

ARTICLE V.

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CLUB.

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THE eighteenth century was an era of clubs. The essayists of Queen Anne's reign made them popular. From the founding of the famous Kit-Cat Club of Addison in 1700, there was a remarkable increase in their number till we reach the most renowned of all, "The Club," of Dr. Johnson, in 1763. The Kit-Cat had among its members Halifax, Somers, Addison, Congreve, Vanbrugh, a double handful of dukes and earls, Sir Robert Walpole, and such like Whig wits and statesmen.

A look at the greater of these two is interesting. After an inexpensive supper at the Turk's Head, Soho, art, letters, manners, and politics are discussed with freedom. Here sits Johnson the dictator, huge, scholarly, voracious, rough, veracious. Around the circle are Reynolds the painter, Burke the orator, Garrick the actor, Gibbon the historian, Jones the orientalist, Goldsmith the prince of essayists, and Boswell of biographical fame. In merry spirit they pass, with the swiftness of intellectual shuttles, jests, quips, philosophical reflections, satire, and story. In all this, brains as well as banter, distinguish the crowd. The beadroll of last century's notable names has a peculiar splendor when we reach the list of the members of the immortal Club. The passing years, like the worshiper's reverent touch, only polish more brightly the shining fame of Johnson and his friends.

Every business, social circle, and profession had its club. Nothing like it has been known in English history.

It would not be strange if Religion shared the spirit of the age. Piety was too inoffensive or too unambitious to give itself a club-life name. It left that to others, the ungodly, and then turned its crown of thorns into an imperishable halo.

In a small room in the second story of Lincoln College, Oxford, we see four young men bending over one book. It is the Greek Testament. The men are Morgan, Kirkham, John Wesley and his brother Charles. This is the "Holy Club."

These various good fellowships of the eighteenth century had distinct reasons for being. The student of English life in the early years of last century discovers a set purpose on the part of Addison and his friends to bring about a change in thought and manners. Addison's latest biographer, Coulthorpe, counts him as the "chief architect of public opinion in the eighteenth century." The facts fall short of this high eulogium, yet point that way. Addison's work as a reformer is too well known to be detailed. It is enough to show that the rigor of Puritan life and the recklessness of court circles were facing each other, sworn foes. Party violence was abnormally active to deepen the animosity. Addison showed the one that religion and good breeding were congenial, and the other that gloomy faces were not essential to a religious life. He said in the *Spectator*, No. 10, that it was his effort to "enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality." Further on he said, "I have resolved to refresh their [his patrons] memories from day to day till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age has fallen." Macaulay speaks of Addison as one "who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform," and who united wit and virtue after a long separation, in which "wit

had been led astray by profligacy and virtue by fanaticism."

But Literature was not destined to lift England out of the mire. A mightier sword than the blade of wit must needs smite down the bad giant. Addison had been a Charterhouse boy. He died in 1719. One year later another Charterhouse boy, the son of a poor rector in Lincolnshire, left its cloisters for Oxford. The names that reflect upon the oaken walls and green quadrangles of Charterhouse the light of achievement are genial and glorious. In the list are Steele, Addison, Barrow, Havelock, and Thackeray. But Wesley has laid a mightier hand upon the helm of English history than satirist, statesman, or soldier.

The so-called Augustan age waned. Depravity deepened. London came to be called the "city of the gallows." No road ran into the metropolis that did not furnish to the eye of the traveler the sight of gibbeted highwaymen slowly rotting away in their clanking chains. The penal legislation of the eighteenth century knew of no cure for crime but the gallows. The iniquity of lawbreakers was only surpassed by the barbarity of their punishments and the atrocity of their execution. This ghastly generalization may seem to the average information too sweeping. Let us summon a few authorities, and make inquiry as to the moral condition of England in the eighteenth century.

The shameless profligacy of the reign of Charles II. was fairly well rivaled, though not so openly, by the deep depravity which pervaded the court until long after the accession of George III., the circles of the aristocracy, of the upper classes, of the middle classes, and of the lower ranks in the social scale. On all sides there was "duplicity, conjugal infidelity, dissoluteness, and laxity."¹ "Society"² in

¹ Sydney, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. ii. p. 323.

