

and the growth of the classical and critical spirit, become loosened or had in many instances faded away.¹ The spirit of Free Inquiry, which in this country had shown itself hesitatingly and sporadically, had supervened and become the leading and stimulating agency in German thought. It formed, however, quite as much a contrast to the spirit of scepticism, indifference, and flippancy, which characterised the writings of many of the foremost thinkers in France, before and at the time of the Revolution. It assimilated the hopeful sentimentalism of Rousseau, from which it derived, to a large extent, the interest and belief in a universal popular education based upon the foundation of a plain and simple Christian morality. In fact the educational movement, as I have had repeated occasion to explain, in its two independent branches of popular and academic education, was the principal direction in which the new spirit of faith and hope in human progress found an outlet. We must, however, not

¹ An interesting account of the uncertain position taken up by thinking members of a younger society towards religious subjects in the end of the third quarter of the eighteenth century is given by Goethe in the eighth book of 'Dichtung und Wahrheit,' which deals with his student days in Leipsic: "The Christian religion," he tells us, "oscillated between its own historical positivism and a pure Deism which, based upon morality, should on its part form a foundation for the same. The difference of character and opinion showed itself here in infinite gradations, especially as a further difference intruded as to the question:

What part reason, on the one side, and sentiment on the other, could and ought to have in such convictions? Some very intelligent and brilliant men appeared, in this respect, like butterflies which, quite oblivious of their chrysalis state, throw away the covering in which they have grown to their organic maturity. Others, more faithful and more modest, could be compared with flowers which, though developing into beautiful blossoms, do not leave the root nor separate themselves from the mother stem, but rather through this connection bring the hoped-for fruit to ripeness." (Weimar ed., vol. 27, p. 192.)