

to our own, they might have recognised as truths what we instantly recoil from as falsehoods, or felt to be absurdities our first and foremost principles of truth. And when this suspicion is once admitted, so as to shake our confidence in the judgments of the intellect, it were but consistent that it should be extended to the departments both of morality and taste. Our impressions of what is virtuous or of what is fair, may be regarded as alike accidental, and arbitrary with our impressions of what is true—being referable to the structure of the mind, and not to any objective reality in the things which are contemplated. It is thus that the absolutely true, or good, or beautiful, may be conceived of, as having no stable or substantive being in nature; and the mind, adrift from all fixed principle, may thus lose itself in universal pyrrhonism.

20. Nature is fortunately too strong for this speculation; but still there is a comfort in being enabled to vindicate the confidence which she has inspired—as in those cases, where some original principle of hers admits of being clearly and decisively tested. And it is so of our faith in the constancy of nature, met and responded to, throughout all her dominions by nature's actual constancy—the one being the expectation, the other its rigid and invariable fulfilment. This perhaps is the most palpable instance which can be quoted, of a belief anterior to experience, yet of which experience affords a wide and unexcepted verification. It proves at least of one of our implanted instincts, that it is unerring; and that, over against a sub-