

who were inspired by this new world of ideas saw in it a definite something which strove for realisation, and which only awaited a suitable form, the right word, the adequate expression by which it should be rendered intelligible to the expectant and receptive minds of the younger generation; a possession not limited to a few creative intellects, but the common property of the many that came under the influence of the great educational movement which was spreading over most of the countries and nations of Europe. In fact, the problem of knowledge was for them not contained in the questions, What is knowledge, and where and how is it to be found? They rather saw with their mind's eye the existence of a higher kind of knowledge in the shape of definite ideals, and the problem of knowledge consisted in realising these ideals and finding a suitable expression for them. No one had uttered himself more clearly in these matters than Goethe himself, who at that time had already in many ways declared that the Highest reveals itself to the human mind only through intuition,—that it is not elaborated by thought but felt and seen: he had in his own creations made it actually visible to the increasing number of his admirers. If some of the contemporaries of Kant, notably Hamann, Jacobi, and Herder, had contented themselves with emphasising the independence of feeling, belief, and faith, as the ultimate original sources of knowledge, Goethe succeeded through the wonderful intuitive powers of his mind in embodying in the poetical creations of his artistic genius what others only believed and felt, thus strengthening enormously the constructive and creative movement of thought.