

these men who labor for the race, and whose faith and works move mountains of antiquated ignorance, are more blamed for the noise and disturbance of their blasting, for the rough and irregular fractures in old beliefs, for the ragged clearings littered with remnants of ancient fancy, than they are praised for preparing materials for coming thousands to change into forms of beauty and utility. It is hard to realize that an unsightly hollow is more nearly prepared for a magnificent castle than is a beautiful lawn or grassy hillock. No longer than two little centuries ago that darkness which is just before the dawning—the concentrated blackness of the Dark Ages—hung heavily over Europe; all departments and all nations felt it and all were waiting with bated, anxious breath for something—they know not what—something new and strange which all felt to be impending over humanity. Church and State were doing their poor best to regulate the affairs of mind—were struggling on the side of conservatism against the renaissance of reason—a new birth which they felt instinctively would in its time of maturity be the cause of their destruction. Yet not the less did they continue to store their magazines with explosives and inflammables, forgetting that a single spark from the torch of an incendiary might shake society to its foundation; yes, in blind infatuation they even made fire their plaything and put torches in the hands of children. Now that the appointed time was come the man could not be lacking—many a man was ready for the mission, but none could prophecy who would have the strength for its completion. What work was there for the coming man? The Bourbon government had sinned away its day of grace, and the church was living on the blood of the innocent; literature was glaring, in its mediocrity, with only the few flashes of real illumination left by Racine and Corneille; true poetry hardly existed in France, and history was a mere enumeration of the deeds of kings and a diary of court scandals. War alone made history and few were the happy nations who had no history. Science consisted in twisting texts of Scripture into form praiseworthy only for their ingenuity and the few facts of nature which forced themselves into sight were outlawed and under ban. Farmers and artisans were only a couple of ciphers which increased a hundred-fold the worth of the upper classes. Judicial torture was not only allowed but was resorted to in the most trivial cases, and confession on the rack was the most conclusive of testimony. Pascal's philosophy was one of the necessary adornments of polite society; his morbid speculations mixed with his brilliant mathematics and flashes of true philosophy excluded all other investigators from the field, and Newton's theories were considered rank heresy. And Francis Aronnet de Voltaire, at the age when most of the French youths were sowing wild-oats with a liberal hand, took up the gauntlet of society; the son of a Paris notary, with his keen rapier of irresistible satire and his dagger of brilliant wit, prepared to defend mankind from its brute nature. Wielding all departments of literature with the hand of a master he forced upon the French theater—half drama, half opera, with its stately versification and decorous dialogue,—something of nature. He originated for France, the modern history by which we know something of the people—the real nation, and first among authors of note raised his voice for peace among nations. A faithful student in science he introduced Newton to the unwilling French

mind, and, while many of his ideas of nature were crude, he opened his mind for the best light then existing.

All departments of literature felt his quickening touch, and he lent his strength to all; yet Voltaire never swerved for a moment from his self-assumed task of crushing the monster who had fed on the happiness of France for so many centuries. In tragedy and story, history, pamphlet and letter is seen and heard one mighty plea for freedom of thought—for an opening of the dams that held back human reason, while the flood was yet under control—that flood which later burst through all barriers and fell with destroying force on the next generation. Well might the prophet ask—"Can ye not see the signs of the times?" But eyes and ears of magnate and prelate were closed with wealth, with pride, with slothfulness and the stroke of the avenging furies could not be averted. One dark remnant of primeval savagery indeed felt the blow of the sage of Ferney who had saved so many persecuted from its terrors, and torture was stricken from judicial methods—but the greatest result of his labor he lived not to see. Not the less however did the mighty revolution, irresistible with the pent up momentum of ages of tyranny, and hastened by his hand, purify a mighty nation and give a new impulse to the progress of truth, and though the tears of thousands were forced to flow, they moistened the dry roots of liberty's tree and a new growth followed. What shall we say to the enemies of this great man—to those who have a microscope for faults and stained glass for virtues? What have we to do with the failings of great men of past ages—only their good deeds affect us and we may well cover all others with a mantle of charity. Why cannot man rejoice in what good has come down to him from the past, instead of complaining that there is no more? And what are the crimes of Voltaire—that, under a system of society radically different from ours, he lived in a radically different manner; that, being only human, he was not always perfectly consistent, and that, when over seventy years of age and with the most prodigious reputation ever enjoyed by man during his lifetime, he did not retain his full vigor to the last; that with a morbid dread of disrespect to his remains, he made some concessions, which he knew would deceive no one, to his life-long enemy; and finally, that he was a destroyer only and constructed nothing. There are times when destruction is reconstruction—we do not complain of the physician if he only destroys the disease—but even granting this, did he not do a work that none other could have accomplished? Though it may not be as grand a work to tear away a ruin as to construct a palace it is quite as necessary and may be as difficult. Ninety-two volumes attest the energy with which he labored at his task, and none can say that it was not done well. While we admit some flaws in the jewel, we must remember that, even with the flaws, it is much more valuable than the common pebble without them.

Who was the man, who with the blaze of the 19th century's civilization concentrated upon him, made of himself a common body snatcher in removing from their resting place in Paris and casting into a public field the remains of this man idolized by the French people? Who but the king of that great nation, fit representative of the house of Bourbon, who recognize no power save that of brute strength. But well perhaps that the ashes of the man exiled for his humanity and his struggle against