

deep-seated, though frequently an unconscious, conviction that the foundations of natural knowledge were not sufficiently firm, nor its principles sufficiently clear to permit of indiscriminate application beyond a limited region. We are acquainted with Newton's final verdict regarding the Law of Gravitation, or of action at a distance, unduly extolled later on in the school of Laplace,¹

who has not thrown off religious belief, but never had it: I grew up in a negative state with regard to it. I looked upon the modern exactly as I did upon the ancient religion, as something which in no way concerned me. It did not seem to me more strange that English people should believe what I did not, than that the men I read of in Herodotus should have done so. History had made the variety of opinions among mankind a fact familiar to me, and this was but a prolongation of that fact. This point in my early education had, however, incidentally one had consequence deserving notice. In giving me an opinion contrary to that of the world, my father thought it necessary to give it as one which could not prudently be avowed to the world. This lesson of keeping my thoughts to myself, at that early age, was attended with some moral disadvantages, though my limited intercourse with strangers, especially such as were likely to speak to me on religion, prevented me from being placed in the alternative of avowal or hypocrisy. I remember two occasions in my boyhood on which I felt myself in this alternative, and in both cases I avowed my disbelief and defended it." At a much later period he wrote ('Autobiography,' p. 189), "With those who, like all the best and wisest of mankind, are dissatisfied with human life as

it is, and whose feelings are wholly identified with its radical amendment, there are two main regions of thought. One is the region of ultimate aims, the constituent elements of the highest realisable ideal of human life. The other is that of the immediately useful and practically attainable, . . . and, to say truth, it is in these two extremes principally that the real certainty lies. My own strength lay wholly in the uncertain and slippery intermediate region, that of theory of moral and political science; respecting the conclusions of which in any of the forms in which I have received or originated them, whether as political economy, analytic psychology, logic, philosophy of history, or anything else, . . . I have derived a wise scepticism, which, while it has not hindered me from following out the honest exercise of my thinking faculties to whatever conclusions might result from it, has put me upon my guard against holding or announcing these conclusions with a degree of confidence which the nature of such speculations does not warrant, and has kept my mind not only open to admit, but prompt to welcome and eager to seek, even on the questions on which I have most meditated, any prospect of clearer perceptions and better evidence."

¹ See vol. ii. of this History, p. 29.