

[ knowledge of what one does not know just as important as knowing what one does know . . . .

“The development of exact natural knowledge in all its vast range, from physics to history and criticism, is the consequence of the working out, in this province, of the resolution to ‘take nothing for truth without clear knowledge that it is such’; to consider all beliefs open to criticism; to regard the value of authority as neither greater nor less, than as much as it can prove itself to be worth. The modern spirit is not the spirit ‘which always denies,’ delighting only in destruction; still less is it that which builds castles in the air rather than not construct; it is that spirit which works and will work ‘without haste and without rest,’ gathering harvest after harvest of truth into its barns, and devouring error with unquenchable fire” (p. viii.).

The harvesting of truth is a safe enough enterprise, but the devouring of error is a more dangerous pastime, since flames are liable to spread beyond our control; and though, in a world overgrown with weeds and refuse, the cleansing influence of fire is a necessity, it would be cruel to apply the same agency again at a later stage, when a fresh young crop is springing up in the cleared ground.