

intelligence, which has awakened a spirit of intense enquiry in every department of knowledge. The schoolmaster and the missionary are abroad. The Press is scattering the thick fogs of ignorance—reflecting the light of heaven upon the darkest spheres of human existence. With this diffusion of light has come a quickening and intensifying of intellectual life. The slumber of centuries is broken. Researches after truth are prosecuted with untiring zeal; and yet speculation far outstrips research. Not only does the world visibly move, but it moves with greater rapidity than ever before. Events which used to occupy a century are crowded into a year. “Revolutions and wars hardly cast their shadows before them, till they are upon us; reminding us of those sudden squalls at sea, which the mariner just discerns darkening in the distance, and then, before he can reef his sails, they are lashing into fury the waves on which his vessel is gliding.” Though it may not be free from its attendant evils, I hail this diffusion of knowledge, and the spirit of enquiry which it evokes, as one of the mighty forces that are lifting the world up to a higher plane of existence. Far better the questionings of doubt, than the unthinking credulity of superstition. Enquiry and examination must always precede intelligent belief. The highest faith is born of doubt. The calmest rest succeeds the toilsome struggle. Yet this condition of things has its shadows. It creates a tendency to superficiality. There is a wider diffusion of knowledge; but little thorough mastery of subjects. We dip into a great many subjects; but not very deeply into any. “These shallow draughts intoxicate the brain.” Not that I would approve of the course of the professor, who spent his whole life studying Greek nouns, and said, when he was dying, “I meant well, but I undertook too much. I see now I should have confined myself to the dative case.” As one of the shadows which bear witness to the existence of the light, we have a great deal of affectation of intelligence and independence. Few things are more contemptible than the shallow pretensions of conceited ignorance, treating opinions and arguments, which it never had the brains to comprehend, with scornful disdain as old foggy notions that it has examined and cast away as unworthy of their regard. You all remember the fable of the crow, that when it saw an eagle swooping down and carrying away a lamb, made a similar effort to carry off a large ram, and got entangled in the wool, and caught for his pains. Well, there is in our day a great deal of affectation of independence and intelligence, and contempt for old things because they are old. “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” Where the sum of our knowledge is small, the circle that bounds it and separates it from the unknown seems also small. But as the circle of our knowledge widens, the