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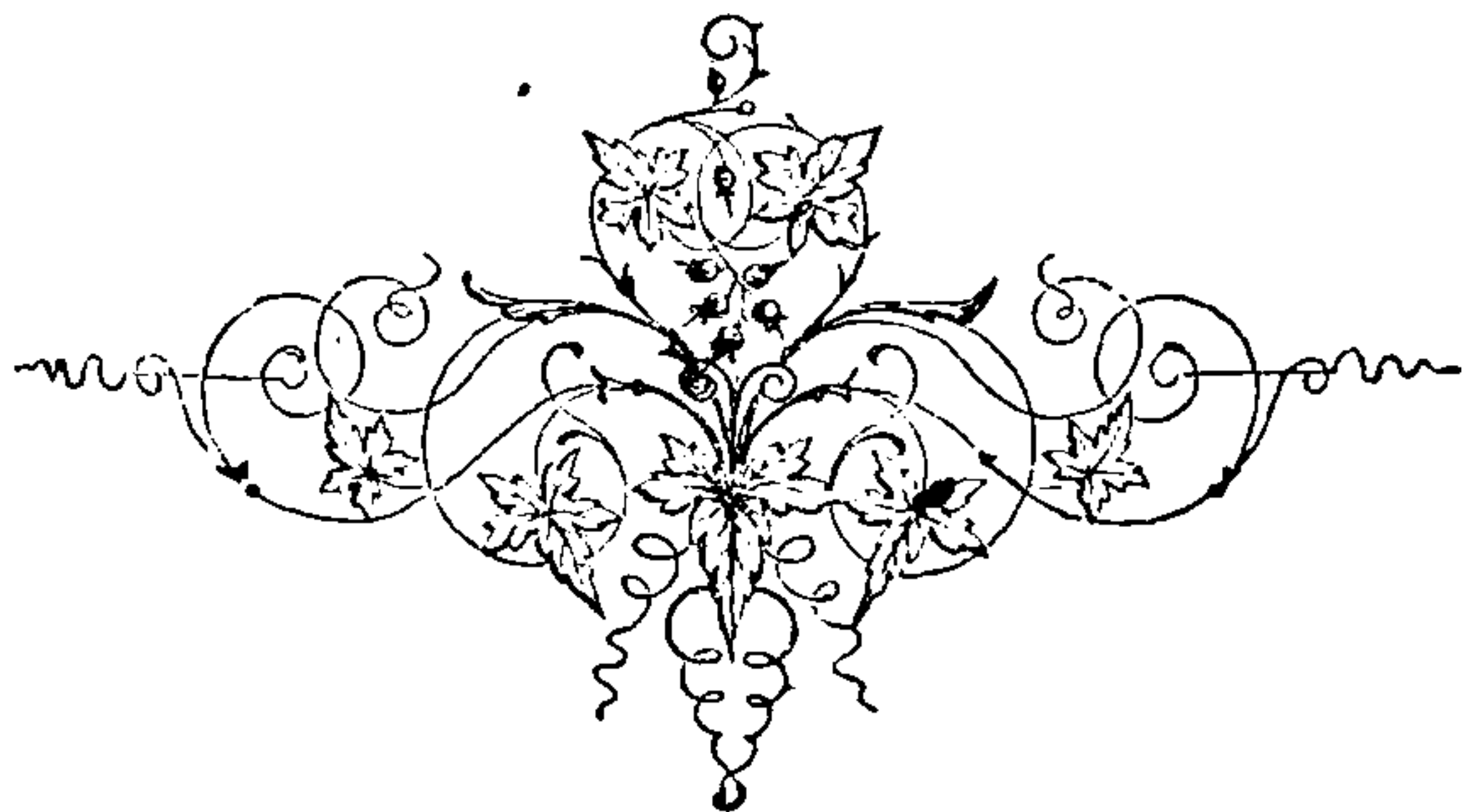
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THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
MARTIN LUTHER.

BY
W. CARLOS MARTYN,

AUTHOR OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN MILTON.



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PREFACE.

THE object in the compilation of these pages has been twofold. An effort has been made to combine in some sort a biography of Luther, and a history concise yet clear of that remarkable Reformation which took its rise, under God, through his instrumentality; so that the most unlettered reader might get from this volume at once an accurate personal view of Luther, and a clear idea of the grounds upon which the Reformation was based, together with its salient characteristics and its most famous historical personages.

