

men as his most congenial companions. But the intercourse certainly confirmed every thing in him that was before base and unworthy.

Let us now follow Wesley through the same critical period of youth. Wesley bows to the same vigorous, religious discipline that met him almost at the gates of life, and bends the energies of his opening mind upon the prescribed course of study at Oxford. The foundation was laid for a broad and ripe scholarship; he had formed the habit of steadfast application to one purpose; and he was prepared to find in the Church of Christ the agency for the elevation of the human race, with which end his whole nature was in thorough sympathy.

There are those who constantly assume that infidelity, liberalism, freethought, have all the learning and culture; and that Christianity is ignorant, narrow, prejudiced. It is worth while, at this point, to note how far this view is sustained by the contrast now under study. As to Voltaire's scholarship, it is difficult to understand how one who in youth could never be kept long under the restraints of school discipline could apply himself to study with the devotion that achieves success. And it is a notorious fact that he did not. After three years in England he could not write intelligently a letter in the language of that land. And his writings, which yet exist, attest that he had no high claim to scholarship in the fields of history and philosophy. He was never, in any sense, an exact, profound, or greatly learned man.

But in contrast, Wesley's claim to scholarship has never been put in question. Few men better meet the standard which Lord Brougham set up, in saying that a truly learned man is one who knows something

about everything, and everything about something. Here then we find the stability, and the learning, with the capacity of true research, on the side of Christianity; and the ignorance, and flippancy, and pretence, on the side of infidelity. There are, doubtless, exceptions on both sides; but we may rest assured that, as between Wesley and Voltaire so generally stands the question between Christianity and infidelity, as to learning and ignorance—deep culture and superficial display. The leading characters, as well as the followers, on both sides, to-day, furnish the same contrast.

Voltaire had not the steadiness of application, nor the knowledge which would have rendered him capable of a patient and thorough examination of the claims of Christianity to man's confidence. To ridicule what, at first glance, appeared weak in it was as much as his powers could do. And no more have his followers to-day those gifts of intellectual culture and the patient research to which Christianity reveals the unmistakable marks of its divine paternity; and if without these attainments, men are likewise destitute of heart, it is not easy to see how they can be anything but infidels. But Wesley, like Paul and Luther, could receive Christianity alike in the claims it addressed to the intellect and to the heart. The consequence was that his faith had been nourished at deep fountains, never known to the aspiring Frenchman. His soul had touched the Deity, and after that he was prepared to pursue his chosen path though a blaspheming world withstood him.

If we would rightly appreciate these men, Voltaire and Wesley, and their life-work, we must take into account as a controlling influence the condition of the two nations to which they belonged. During the reign of Louis XIV.,