

popular idea of Christ and His religion. Few Frenchmen have hitherto known much about the Gospels. The devout read manuals of devotion, of which the least unevangelical is Thomas à Kempis; while sceptics have got their notions from Voltaire. Most remarkable, and of infinite importance as an indication of the place which, when criticism and science have done their utmost, Christianity, apart from supernaturalism and dogma, will hold in the minds of men, is the difference between Voltaire and Renan. Voltaire, when he cried *Ecrasez l'Infâme*, saw the religion of Jesus through the smoke of an *Auto-da-Fe*; though even he got an inkling of something nearer the truth from the brief intercourse which he held in England with the Quakers. The fires of the *Auto-da-Fe* are now quenched; the Satanic counterfeit once installed in the persecuting State Churches, which Shelley, as well as Voltaire and Rousseau, took for the Christians' God, has departed, or is departing; the divine reality presents itself to view; and Renan, the most uncompromising of critics, though he certainly is not a witness in favour of orthodoxy, is as certainly a witness, unequivocal and loud-mouthed, in favour of natural Christianity. "The hour cometh," says Jesus to the woman at the well, "when ye shall neither on this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father, but when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." "On the day," exclaims Renan, "on which Jesus spoke these words He was truly the Son of God. He uttered, for the first time, the saying on which the edifice of religion will rest for ever. He founded the true worship, without date, without country, that which the highest souls will practise to the end of time. Not only was His religion that day the religion of humanity, it was religion in the absolute sense; and if other planets have inhabitants endowed with reason and morality, their religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed by the side of Jacob's well. Man has not been able to cleave to it, because we attain the ideal only for a moment. The saying of Jesus was a gleam of light in a dark night; it has taken eighteen hundred years to