

books and other writings, and these were spread out to be tested. A fluid was poured on the pages, the effect of which was to obliterate entirely every untrue proposition, and to make every partially true proposition grow faint in proportion to the false element which entered into it. Alas! chapter after chapter vanished away, leaving the paper clean as if no compositor had ever laboured in setting type for it. Pale and illegible became the fine-sounding paragraphs on which I had secretly prided myself. A few passages, however, survived here and there at long intervals. They were those on which I had laboured least and had almost forgotten, or those, as I observed in one or two instances, which had been selected for special reprobation in the weekly journals. Something stood to my credit, and the worst charge of wilfully and intentionally setting down what I did not believe to be true was not alleged against me. Ignorance, prejudice, carelessness; sins of infirmity—culpable indeed, but not culpable in the last degree; the water in the ink, the commonplaces, the ineffectual sentiments; these, to my unspeakable comfort, I perceived were my heaviest crimes. Had I been accused of absolute worthlessness, I should have pleaded guilty in the state of humiliation to which I was reduced; but