

A distinguished author once said to me that Mr. Alcott's books were mistakes. I turned the observation over in my mind and it started a new train of thought. Before this I had read "Tablets," but had not been very much impressed with it. When afterwards I learned that Mr. Alcott's books were mistakes, and serious ones at that, I made up my mind to secure the entire series—not a very formidable array of volumes—and vigorously began the whole course. I read very slowly at first in order to get at the style of the author, and to discover, if possible, what my friend had meant by mistakes. I may truthfully say that I was a little disappointed at the beginning. The books dealt largely in the ideal character, in the mystical, in transcendentalism, in spiritualistic thoughts, and in a certain peculiarity of expression or method that was not always clear, but quite profound enough in its way. As I read on I became more and more impressed with the idea that I was reading some very ancient but eminently respectable author, who was describing as something exceedingly new, several thoughts which had been very fully developed and explained two or three centuries ago. I was startled at the way in which Mr. Alcott grouped his favourites—Plato, whose writings he read, Mr. Emerson says, without surprise, Pythagoras, the high priest of our author's philosophy, and such moderns as Hawthorne, Carlyle, Emerson and Thoreau. You would fancy these gentlemen were contemporaries. All through the books there was something which reminded one of the Song of Solomon, of the Book of Proverbs, and of some things I had read once in a translation of the Talmud. Words of wisdom, quaint aphorisms, axioms, such as you would expect to find in Burton's "Anatomie of Melancholy," and books of that class and scope, crowded the pages at every turn, and as I got on with my task, I can assure you it did not appear as if my time was being unprofitably spent. Apart from the style, which does not flow easily, but is at times