

moral laws as precepts of human conduct. And the attempt to foretell the future and define the ideal of social Happiness in any other way than through an appeal to the call of Duty has given rise to those visionary and impracticable constructions by which extreme socialists again and again strive to bring about the millennium, but in reality do a great deal to retard and impede the slow but sure march of human progress.

45.
Contempor-
ary recep-
tion of
Comte's and
Hegel's
doctrines.

The philosophy of Comte which at the present day appears comparatively simple in its main features, and which contains so many germs of newer thought, was nevertheless not at the time appreciated by his countrymen. In this respect it contrasts very markedly with the philosophy of Hegel, which, in spite of its abstract ideas and difficult exposition, may be said to have almost exclusively governed, for the time being, the thought of Germany. The reasons for this are not far to seek. Hegel gave expression to the spirit of his age and country, which, frequently undefined and unconscious, lived in all the great minds who were his contemporaries. This spirit was striving to find a definite form, and the very fact that Hegel's language, both in his lectures and in his works, was so expressive of the wrestling of the mind with a deep and difficult subject of which it gave prophetic glimpses, alternating with felicitous and suggestive verbal definitions, made it attractive to hearers and learners who could bear anything but the triviality and prose of rationalism.

Hegel's works and lectures were a kind of rhapsody, a dithyrambus of the searching and aspiring soul in a poetical and creative age. Hegel caught up the pre-