² Trevelyn, C. J. Fox, p. 77.

those days was one vast casino." The gambler was abroad in the land.

Near the close of the first third of the century there grew up the "habit of gin-drinking, the master curse of English life, to which most of the crime and an immense proportion of the misery of the nation may be ascribed."¹ The same calm historian elsewhere says: "Small as is the place which this fact occupies in English history, it was probably, if we consider all the consequences that have flowed from it, the most momentous in that of the eighteenth century—incomparably more so than any event in the purely political or military annals of the country."²

Other well-known witnesses repeat the sad story. "In July, 1710, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu expressed her conviction in a letter written to the Bishop of Salisbury, accompanying a copy of her translation of 'Epictetus,' that more atheists were to be found among the fine ladies of the times than among the lower sort of rakes. Addison, writing in No. 47 of the *Freeholder*, declared that there was less appearance of religion in England than in any neighboring state or kingdom."³ While the Holy Club were poring over the Greek Testament in John Wesley's room in Lincoln College, Montesquieu was in the best society of London. He wrote, "There is no nation which has less religion than the English."

A witness of renown rises. The first sentences of Bishop Butler's "Analogy" (published May, 1736) state that many persons took it for granted that Christianity "is now at length discovered to be fictitious." The witnesses multiply. Bishop Secker, 1738, says, "An open and profound disregard to religion is becoming the distinguishing characteristic of the present age." Trevelyn says, "There is

¹ Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. i. p. 516.

² *Ibid.*, p. 519.

³ Sydney, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. ii. pp. 323, 324.

just as much and just as little trace of Christianity in Horace Walpole as in Pliny the Younger. Indeed in this very year of 1776, Walpole describes his first sight of the man [Wesley] who was guiding a revolution in creed and practice which has deeply and permanently modified the religion of the English-speaking race, in a letter, which, if translated into good Latin, might pass muster as an extract from the familiar correspondence of Gallio."¹ To quote a classic passage: "Never has a century risen upon Christian England so void of soul and faith as that which opened with Queen Anne, and which reached its misty noon beneath the second George; a dewless night succeeded by a sunless dawn. There was no freshness in the past, and no promise in the future. The Puritans were buried and the Methodists were not born." The Church of England was torpid. The lethargy which seized the church has been noted as "one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of religion."²

Macaulay has provoked much hostile criticism because of his sketch of the character of the Anglican clergy in the rural districts of England in the last half of the seventeenth century. Excellent authority, however, has declared, that "there is no reason to impugn the accuracy, in its main outlines, of the picture which Lord Macaulay has drawn."³ And further, Macaulay's picture would be a word-for-word statement of the condition of "one-half of the rural clergy of England for fully three-quarters of the eighteenth century."⁴

If the rural clergy were often inferior to the yeoman who hired their sons for the plow and their daughters for the dairy, the city clergy were not a whit behind their fashionable flocks in abandonment to follies, idleness, and sacrilege. The spouse of Archbishop Cornwallis presided over

¹ C. J. Fox, p. 86. ² Overton, *Evangelical Revival*, p. 1.

³ Sydney, *Op. cit.*, Vol. ii. p. 330. ⁴ *Idem.*

Sunday routs and balls at Lambeth palace. They became so notorious that George III. sent a remonstrance to his grace, and finally put a stop to this impiety.

Evidence accumulates on all sides to show that the guides of the church made sinecures of their sheepfolds, and even the more zealous contented themselves with a formal supervision of diocese and parish. When bishops were dead to duty, little could be expected of the under-shepherds, who fell into many and gross irregularities. Bishop Burnet thus expressed a not rare view: "I must say the main body of our English clergy has always appeared to me dead and lifeless." Arthur Young in "Travels in France," contrasts the exterior decency of behavior of the French clergy with that of the English. "Such advertisements were never seen in France as I have heard of in England: 'Wanted, a curacy in a good sporting country, where the duty is light and the neighborhood is convivial.'"

In 1781 Cowper penned these lines:—

"Except a few with Eli's spirit blessed,
Hophni and Phineas may describe the rest."

The ordination of ignorant dolts made the Ember weeks the "burden and grief of my life." So wrote Bishop Burnet in 1713.

