were right) persecuted and put to death thousands of Protestants; and Protestants did the same thing for Catholics in proportion to their power. Said Canon Farrar<sup>(b)</sup>: "The idea of man's universal rights, of universal freedom and liberty of conscience, was alien to the views of the whole ancient world. Indeed it is of quite modern introduction. It was not known even in Christendom, not even in the Protestant part of it, till the seventeenth century." *Catholics and Protestants, including Calvin, Knox, etc., etc., were wrong.*

(a) Laws, X., 909; Jowett's Translation, IV., 421  
History of Free Thought, Note 15.