

deep enough to give color to a nation's development, hindrance to a human wrong, or vigor to the higher aspiration of an individual, there, therein, has been philosophy.

The fallacious popular estimate of philosophy is easily explained ; it is fallacious because it is the popular estimate. Philosophy has for a mission a task which the majority of men take for granted, at the same time that they decry it and its pursuers. Men act on the supposition that the world is reasonable, that knowledge is true, that duty is right, that human affections and expectations are not a mirage of desert hopes, that nature has satisfactions for her own cravings, and that every phase of human emotion has an answering response somewhere : but how many of us could justify these beliefs from our experience? Who of us will endeavor to explain the most legitimate and commonplace affairs of life? When one does this he becomes a philosopher. He undertakes a task in which all men are interested, but in which most men take no interest.

There is an important sense, however, in which the popular opinion of philosophy is true. The nature of the subject with which it deals ; the more or less conjectural hypotheses which may be put forth with dogmatic assurance and confidence and some show of reason—which hypotheses often rest upon individual prejudice or misconception or exhibit dense ignorance of established fact ; the traditional belief that no philosophy is true which does not explain the infinite and eternal, however it may neglect the concrete and empirical ; the unspeakable audacity with which the metaphysician is accustomed to explode his guns above the heads but beneath the regard of the plodding and successful worker in science—all these things have tended to bring speculation into disrepute and metaphysics has become synonymous with fancy. In the language of Clifford, "the word philosopher has come to mean the man who thinks it his business to explain everything in a certain number of large books."

It is against this abuse of philosophy that I wish on this occasion especially to protest, not against the criticism which is aimed at the extravagance of speculation. But in as far as philosophy in its true province and as concerned with its true problem is involved in this criticism, such aspersions are unjust, and they should be vigorously met ; and met on the ground of the