Sir William Blackstone, early in the reign of George III., made the rounds of the pulpits of London. The result was, "that it would have been difficult for him to discover whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, of Mahomet, or of Christ." Mark Pattison, in "Essays and Reviews," says the sermons of the eighteenth century were "cold and barren." As with the Anglican Church, so was it with the Nonconformist bodies. Skeats, their historian, says, "The churches were characterized by a cold indifference. The zeal of Puritanism was almost as unknown as it was unimitated."

The age was dry, cold, unromantic, severely practical. It cared little for high ideals. It set its face against enthusiasm. The two texts from which most sermons were preached in England during the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century were, "Let your moderation be known unto all men," and "Be not righteous overmuch."¹

A highly significant indication of the low moral tone of the times, especially of the first half of the century, may be found in the fact that men who filled pulpits dipped their pens in gossip, cheap comedy, coarse satire, and even wretched and unquotable obscenity. From Swift to Sterne, the highest officials and most brilliant wits read, quoted, and dilated with discreditable abandon upon the spicy scandals of letters, poems, plays, and daily life. Dean Swift grew old, and yet his old age was "stained with horrible and gratuitous obscenities" (Gosse). Lawrence Sterne preached with idiomatic power, yet his "Tristram Shandy" may not be unblushingly read to a group of both sexes.

To increase the difficulties of the situation, the deists were at the popular ear, especially in the first half of the century. It is true that Burke flung out the question, "Who, born within the last forty years, has read a word of Collins, or Toland, or Tindal, or Morgan, or the whole race of freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through?" But it is also true that there was a time when this could not have been said. It is ours to show the reason of the overthrow of the deists. They had power at one time. Their influence was out of all proportion to their ability, for the scholarship of Locke, Clarke, Warburton, and Butler outranked theirs; to their literary standing, for Swift, Addison, and Steele were the rulers; and to their social influence, for with one or two exceptions they were unknown men. Deism was not unobstructed in its march. It was opposed. It was overthrown by Cony-

¹ Hunt, *History of Religious Thought in England*, Vol. iii. p. 291.

beare, Berkley, Lardner, and towering highest, by Butler. The answer to deism was complete, yet there was no guarantee of reform. The strongest motive to a moral life was lacking. The great danger was in the spiritual malaria of the times.

Attempts at cure were not lacking. Philosophy came with its balm and proposed a new ethical rule, "The greatest good to the greatest number." This scheme of ethics found its leader in Jeremy Bentham, who developed the theory of Utilitarian Morals. But it could only work upon life. It never called the dead to life. There is little room for doubt that Bentham's practical conclusions found in the latter half of the century readier welcome, because of the deeper and truer reformation wrought by the school of Christian evangelism. Aside from this, Utilitarianism never could have wrought even the good it boasted as its own, in the social and political reformation of England. It is stamped with selfishness. It is no pioneer in the world march. "Benthamism is an eyeless heroism; the human species, like a hapless Samson grinding in the Philistine mill, brings huge ruin down, but ultimately deliverance withal." So says Carlyle. But though "ultimate deliverance" may use to advantage somewhat of Benthamism, initial deliverance must come from heaven. What the English world needed was the touch of the Creator.

The above ethical theory has been declared "more beggarly than Mahomet's." Bentham's "moral arithmetic" would never have sent Whitefield to the collieries of Bristol. His mechanical scheme of life had too much of prudential calculation in it to send Coke to India, an old man on a young man's mission, with a young man's fiery heart. Preachers, like poets, are made, not by induction, but by inspiration.

This theory of reform was seconded by some very earnest practical efforts to work a change in the dolorous con-

dition of England, such as those put in operation by the "Societies for Reformation of Manners," near the beginning of the century. They soon assumed new functions, and became a sort of unofficial police. In making a fortieth annual report in 1735, it was stated that "the number of prosecutions for debauchery and profaneness in London and Westminster alone, since the foundation of the societies, had been 99,380."¹

Yet England was morally on the downgrade. Isaac Taylor speaks of "the ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism—or a state scarcely to be distinguished from it."²

This then is the sum of our review:—

Not Addison, with his high *Culture*, nor

Lord Mansfield, with the might of *Law* at hand, nor

Bishop Butler, chief of *Apologists*, nor

Bentham, the arch-theorist in *Morals*, nor

Practical efforts for the "*Reformation of manners*," availed to insure the desired end. It is true that Addison made piety respectable; that Mansfield gave every trial the benefit of his splendid impartiality; that Butler cut its feet from under the current deism; that the Utility school of morals wrought some external reforms; and that practical protests were made; yet not one, nor all together, led England back to righteousness, to a guarantee of immunity from impending storms. The work was done by men known less than any of these I have named, in their day, yet now known beyond all put together in this day. Are we claiming too much for the "Holy Club"?

