

ments, but on the qualities of rational and responsible beings), still narrower is the limitation of our inquiries. To suppose that we can reason up to a first cause in moral questions—that we can reach some simple principle, whence we may descend with logical precision to all the complicated duties of a social being; is to misapprehend the nature of our faculties, and utterly to mistake the relation we bear both to God and man. Such a system may delight us by its clearness, and flatter our pride because it appears, at once, to bring all our duties within our narrow grasp: but it is clear only because it is shallow; while a better system may seem darker, only because it is more profound.

If it be contended, that in the trying circumstances of life the moral systems of the ancients are without sufficient motives: we may reply, that in this respect all moral systems are alike—that all of them lead to consequences, and point to actions, beyond the power of any earthly sanction. When we ascend to the highest virtues and capacities of our moral nature, and think of the tens of thousands who in every age have encountered a voluntary death for the good of their kindred men and the glory of their country, or the still more exalted heroes who have died as solitary martyrs in the defence of some high and holy principle; we tell of deeds which moralists and historians of every age have adorned with their praise, and held up for imitation. But still, however common acts like these may have been in the history of mankind, we have no right to class them as social duties, grounded in mere moral and social feelings; and in accounting for them, our souls recoil from the vulgar sanction of this world's praise. If deeds like these be com-