

country the philosophic mind has always restored its vigour by returning to the datum-line of common-sense.

The influence I refer to is the special expression and exact definition which the idea of development, long familiar to German thinkers, acquired through Darwin's 'Origin of Species,' and the support it received in Herbert Spencer's philosophy of Evolution. The principle of natural selection, suggested to Darwin by Malthus' 'Essay on the Principles of Population,' joined to the facts of variation and inheritance, was the spark which was to illuminate and give life to Spencer's long prepared system; it was to convert in Germany the vague indications contained in the writings of Leibniz, of Lessing and Herder, of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel, into useful formulæ which could guide research as much in the fields of nature as in those of history; it furnished a constructive principle and broke the one-sided and depressing rule of the purely critical spirit which was becoming more and more negative and unpromising. Thinkers in Germany who coined the name of Darwinism, with Ernst Haeckel at their head, infused a spirit of hopefulness and cheery confidence into German thought, and this operated in many instances as a wholesome and effective antidote to the deadening ravages of scepticism and pessimism; in fact it worked, though in a one-sided way, a restoration of faith in the powers of the human mind to attack afresh the eternal problems.

There were three principal features in Darwinism which influenced philosophical thought in Germany. The first was the study of the genesis of natural

51.
Darwinian
evolution as
a corrective
of pessimism
in Germany.