

which seeks to connect and harmonize all the phenomena of experience. Such a knowledge as this can never be evil, but only good. If such knowledge is attainable, or in any measure attainable, then as rational beings we can be satisfied with no other. It is sometimes, indeed, feared by the supporters of peculiar theories of religion or civilization that the spread of science will be the destruction of their cherished opinions and dogmas. No one who thus thinks can have any solid faith in the system which he professes. For assuredly science, in the sense in which we have described it, can destroy nothing which has a right to be preserved. No truth can be really in conflict with any other truth; and what is science but a method of arriving at truth, of guarding the seeker for knowledge against error?

By *what methods*, then, is knowledge best acquired? This is our next question. It is one which concerns us all more or less, but which obviously does most deeply concern the young. Of course, it does not concern them alone. Men must never cease to accumulate knowledge and to gain experience; and wise men will to their lives' end submit themselves to that discipline which is needful for the improvement of the mind and the strengthening of the will. And indeed no man is too old to unlearn something of his imperfect ways of thinking and working; no man is incapable of being taught how he may think better, act better, live better.

When we speak of the beginning of the acquisition of knowledge, we are using relative terms. This work is actually begun before we are conscious of it. At first we are little more than passive; and even when we become active, our activity is, for a considerable time, so guided by

others that it can hardly be said to be, in any complete sense, our own, or to be animated by any definite principles of which we are distinctly conscious.

There comes a time, however, when we have to consider what we are doing in this matter, and on what principles and by what methods we are conducting our work, of whatever kind it may be. Happy are they who have not, at such a time, to undo a great portion of all that has been done for them by others: happy if they have not to change, not merely their opinions, for in most cases this will be inevitable, but the very principles of their thinking, the very methods by which they have been labouring towards the light of truth and the certainty of knowledge. Be this as it may, it is for us to do our best to know and follow those principles and methods which have received the stamp of wisdom and experience, and to persevere in them with all the strength and energy of a resolute will. These methods have no longer to be sought for as an undiscovered land. To apply them, to work them out in our own life, can never be quite easy for any of us, until perfect self-abnegation is easy. As far as the knowledge of them is concerned, we have only to accept the conclusions of the greatest and wisest teachers of mankind and to verify them by our own experience.

A useful way of approaching these principles and methods will be found by the noting of the chief hindrances to the acquisition of knowledge, whether moral or intellectual. In pointing out the true character of these hindrances we shall at the same time be indicating the course which should be taken if we would attain true knowledge.

Beginning with the moral hindrances, there can be little doubt that the most common causes of human