

ministers in power, and looked for appointments mainly to draw the large incomes attached to their sees. There were, of course, many simple, earnest men among both the clergy and the bishops, but very many more were both careless and ignorant. The dissenters were far from being as earnest and godly as they had been a century before. The lower orders of the people were ignorant and vicious. The labouring poor were quite neglected, especially in the towns and in the mining districts. Ignorant, dirty, ragged, and poorly housed, their lives were a cheerless, hopeless grind. Drunkenness was a common vice of the people.

But a great change was at hand. About 1735, a small group of students at Oxford began to attract much attention

by their meetings for prayer and religious exercises. So enthusiastic and so methodical were they in their habits of devotion that they were given the nickname of "Methodists." From this earnest band of students spread a great religious revival which was to have a powerful effect on the spiritual and social life of the whole community. The two great leaders of the movement were John Wesley and George Whitfield. These



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men threw themselves with whole-hearted devotion into the work of preaching the Gospel to the poor and the outcast of England. They travelled up and down the country, preaching in barns and houses and in the open air, and teaching the truths of the Bible to all who came to listen. As the bishops opposed this irregular work, the "Methodists" formed a society of their own, and accepted the name given at first in derision. Before the death of John Wesley in 1791, they counted their membership at more than one hundred thousand. Many of the great humanitarian movements of the latter part of the