The biography of Luther is in truth a history of his age, so wide-spread were his connections, so universal was his influence. Yet, singularly enough, most of his biographers have traced his life chiefly and intentionally from a personal stand-point. These works are therefore fragmentary, as witness the lives by Michelét and Meurer.

In turning to ecclesiastical history, it is found that minute personal biography is not within its sphere. Those interesting incidents, those lifelike personal trifles which are the key to character, and which constitute the essence of biography, are necessarily slighted. The careful and judicious muse of history shows us her chosen children only on *gala* days, when dressed in the garb of great and exceptional occasions. How does this hero demean himself at his own hearthstone? How does he conduct

himself in the *ordinary* walks of life? To these questions she will not stoop to reply.

Thus it happens that the most graphic historians of the Reformation necessarily merge Luther's grand individuality in the absorbing sea of general events.

In this volume careful attention has been paid to what has been termed distinctively the *personal* side of Luther's character, and also to the *historical* side: he is here presented as the *reformer*, and as the *man*.

In the execution of this plan, liberal use has been made of all the available material: whatever tended to improve and animate the book has been freely, yet it is hoped discriminatingly levied upon; the aim being not the utmost possible originality, but the utmost possible completeness and interest.

The story of Luther's life, owing to the abundance of material out of which the narrative may be constructed, is mainly a labor of editorial research. The loving pens of his contemporaneous disciples gathered up with reverent care every thing that he said and did, the minutest trifles of his daily life; and succeeding generations have embodied these in a thousand pages of heterogeneous biography.

By a judicious arrangement of these records, Luther may be made to relate Luther. Wherever use could be made of his own picturesque narrations of important phases of his career, these have been selected, and care has been exercised not to interrupt the authoritative grandeur of his speech.

Usually where the Roman and the Protestant authorities are in essential agreement, the Roman writers have had the preference in the marginal

citations, for obvious reasons; and no statement of fact which has ever been questioned, has been unreservedly made in this volume, without a prior close scrutiny in the light of impartial history.

Not an *ideal* Luther, but Luther as he was, frank, homely, resolute, vehement, statesmanlike, grand, yet marred by faults, human in his errors, is the Luther of this book. The life he dared to live, surely we should not fear to depict.

The first portion of Luther's life abounds in striking historic pictures, and is replete with singular fascination. It marches on from his entrance into the Erfurth cloister, through the stormy phases of the initiatory days of the Reformation, up to the confession of faith at Augsburg, with the grandeur of an epic poem.

His latter years are necessarily more prosaic. Standing on the table-land of the Reformation, he was largely employed in the discussion of mooted points of the new faith, and in settling the discipline of the reformed church—an important work no doubt, but not of general interest; nor is it necessary to follow him minutely into the field of polemics.

This portion of Luther's life has therefore been somewhat abridged, while care has been taken to exclude from the volume every thing of a questionable or denominational character. Like Milton, Martin Luther belongs to Christendom at large, nor can any single sect or country be permitted to appropriate him.

The amount of labor necessitated by this work has been great. The authorities, English, German, and French, consulted, compared, and cited, have been unusually numerous and diverse. Attention

is called to the marginal portion of the book; at the same time it is hoped that any inaccuracies which may inadvertently have crept into it, may be pardoned in view of the extent of ground covered, and the labor undergone.

This has been a labor of love. A profound respect for the life and influence of Martin Luther, certainly one of the most extraordinary men known to history, and a firm belief that no one since apostolic days has been entitled to greater and more general reverence—these are the feelings which have dictated the compilation of this biography; and it is now given to the public in the earnest hope that it may serve to broaden the posthumous fame of its illustrious subject, and to interest hearts now untouched in the GRAND CAUSE for which he labored, for which he suffered, and for which he was content, if need were, to die.

Luther was the restorer of liberty to the ages which followed his era. He signed his name to the great revolution which legalized the right of free examination. “To him,” says Michelét, “it is in great measure owing, that we of the present day exercise in its plenitude the sovereignty of individual reason, that first great right of the human understanding to which all others are annexed, without which all others are naught. We cannot think, speak, write, read for a single moment without gratefully recalling to mind this enormous benefit of intellectual enfranchisement. The very lines I here trace, to whom do I owe it that I am able to send them forth, if not to the liberator of modern thought?”

NEW YORK, 1866.

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MARTIN LUTHER.

CHAPTER I.

