

now little studied. Like other schemes of social re-organisation, in which French literature of the nineteenth century is especially rich, it has been laid aside. Only the positive spirit has spread and lives still in the literature of his country. Nevertheless the mind of Comte was prophetic, inasmuch as it marked in advance the direction which French thought would take and the problems which it would have to solve. It pushed the social problem into the centre of thought, a position which it still holds, and it raised if it left unsolved the problem, which is even more pressing to-day, how to found a purely ethical religion and how to guarantee and enforce the acceptance of its precepts.

Comte foresaw clearly that the final question would be as to the seat of authority in matters of belief—*i.e.*, as to the persuasive or compelling force of the ultimate convictions which should govern conduct. In fact he, in his later writings, laid great stress upon the establishment of a system through which what was considered the final truth and the highest moral principle could be enforced in the organisation of society. He devised a régime similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church, without the dogmatic substance of the Roman Catholic religion. It is perhaps not too much to say that this is exactly the problem which the educational government in modern France is trying to solve.

59.
Solitary
position
of Comte.

Comte was a solitary thinker, like Schopenhauer and von Hartmann. He had few disciples, and his connection with earlier or contemporary thought was very slender. The first to introduce the historical spirit into sociology, he is, as he claims to be, quite original in