Leslie Stephen says, the religious revival of Wesley and Whitefield was "in many respects the most important phenomenon of the century."³ Justin McCarthy writes, "In-

¹ Lecky, *Op. cit.*, Vol. ii. p. 595. ² Wesley and Methodism, p. 56.

³ History of Religious Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. ii. p. 389.

deed, there is not much about this period of English history concerning which the modern Englishman can feel really proud, except that great religious revival which began with the thoughts and teachings of John Wesley."¹ Addison coveted much: "It was said of Socrates that he brought down Philosophy from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell at clubs, and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses." We grant the claim. But the claim of the poor Oxford student goes far beyond this.

John Wesley's work lay in another line. Not philosophy, but piety, was by his invitation to walk with unhopèd-for energy in unaccustomed ways, and to become the first power and familiar friend of the common people, the regenerator of homes, the most logical of apologists, the backbone of law, the foundation of a finer culture, the real saviour of the English race.

What of this man? There is time for only a silhouette.

The first thing that catches our eye in his life is his mother's influence. John Wesley stands for heredity. Aristippus founded the Cyrenaic school of philosophy. At his death his daughter, Arete, directed its course. Her son was named for her father. So profoundly did she impress herself upon him that he, the next leader of the school, went by the name of *Matrodidaktos*, "mother-taught." So might the boy of the Epworth rectory have been named, as the foremost of those whose mother's apron-strings have been long enough to reach to the end of the boy's life, to the end of the history of the English race, to the end of time.

The rector's son becomes the Charterhouse gown boy. The gown boy passes on to Christ Church House at Oxford. He wins a fellowship in Lincoln College. He does not

¹ *Four Georges*, Vol. ii. p. 169.

lack ability. He does not lack character. He does not lack ambition. Yet his future is all unknown.

In fancy we see him on the evening of a busy day. His fellow-students, with whom he has been bending over the Greek Testament, have left him alone. The Book lies before him. His most recent self-dedication beckons him on. But how far on and up? In the veiled future he has no large vision of himself. His ingrained self-control has never indulged in idle dreams of attainment.

Had some one now told him, that, after years of study and prayer and waiting, he would become conscious of God's favor, would gather about him a band of like souls; that, after sifting his fellows, he would scour England; that, forsaking the traditions of the church, he and they would address, in open fields, vast throngs no building could hold; that he would organize, drill, direct, inspire, the multitude for a forward movement without parallel since the itinerating tentmaker of Tarsus prayed and preached the paganism of the Mediterranean shores out of power; that he would die at the head of a host of one hundred and forty thousand followers; that in a century from the date he received the witness of divine love that host would number one million, one hundred and seventy-one thousand; that in another half-century (a century after his death) the host, bearing now in honor the name with which his early devotion was derided, and which he bore with unruffled serenity in the midst of cursing, maddened mobs, would be marching around the world over six million strong; and if he had been told that this would be the smaller part of the fruitage of his dedication of himself to God; that in the train of his mighty leadership would follow the reform of prison life, a better penal code, the abolition of a thousand brutalities, the founding of asylums, the protection of children, the establishment of schools for their training, the spread of popular education entirely unfelt before his day

