

FÉNELON.

Among the many illustrious men in France during the splendid age of Louis XIV, there was not one who gained the love and respect of his countrymen as Fénelon. His brother prelates were eloquent and attractive, but he is remembered as the most loveable of them all. The record of his life so touched Rousseau that he said he wished he had lived in the time of Fénelon, so he might serve him as his valet. Fénelon's brilliant contemporaries were renowned for their wit, learning, and poetic genius, but he, in addition to those gifts, had that of a noble nature. His life is worthy of study as that of a man who was in advance of his age in liberality of mind, and true Christian charity. In a time when hypocrisy and selfishness were unchecked vices, he was unselfish and sincere. The darkness of his moral surroundings makes his purity shine forth all the brighter.

Fénelon was born in 1651, and, belonging to an old and noble family, he had all the educational advantages afforded by the time. His studies were directed by his uncle, a man of culture and judgment. At twelve years of age, he was familiar with all the best authors in his own language, and also delighted in reading Homer and Sophocles. When a boy of fifteen, he preached his first sermon, before a large and critical audience. The young preacher was enthusiastically received. His wise guardians, fearing the effect of so much praise in the talented boy, insisted on more study and seclusion, so Fénelon's public work was not begun until his twenty-fourth year.

Missionary work held a foremost place in his heart, and, had it not been for delicate health, and parental opposition, Fénelon would have been numbered among the pioneer missionaries to Canada. Thus, turned away from his chosen work, he became director of a school for girls. As a result of the experience gained in that position, he wrote a treatise on female education. The most of his theories are sound, and useful for all time. The study of the fundamental branches, with Latin and Greek, he considered necessary for properly educated women; but he says that "their modesty ought to shrink from science with almost as much delicacy as from vice."

A book in which Fénelon opposed the doctrines of the Reformation caused the king to send him on a

mission to those who had joined themselves to the Reformers. It was not intended by the king to be a mission of merey; but the man he chose for the work made it such. The soldiers, who had been punishing the people for persistence in their faith, were withdrawn by Fénelon's request, and, in his stay of one year, he spent the time trying to soothe the sorrows of the people.

Fénelon was, after this, called to undertake the guidance and instruction of the king's nephews, one of whom, the Duke of Burgundy, was heir to the throne. No other position could have given such opportunities for the graces of Fénelon's character to appear. His mildness, discretion and firmness were the qualities most needed, for the young duke was passionate, haughty and obstinate. This ungovernable child became a most agreeable and reasonable prince by the patient and judicious care of his teacher. A great many of Fénelon's books were written for the instruction and entertainment of his pupils, but, besides accomplishing their avowed object, they gained for him the applause of all France. A tangible proof of this, he was made a member of the French Academy, and received a rich abbacy.

So far, every change in Fénelon's life had, like the incoming tide, advanced him a little higher in worldly station; but now the tide was about to turn, and he would soon have the opportunity to show that he could bear adversity with the same grace as good fortune. Certain doctrines were being taught which the king and clergy thought heretical. Fénelon failed to denounce the heresy as strongly as his superiors wished, and even wrote a book which was misconstrued into a defence of the obnoxious doctrines. The result was that his offices and honors were taken from him, and his book was condemned by the Pope. The Pope's opinion of Fénelon, however, was shown in his reply to Fénelon's accusers, "He has sinned through excess of divine love, but you have sinned through lack of love for your neighbor."

Sad at heart, and forsaken by many of his former friends, Fénelon resolved to devote the remainder of his life to the people of his diocese. The "Good Archbishop," by his mildness, energy and benevolence, gained the strongest love and respect of his people. He had the happy gift of making all with whom he came in contact, no matter what their station,