“GIVE me,” said Archimedes, “a point without the world, and I will move the earth from its poles.” It has been well said by D’Aubigné, that “true Christianity is this point, which raises the heart of man from its ‘double pivot of selfishness and sensuality, and which will one day turn the whole world from its evil ways, and make it revolve on a new axis of righteousness.”*

Some men run up and down eagerly demanding evidence of the divine origin of Christianity. This is the sufficient proof—its *imperishability*. All the other creeds which have domineered over the intellects or the hearts of men have eventually succumbed either to outward force or to internal corruption, and crumbled to pieces. “The national religions

* D’Aubigné’s Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. 1, preface.

which had satisfied the parents, no longer proved sufficient for their children. The new generations could not repose contented within the ancient forms. The gods of every nation, when transported to Rome, there lost their oracles, as the nations themselves had lost their liberty. Brought face to face in the capital, they had destroyed each other, and their divinity had vanished.”*

From the grey dawn of history, when Cambyzes came down from Persia and thundered across Egypt, treading out beneath his horses' hoofs the old ecclesiasticism which built and inscribed the pyramids, to that monstrous birth, the “religion of reason,” with which the infidel philosophers of the French Revolution sought to replace Christianity, all creeds which have owed their inception to the human intellect, to the wit of laymen or of priests, have been eventually overthrown by the scornful execrations of their former dupes.

Christianity alone has stood all tests, firm as that “Rock of ages” upon which it is based.

“I am tired,” said Voltaire, “of hearing that twelve men established Christianity. I will show that *one* man is sufficient to overthrow it.” But the rock of unbelief with which the haughty scholar meant to crush religion, God, as in that tradition of the Jewish Talmud, of Og king of Bashan, hung about his own neck, and fastened it there for ever.

Christianity, from the moment when Christ began to preach it on the plains of Palestine, has trium-

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. 1, p. 1.

phantly withstood the assaults of heathen rage, of priestly intrigue, of worldly ambition, of scholastic subtlety; and God has also vouchsafed it sufficient inherent power to cleanse itself, when the licentiousness of ecclesiastics and the cunning of statecraft have sought to transform its temple into a den of profligacy, or into a shelter for money-changers.

“Christianity has so directly for its object the improvement of man’s nature, that to conceal any of its doctrines, or to oppose, under the pretence of its sanctions, the full development and exercise of reason, is to resist its Author, and nullify his mercy. But a system so pure and luminous as that of the gospel is totally adverse to the deceits and artifices necessary for the support of spiritual pride or ecclesiastical ambition: the system has therefore to be modified when employed for such purposes; and that this may be done securely, every effort must be made to prevent a comparison between the new and the original form of the religion.

“The domination of the Roman pontiffs afforded, for many ages, a memorable instance of power wholly supported by these means. As bishops of one of the most ancient provinces of the Christian church, they merited reverence, and had a just claim to the authority which Christ has vested in all his ministers: but this was not sufficient for the purposes of pride and sensual ambition; and that which the gospel allowed not, they had to support by a cumbersome scaffolding of crafty inventions. Nor did they stop here; for no invention which tends to

violate truth or nature can endure long, if the evidence existing against it be not studiously anticipated. To prevent the light of the gospel, therefore, from freely circulating, to put a ban upon reason when it ventured to assail even the outworks of usurped authority, was the grand policy of Rome; and in this it succeeded till it left no alternative for mankind but to groan perpetually under the most galling of yokes, or to assert the right of reason and the liberty of the gospel with a new and holy enthusiasm.”*

After the birth of Christ, the most momentous event in the annals of the human race is that Titanic struggle which occurred in the sixteenth century for the reformation of those abuses which deformed and scandalized the Christian name. The success of the reformers has been pregnant with the most beneficent results. It has bequeathed to mankind the rich legacy of a pure gospel, the spirit of inquiry, and unfettered lips: influential also upon the politics of Christendom, it has marked out many of the limits and duties of Christian citizenship, and taught rulers the true sources and uses of sovereign power: inculcating nobler social ethics, it has lifted a servile, ignorant, and licentious race, melted in baths and perfumes, engrossed in folly and debauchery, upon a higher plane of manhood and honorable living. Civilization, depending for its progress upon the diffusion of intelligence and the establishment of just laws, received from the Reformation, which

* Stebbing's Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. 1., pp. 1, 2.



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emperors, kings, and princes. They yielded and fell before him. Then came our Lord God. He dealt the cards: he took the lowest," Luther, "for himself, and with it he beat the pope, that vanquisher of the kings of the earth. This is the ace of God. As Mary said, 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.'""*

Martin Luther, the grand central figure of the Reformation, was born on the 10th of November, 1483,† at Eisleben, a village of Saxony, situated near the Harz mountains, and then subject to the Counts of Mansfeld. On the following day, Tuesday, it being St. Martin's day, he received the seal of his dedication to God, in memory of which he was called Martin by his parents.

