

first and most powerful impetus to a discussion of the social problem by German thinkers. They realised quite as fully as did those of other countries that the age had great problems to solve, nor did they approach them in a less hopeful spirit, though it was a spirit at once less radical and subversive than that which ruled in France, less practical and common-sense than that which spread in England.

With French contemporary thought German thinkers had indeed in common that they believed in abstract constructions, in logical formulæ. But whereas in France abstraction meant the methods of the exact sciences, the logical ideal being that of the mathematician, in Germany abstraction meant the lifting up out of the lower region of the ordinary interests of life into the higher realms of Poetry, Art, and Speculation, and logic meant a higher intellectual process which dealt not with the mechanical connection of things but with their meaning, interpretation, and value. It was in fact a great scheme of intellectualising and spiritualising, of looking at things from a higher point of view.

The first systematic attempt to carry out this ideal, which engrossed German thought for fully half a century, was, as we know, the philosophy of Kant, and in it the supreme position assigned by him to the moral law which he conceived to be, when thought of as command, the highest kind of Revelation. It was the task

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Kant.

of the working classes in that country, but because they were more enlightened, because the hard rule of the landed proprietors was much relaxed in France as com-

pared with the state of serfdom and bondage in which the peasant population still lived in the more eastern countries of Central Europe.