

Voltaire brought to his times a bad heart, and through it looked upon all that he criticised, and was influenced by it in some degree in all that he said and did. Hence circumstances similar to those that made Wesley a laborious evangelist made him a fierce-mouthed infidel.

It is not the design of this paper to trace in detail the events in the life of either of these men, the present plan being principally a study of influences. But the character of Voltaire's work cannot be properly estimated without considering the influence upon himself of his social relations. With women his intercourse was as depraved as even dissolute France would allow.

Frederick the Great of Prussia had a not uncommon weakness—he thought he could write poetry. Contemplating the benefits of mutual criticism, he cultivated Voltaire, and brought him to the palace at Berlin. But incessant praise was the only condition of friendship with this vain man, and this was more than a great king could consistently give to a subject, so they soon quarrelled. This polished light of the French world of literature stole some of the king's original poetry, for which he was arrested at Frankfort. He then applied himself to the writing up of Frederick's private life, and so clothed it with falsehood that Carlyle protests in bitterness against so great a wrong to his loved hero.

A good deal has been said and written about the style of Voltaire's infidelity. We are told he was not an atheist, because he once said that faith in the existence of God was so necessary that if there were no God it would be necessary to invent one. Such a statement seems at first sight to indicate a very exacting theism indeed; but examined more closely, it really means nothing at all. A belief in God is

necessary. But the demands of that necessity would be fully met by an invented god. But it is not necessary to invent such a god, because there is one already existing in the prejudices of the faithful. The language quoted to prove that he was not an atheist, looked at in its true significance, shows that he had no strong conviction at all of the existence of God.

Much has been made of the fact that he built a Christian church at Fernay, which he dedicated to God. This is certainly true. He purchased a house there. The old church interrupted his view, and was altogether unsightly. He tore it down, with consent of the civil authorities, and built a new one. That fact will not do much to establish for him a Christian character.

Nor yet will another—the fact that he was offered a cardinal's hat. Who offered it? Madame Pompadour, the accomplished courtesan who ruled Louis XV., and, therefore, the court and all France. But as she was not an ecclesiastical authority, a doubt may be stated as to her ability to secure this dignity for Voltaire upon his acceptance; but it is very likely from the way things were done at that time that she could. However, he declined the honour, undoubtedly not on the ground of consistency, but because of his deep-seated and ever-growing malignity towards the Church.

But the controlling feature of his infidelity was hatred of Christ. This was, no doubt, intensified by his contempt of the priesthood, who censured and opposed him. Him he cursed; them he stung in words of burning sarcasm. His assaults upon the Bible are wanting in the simplest elements of honesty and truthfulness. He read the Jewish law. A particularly vile crime is prohibited under severe penalties. He at once assumes and asserts that the Jews were in the habit of com-