

ideas forming an argument ; such an operation necessarily implying the actual presence of the ideas before the will is exerted." This doctrine is also sanctioned by the statements and opinions of metaphysicians of the very highest name. But notwithstanding these very great authorities, the few following facts are, with the utmost possible humility and deference, submitted as some ground for entertaining a strong suspicion, that the mind does actually possess some influence in directing, at least to a certain degree, the current of ideas that are continually passing through it, and consequently, in affecting, more or less, the opinions which it forms on a certain description of subjects.

The simple circumstance, that we can, by a certain process of mind, recall to our recollection, things and ideas which we had forgotten, and do not at present remember, is a proof that we possess some such power. This is undoubtedly a voluntary operation of mind ; for we actually set our attention to seek for the idea we had lost or forgotten, and continue to turn over all the furniture with which our memory is stored till we meet with the thought which we are in quest of. It is very true, and often happens, that we cannot immediately summon up the idea we are in quest of. We cannot instantly command its presence in the imagination. We cannot, like the magician, stamp with our foot, and instantly obtain what we want. But such is the power of recollection which the mind possesses, that we generally succeed at last in recalling the fugitive thoughts. We may be some seconds, even some minutes, on the rack ; we may even spend hours in the painful search ; nay, days may pass away before we succeed in calling up the lost and valued idea. And if no record of it exists, it is possible, but only barely possible, that it may be lost for ever.

Now, let it only be considered what must necessarily happen, should any individual, in forming his opinion on some important subject, lose in this manner the remembrance of some essential circumstance required for the formation of a correct opinion. And let us suppose further, that, to avoid the trouble and delay, and exercise of patience, necessary for recollection, that he proceeds instantly to draw his conclusion and form his decided opinion from the premises already at his mind's command. Is it not manifest, that he is blameable for haste and precipitancy of judgment ? Has he not committed a voluntary fault ? And supposing this voluntary and meditated neglect to lead to some capital error in his conduct or in his belief ; who can say that such an error is not the effect of volition ? And who will pretend that he is not

justly chargeable with the injurious consequences to which such an error may lead ? If he had made serious and persevering efforts of recollection, and yet not succeeded ; we might then acquit him of all blame. But without at least a moderate effort, we cannot upon any principle of moral reasoning hold him blameless.

It is, however, well deserving our attention, to observe in what manner these important efforts of recollection are performed. The mind, as already hinted, has no direct method of making them. It is possessed of no talisman to call up the idea required. It must and can only proceed in its accustomed tracts of association, summoning up the various trains of ideas that are supposed to be connected with it, and may be expected to bring it along with them. This incapability of calling up the precise idea required, is probably all that is meant by the illustrious metaphysicians referred to, when they assert the impossibility of bringing by volition any idea into the mind which is not actually present to it. They could never have intended to deny that the mind is possessed of a certain management, a certain tact and art, by which generally, though not universally nor with absolute certainty, it attains the end proposed. This management and tact is learned by experience, and is acquired universally. No man is without it. He who would neglect its assistance in the formation of important opinions, could never be held free from blame. His errors could not be held involuntary. It is true he did not actually intend being wrong ; but it is equally true, that he did not use the necessary means of being right.

It may, perhaps, be here urged, that we are thus putting an extreme case. In answer, let it be observed, that, though a strong case is here put for the sake of illustration, it is probable that slighter cases occur with great frequency. There are also many other causes besides absolute forgetfulness, that are suffered to turn away the mind from the correct view of many of the questions that involve some degree of doubt. Of this kind are all the various biases to which different minds in different degrees are exposed. And it is only in cases that involve some degree of doubt, and require some deliberation, that there is room for the operation of such biases. Where the evidence is clear and decisive, the assent of the understanding is unavoidable.

Our author's third argument is that every mind is conscious to itself of being utterly incapable of changing its belief or disbelief, in consequence of any volition. "Take," says he, "any controverted fact in history. Let a man make himself perfect-