

for persons and institutions but also for the spiritual agencies of which they were—or should have been—the representatives and guardians. This spirit of flippancy and impurity in morals and literature was in process of spreading into the neighbouring countries, and had, in fact, already made considerable progress both in England and Germany when the violent scenes and excesses of the Revolution gave additional strength to a timely reaction which had already set in. It remains the immortal glory of Walter Scott and Wordsworth to have stemmed and broken this tide of impurity and flippancy in the literature of their country, and to have prevented the spread of that irreverent tone to which we have become accustomed in some of the best and most elegant of French writers, which, after the age of Classicism in art and poetry, has gradually taken hold likewise of a large portion of German literature. For a long time it had there been kept in check by the powerful influence of Goethe's sovereign mind.

This characteristic of the English mind, which in its best form is the Spirit of Reverence, has, of course, likewise its less favourable side. For in many cases it is no more than an inherent dislike to break with that which is traditional and conventional: this has been called the conservatism of the English people. To foreigners who have tried to understand the peculiarities of English thinking it has not infrequently presented itself as a servile submission to the powers that be whether for good or for evil—nay, even so far as religious questions are concerned,