

evidence in regard to one of a thousand of the more complicated social, moral and secondary religious questions of the day, even could I hope, as I certainly cannot, even to acquire that equilibrium of judgment indispensable to success in the undertaking. Am I, then, condemned to a state of perpetual oscillation, or rather mental equipoise and inactivity, ever afraid to step for fear of going wrong, or to express an opinion lest my data prove incomplete, or my judgment unreliable?

Such a conclusion bears, of course, its absurdity upon its face. The train of thought which sometimes tempts us towards it may be profitable or otherwise, according to the use we make of it.

It can scarcely fail to be profitable if it teach us modesty and charity, modesty in respect to our own views of truth, charity for the views of others. If the chances of our being wrong in any matter not susceptible of the crucial tests of experience, mathematical demonstration, or infallible authority, are so many, there must always be at least a few chances of our opponents being right. If the disturbing elements of ignorance, and prejudice and mental indolence affect so largely the commonest operations of our own faculties, it is but reasonable that we should cherish a large tolerance for the same defects in others. Here, then, we have the best antidote to bigotry, which is ever the offspring of narrowness, and the foe of introspection. For our own part we never hear a man affirming with dogmatic emphasis, where others, equally wise and candid, doubt; or decrying the blindness and wilful prejudice of opponents, whose characters and views are entitled to at least equal respect with his own.—We never hear such an one, even though we may quite agree with his opinions, without a kind of painful suspicion that he never yet has seen clearly more than one side of the question, or put himself into the mental attitude in which the real difficulties which beset it become visible. There is truth as well as error in Tennyson's lines:

“There dwells more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”

Doubt on certain subjects and questions, where the means of exact knowledge have not been put within our reach, may be a loftier and nobler position than dogmatism. Just as in extemporaneous speaking, the man of powerful intellect and cultivated taste, may stammer and hesitate by reason of the very abundance and competing merits of