and due to the religious movement led by him; that with increased knowledge of the rights of men, and an increased sympathy with their sorrows, the abolition of slavery would be demanded in a paper to Parliament in which out of three hundred and fifty-two thousand, four hundred and four names of petitioners against its continued existence, one hundred years from his vision of the future, two hundred and twenty-nine thousand, four hundred and twenty-six would be Methodists; that a new philanthropy would signalize each step of this people's march; that the widening circles of the evangelical movement would include all protestant Christianity; that tract, Bible, and missionary societies would spring from the intelligent fervor of the movement; that in the presence of this practical gospel deism would shrivel; that unwelcome and unreasonable dogmas would be shut out of the pulpits of the coming age; that cannibalism would become extinct in sea-girt islands; that the worse than cannibal ferocity of the French Revolution would fall back from England smitten blind by the flame and light of this mightier revolution; if he had been told that without "novelty of doctrine" this religious and moral revolution would "invest the most prosaic life with a halo of romance," would arouse in "great masses of men an enthusiasm of piety which was hardly surpassed in the first days of Christianity," would "emancipate great numbers from the fear of death, and impart a warmer tone to the devotion and a greater energy to the philanthropy of every denomination both in England and in the colonies"; and if, as the vision reached its vastest compass, he had been told that, led by his gospel-on-horseback, a mighty race would with a swinging, tireless stride press through the great gates of the Northwest, out into the wider area of the Anglo-Saxon's new land;—and that he, the poor rector's son, would help God turn a corner in human history, and that Westminster Abbey, into whose pulpit he was not to

put foot, would honor its walls with his face and that of his brother, carved in memorial marble, which, though white, would be less clear and unstained than his own transparent character and less enduring than his own immortal name;—had all this been told him, he would have dismissed the tale as an idler's vagary, and with that rare sanity of reason which distinguished him, he would have bent to his present task.

Yet the above is the barest recital of the outcome of the purpose of the Oxford student to live up to the highest light he had and could get. The vision has become fact. The nineteenth century is what it is morally and religiously because of the eighteenth century "Holy Club." Canon Taylor has declared that Methodism is "*The starting-point of modern religious history.*"

But this does not account for the movement itself. Is Methodism an enigma? Its visible elements in the Oxford student are not hard to find. Wesley's blood went for much. He was of gentle birth. He was so well born that he was absolutely unyielding to the seductions of rank, and so true a gentleman that he was every man's brother. His rearing was unexceptionable. His scholarship was above the suspicion of the most exacting critic. His character was stainless. His self-control was perfect. His courage was equal to that of Cromwell. His organizing power has been the subject of constant eulogium.

Men have thought to explain the rise of Christianity and its spread from the level of human motives and human energies. Gibbon is the great example of this. Men have thought to explain the rise and spread of Methodism in the same way. Southey has not escaped this difficulty. He went so far as to charge Wesley with ambition, though he afterward withdrew this judgment. If we canvass all the facts, we shall not err. A profound writer has said, "Wes-

ley perplexes only those who, if they would confess it, are still more perplexed by Christianity itself." ¹

It has been left for a skeptical historian to make a complete admission. Lecky says, "The Methodist movement was a purely religious one. All explanations which ascribe it to the ambition of its leaders, or to merely intellectual causes, are at variance with the facts of the case." ²

In speaking of May 24th, 1738, and of Wesley in the prayer-meeting, Lecky remarks, with philosophic and impartial candor, "It is, however, scarcely an exaggeration to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate street forms an epoch in English history." ³

Christianity is supernatural. So is Methodism.

Its rise, its centrifugal movement, its sin-subduing power, its grit in reform, its growth among men in the face of difficulties known, unknown, anticipated, and unsuspected, but all of them overcome, its humanitarianism, its tolerance, its charities, its enthusiasm, its hearty fellowship with the ever-widening republicanism of these modern days, its bounding hopefulness, its emphasis upon life rather than upon institutional or confessional types of Christianity, its ever youthful flexibility in methods, and its attractive consciousness of a high and holy purpose to lead on in the march of the world's evangelization,—these declare it to be divine.

The supernatural sounded the clarion for Wesley's advance. It became the consolation of his waning strength. It nerved him at St. Ives against the mob, and nursed him on his dying bed, around which many gathered to watch the old hero's passing on and up. The philosophy of the great revival was declared in the "strange warning" of his heart, in the Aldersgate meeting, and in his last note of triumph, "*The best of all is, God is with us.*" What ex-

¹ Taylor, *Op. cit.*, p. 87. ² *Op. cit.*, Vol. ii. p. 598. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 607.

plains Methodism? God. There is no other adequate explanation of the movement. Wesley was, under God, enabled to exercise a "wider constructive influence in the sphere of practical religion than any other man who has appeared since the sixteenth century."¹

Both England and France had gigantic revolutions in the last century. The high-priest of the one was Wesley, and of the other Voltaire. They both seemed to be full of destructive energy. Methodism appeared to be so revolutionary as seriously to threaten the stability of the social system as well as of church life.

