

Phil. Ah! if it were only conviction based on insight, one would then be able to bring forward arguments and fight the battle with equal weapons. But religions admittedly do not lend themselves to conviction after argument has been brought to bear, but to belief as brought about by revelation. The capacity for belief is strongest in childhood; therefore one is most careful to take possession of this tender age. It is much more through this than through threats and reports of miracles that the doctrines of belief take root. If in early childhood certain fundamental views and doctrines are preached with unusual solemnity and in a manner of great earnestness, the like of which has never been seen before, and if, too, the possibility of a doubt about them is either completely ignored or only touched upon in order to show that doubt is the first step to everlasting perdition; the result is that the impression will be so profound that, as a rule, that is to say in almost every case, a man will be almost as incapable of doubting the truth of those doctrines as he is of doubting his own existence. Hence it is scarcely one in many thousands that has the strength of mind to honestly and seriously ask himself--is that true? Those who are able to do this have been more appropriately styled strong minds, *_esprits forts_*, than is imagined. For the commonplace mind, however, there is nothing so absurd or revolting but what, if inoculated in this way, the firmest belief in it will take root. If, for example, the killing of a heretic or an infidel were an essential matter for the future salvation of the soul, almost every one would make it the principal object of his life, and in dying get consolation and strength from the remembrance of his having succeeded; just as, in truth, in former times almost every

Spaniard looked upon an _auto da fé_ as the most pious of acts and one most pleasing to God.