

Voltaire. In respect to literary achievement he was peculiarly fortunate in living when he did. The taste of Paris had been created by a long line of laborious masters in literature; for with all the evil that must be said of Louis XIV. and his reign, this much good must be accredited to him, that his court encouraged literature. All the great classic names in French literature won their first laurels under his patronage. In stately procession they march through his court—poets, philosophers, historians, and preachers, a brilliant array. Corneille, Moliere, Lafontaine, Racine, Boileau, Descartes, Pascal, Bossuet, Fenelon, Massillon, all these had passed the portals of the palace, wearing the crown of approval from the vain king, and from the gay gentry and grand dames, the habitués of the court. The last of them had only disappeared when Voltaire came. He came to a field offering an easy conquest. The gates leading to literary glory were wide open. He had genius enough to enter and draw the popular gaze upon himself, and to hold it while he lived. But there are few of the names above mentioned who have not to-day greater influence in the world of letters than his.

As to the results of John Wesley's life, it is enough to say that thirty millions of people to-day acknowledge the influence of his work. Some of the noblest tributes ever paid to him have come from those who do not stand among his followers at all. Knight, Green, May, and Lecky, in their histories of England, give such testimonies to the abiding influence of his life and labours, as could not fail to satisfy the most ambitious of men. The present activity in all the Churches, both Established and Nonconformist, has been again and again attributed. by unprejudiced

men, to direct influence of the Wesleyan revival. His work abides and grows like a stream steadily reinforced by mountain torrents!

Men tell us to-day that there is danger of a moral interregnum; that the Bible will for a time lose its influence over the human mind; that faith will become increasingly weak, and a dark night of unbelief will ensue; that even the motives that induce morality will lose their power. With reference to such fears it may be said, that in the eighteenth century infidelity began a race with Christianity under circumstances to an untold degree more favourable to itself than any that now exist. It had pretty well spread over a prepared soil. To-day neither is the soil ready, nor is its influence widely felt. It had as much a scientific basis then as now. The discoveries of Newton and Franklin were as much calculated to give it character and support as are the more modern scientific developments. Then the existing forms of Christianity were debased and low. Many of its most distinguished representatives were gross and selfish men. There was a certain excuse or apology for the assaults of the infidel. And yet in less than one hundred years a simple, earnest Christianity had so thoroughly aroused England that it swept farther back from infidelity than ever!

But to-day Christianity is pure. The Churches are active. Every avenue of practical benevolence is open. There is on every hand a tendency to consolidation and unity. If we may read at all from the past, we will find at this time abundant encouragement to our faith as long as the Church of Christ remains actively alive. The standpoint of Christian faith to-day is incalculably better than when Voltaire and John Wesley began their marked career.