The encyclopedists of France urged liberty. They invoked the terrors of the wildest and most furious fanaticism. The revolution of Wesley was constructive; that of Voltaire was destructive. One was Christian, the other was anti-Christian. Both were charged with folly, fanaticism, and certain failure. Both resented the charge. Methodism lived through calumny and won. French infidelity scornfully flung the disgraceful imputation from her. What? The robes of the Goddess of Liberty stained with fanaticism? Anything, all things, but not that despicable offspring of superstition. But the fact remains that the French Revolution is the most wonderful illustration of a lawless and pernicious fanaticism in all the annals of history. Burke said that thing happened which no one would have imagined; "that atheism could produce one of the most violently operative principles of fanaticism" ever seen on earth.

France owed much to England, in her great upheaval: pity it is that she had taken cast-off clothes instead of a new robe, which she could have had for the asking. Voltaire, while getting good from Newton's philosophy, and Locke's toleration, was influenced by Collins, Wollaston, Bolingbroke, and other English deists. The robes had

¹ Lecky, *Op. cit.*, Vol. ii. p. 637.

soiled the Saxon, and were now to stain the Gallic people.

English deism went to France unwashed. It underwent a change in England. Under Wesley deism became theistic. Under Voltaire it became atheistic. It sat under the fair bowers of Paris "squat like a toad," till the spear of an Ithurial disclosure revealed it to men in all its devilish malignity. The deism of the English laborer went to its death in the Methodist class-room. The deism of the French attorney rioted away its allowance of liberty, and welcomed the chaotic frenzy of the Jacobin clubs of Ninety-three.

Wesley and Voltaire: these two are, as contemporaries, most fitting representatives of their peoples in culture, in toil, in character, and in the final result of life. We know Wesley's God and watchword. Had Voltaire no God, no watchword? The word of the French reformer was "Honor," and its sanctioning deity was the "Force of Public Opinion." But Honor is oftentimes the daughter of vanity, and the force of public opinion has little about it that is divine. It never sent Columbus to America, nor showed Copernicus the secrets of the starry system, nor fired Livingstone to go to Africa. As a basis of public and private morals it is a failure. It is as Carlyle has said: "Without some belief in the necessary, eternal, or which is the same, in the supramundane, Divine nature of Virtue, existing in each individual, what could the moral judgment of a thousand or a thousand thousand individuals avail us?"

The God of Wesley is the world's Maker and Redeemer. The watchword of the English reformer was not "Honor," but "*Holiness*." England rose, and France receded, because Holiness is evermore stronger than Honor. Holiness is the chief of builders. It works marvels in a short time, and finally moulds heaven out of earth. It is disinterested and centrifugal. Honor is oftentimes selfish and centripetal.

The Frenchmen boasted of their "Fraternity." But

what did it amount to? It was very far from being comprehensive. It was never unselfish. It was exclusive. Voltaire was fond of the attentions of the higher ranks. The insinuating flattery of their smiles fed the vanity of the poet-philosopher. Wesley went to the highways to walk with plain men. Voltaire said: "We have never pretended to enlighten shoemakers and servants." Without cheapening his refined manhood, Wesley befriended miners, plowboys, and cobblers. His fraternity included the whole world-parish.

The sentimental Frenchman praised the heroic of great days. The sensible Englishman begot the heroic of common days. Both attracted the women of their day, and received from them rare proofs of peculiar devotion. For answer to the declaration of the great English critic, who has said that there was nothing heroic in the eighteenth century, we recall two scenes in the middle of the century, one in France, the other in England. The surroundings of the two scenes are as different as can be imagined. Voltaire was loaded with honors on the occasion of the acting of his play "Merope" in Paris, February 20, 1743. Amid the tumultuous applause of the crowd, the author was seated at the front of the stage. While the crowd cheered, the Duchesse de Villars crowned him, and then, intoxicated by the part she had taken, she went further and immortalized him with a kiss.

