

As so often happens, what we have to do here is to decide between alternatives. Let us suppose, then, that a critical and systematic study of Ethics is avoided, with the belief that to explain is, necessarily, to explain away ; that whatever we may do in other departments of thought, in Ethics, at least, we shall rely entirely upon authority and depend upon the dogmatic method. In discussing this supposition we must consider the effects of other influences that bear upon the education of our young men and young women.

An alternative.

Avoidance of investigation attempted.

Other influences not thereby excluded.

Do we not all know that there is a period in the life of most young people, when they become aware of possessing powers and capabilities, and wish to exercise them : "The glory of young men is their strength" ; and just as in youth the physical activity seeks exercise and delights in athletic exploits, so with the consciousness of his mental powers the young man desires to have the pleasure of solving problems for himself. It may be that very correct answers are given at the end of the book, but he wishes to work out the solution independently. Quoting authority to him at this period of his life is like offering him crutches. I am not concerned just now to maintain that this state of mind is desirable or undesirable ; I simply call attention to the fact of its existence and its effect. One thing is certain, it will not tend to produce adherence to authority nor respect for the dogmatic method. There is one word that always fires the enthusiasm of a young man : "Liberty" ; and at first it is the negative element in liberty, viz., freedom from external constraint, that is most welcome.

Natural tendency to question.

We are living in a time of great literary activity. If we carefully examine this literature we shall find that a very large proportion of it is of a controversial character. To use the language of Biology, that has now become so familiar through the discussion of the theory of Evolution, there is now a great "struggle for existence" in the realm of opinions and ideas. In our newspapers, monthlies, and theological journals, one view is strenuously opposed by another, and young men and young women, if they read at all, are almost compelled to think for themselves, and form opinions of their own, for it is needless to point out that to decide in one's own mind between conflicting views is practically to form an opinion or adopt an independent position.

Controversial literature.