

might look about them for some position in which it might befall them to be good, but as to beings conscious of internal power to strive and win the excellence they love ; to grapple athletically with the oppositions of circumstance ; and run the appointed race, though with panting breast and bleeding feet. Herein, I conceive, did Christ preach a gospel wholly at variance with the prevailing temper and philosophy of our times. It is their tendency not to excite men to what they ought to be, but to manage them as they are. The age has been prolific (like many of its predecessors) in inventions and proposed social arrangements, by which we may sit still and be made into the right kind of men ; which will render duty the smoothest thing on earth, by warning all interfering motives off the spot, and turn the Christian race into a stroll upon a mossy lawn. The trust and boast of our period is not in its individual energy and virtue, not in its great and good minds, but in its external civilization, in schemes of social and political improvement, in things to be done *for* us, rather than *by* us, in what we are to *get*, more than in what we are to *be*. We have had systems of education, which were to mould the minds of our children into a perfection that would make experience blush ; systems of self-culture, to nurse our faculties into full maturity ; systems of socialism, for mending the whole world, and presenting every one with a virtuous mind, without the least trouble on his part. Even those who escape this enthusiasm of system are apt to place an extravagant trust in sets of outward circumstances ; and dazzled by the splendid forms which modern civilization assumes, to conceive of them as powers in themselves, independently of the minds that fill and use them. Commerce, mechanical