While the Protagonist of Infidelity was thus set apart by the apotheosis of a titled woman's affection on a French stage, a scene less theatric, but more dramatic, was taking place across the Channel. The time was June 18, 1743. The place was Wednesbury. The slender Oxford scholar was the center of a storm. John Wesley had in some way aroused the mob. For six days the lanes and streets were filled with an infuriated, senseless, brutal throng. Down the road and by the river's brink Wesley was hustled,

cuffed, beaten, cursed, dragged, his clothing torn, his face bleeding, his cause forsaken by his friends. They were overawed. But Wesley was immovable. While chaos reigned he preserved an unbroken calm. Like Paul he could say: "No man stood by me"; yet one brave woman came to his aid. She walked by his side. She warded off the terrible onslaughts of the mob. She led him through the midst of the howling, drunken madmen. She became his guarantee of safety. She deserves a crown. Aye, she has one. It is unfading. Her name is her glory. Let the seeker for the heroic walk the streets of Wednesbury, and quicken his courage as he repeats the name of the heroine of the scene of the fiercest assault endured by the conqueror of a hundred mobs; and, for contrast to the hysterical Duchesse, study the heroic Joan Parks.

What did each leave? For immediate result; the writer of France, dying on the verge of the Revolution, deeded his tomb for a cradle of storms. The preacher of England walked a little nearer to the edge of the chasm, and found that the feet of the English people were on solid rock. The philosophy of Voltaire's skepticism blew up an awful tornado, and the tallest trees went to the ground. The philosophy of the Wesleyan revival walked the troubled waves, and silenced their fury with the might of speech and song.

For ultimate result; who can tell? The rock-firm biblical character of Wesley's gospel is known to all. Present-day judgment has strangely inverted the estimates of the last century. Then men thought that the power of Wesley's work was in its form, its new way of heralding the truth. But the power remains, though the form is ever changing. The opposite verdict is given in Voltaire's case. There the only thing that is now of any value is the form. According to Saintsbury, "Not the most elaborate work of

Voltaire is of much value for matter; but not the very slightest work of Voltaire is devoid of value as form."

The very year, 1778, in which, after having been crowned in a theater with laurel, Voltaire died, John Wesley opened City Road Chapel. Its pulpit, like all other pulpits of Methodism, was to achieve its loftiest purpose when in the union of truth with personality the surest success would be guaranteed to every preacher of righteousness. That pulpit towers above all other pulpits which most exalts the living witness.

The evangelical revival of the eighteenth century solved the question of the reformation of manners, of laws, and of life. This is no puerile boast. The whole world's regeneration lies in the microcosm of the one soul. The large liberty of the human race is involved in the one man's attainment of the "glorious liberty" of a child of God. Froude, in his Inaugural at Oxford, endeavored to tear in pieces the theory of the *evidence of progress in history*. He sees not much evidence of moral development. "According to Aristotle, that is the best condition of things which produces, not the largest amount of knowledge or wealth, but men of the noblest nature; and I cannot see that there is any distinct progress in productions of this kind." He admits there is more liberty, but authority is fading. "Does history show that, in proportion as men are left to their own wills, they become happier, truer, braver, simpler, more reverent of good, more afraid of evil? If so, the problem of existence is solved; but is it so?" He denies it. Liberty in the modern sense of the word has not raised the "character either of individuals or of nations." Character is the main thing to be considered, and "the only true progress is moral progress." Will any one with his historical perspective freed from the blurs and prejudices of oligarchic hauteur side with this pessimism?

The high ideal of liberty which the twentieth century

will take as its guide will not be the mad license of France, but the mild and firm loyalty of England under the direction of the Wesleys.

Who had the better notion of true liberty? The men who whirled about the benches of Danton and Robespierre, or those who watched at Independence Hall over the birth of the new nation? The liberty of the coming age will be seen to be a complete surrender to the will of God. The revolution of Irreligion issues in blundering crime and appalling cruelty. The revolution of Religion issues in real liberty, the elevation of the masses of men, their sharing in the affairs of government, the stability of the nation, the purity of its politics, and the peace of its homes.

The regeneration of the unit is the reformation of the universe.