The ancestors of this boy just born and consecrated to God's service were peasants, inhabiting the village of Mora, near the Thuringian forests. Melancthon hints that the Luther family were ancient and numerous.‡

The man to whom God gave the rare honor of calling the great inaugurator of the new *régime* son, was named John Luther, and was a younger member of the family. Marrying the daughter of a cit-

* Luther's "Table Talk."

† An attempt was made by Luther's enemies, who believed in astrology, to prove that he was born on the 22d of October, when, as they said, there was a certain malign conjunction of the planets. It was asserted that with such a horoscope he could scarcely fail of being a heretic and reprobate.

‡ *Vetus familia est et laté propagata mediocrium hominum.* Melancthon's "Vita Lutheri."

izen of Neustadt, in the see of Warzburg, Gretha Lindemann, the newly wedded pair quitted the Thuringian plains, pushing buoyantly and resolutely out into the great world in search of a home and livelihood.

They finally selected Eisleben as their residence. Here, under the brow of the Harz mountains, John Luther erected his cot; and being a miner by trade, he found in the adjacent mines that employment which he desired.

John Luther, notwithstanding his humble station and his poverty, which was at this time extreme, was a man of intelligence and a great reader. Books were then rare; but the miner omitted no opportunity for their acquisition, and he devoted a large portion of his leisure hours to their perusal. He was a man of upright and frank character, mingling, however, with those qualities a firmness which amounted to obstinacy.*

Concerning Luther's mother, we have Melancthon's testimony that she possessed all those virtues which adorn a noble and Christian woman. She was looked upon by the matrons of the neighborhood as a model whom they should strive to imitate.†

It has never been definitely ascertained how many children were born to this worthy pair; but it is certain that there were several besides Martin, since two died of the plague which desolated Europe

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. 1, Book II., p. 145.

† Melancthon's "Vita Lutheri."

at the commencement of the sixteenth century, and one, a daughter, married the scribe Ruhel de Mansfeldt, whose name occasionally occurs in Luther's correspondence.*

Ere Martin was a year old his parents removed from Eisleben to the adjoining village of Mansfeldt, attracted thither by the celebrity of the Mansfeldt mines.

Luther has himself informed us that his parents were at this period very poor. He adds, "They endured the severest labor for our sakes." Thus the little boy was early inured to labor and frugality. But the indefatigable zeal and business tact of the elder Luther would not suffer him to grovel long in the depths of abject poverty. It was not long ere his economy and success enabled him to establish at Mansfeldt two smelting furnaces. His integrity and moral worth were speedily recognized by his fellow-townsmen, who promoted him to several magisterial offices.†

Although not himself what would be termed a man of cultivated mind, John Luther had acquired sufficient knowledge to be fully conscious of its value, and he early determined to bestow upon young Martin a good education, and if he exhibited an aptitude for learning, to train him up to scholarly pursuits.

John Luther, having been appointed counsellor of Mansfeldt, took advantage of his official position

* Audin's "Histoire de Luther."

† D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. 1, p. 146.

to court the society which he preferred. "He had a great esteem for learned men, and often invited to his table the clergy and schoolmasters of the place. His house offered a picture of those social meetings of his fellow-citizens, which did honor to Germany at the commencement of the sixteenth century. It was a mirror in which were reflected the numerous images that followed one another on the agitated scene of the times. The child profited by them. No doubt the sight of these men, to whom so much respect was shown in his father's house, excited more than once in little Martin's heart the ambitious desire of becoming himself one day a schoolmaster or learned man."*

The austerity and earnestness of his parents, by checking the natural tendency of his character to impulsive thought and expression, undoubtedly had a happy influence upon young Luther. He was taught to be attentive to the soberness and reality of life. But it is certain that in their excessive use of corporeal chastisement as an incentive to study or the performance of duty, they greatly erred, securing, not a ready compliance with their just wishes, but the timid acquiescence of a cowed spirit. Martin's parents were very harsh to him in the earliest and most impressible years of his life, not intentionally, but simply because such was the vicious domestic custom of the age. Luther in after-life wrote these words: "My parents treated me harshly, so that I became very timid. My mother

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref. Vol. 1, pp. 146-7.

one day chastised me so severely about a hazel-nut that I had stolen, that the blood came. . They seriously thought that they were doing right ; but they could not distinguish character, which however is very necessary in order to know when, or where, or how chastisement should be inflicted. It is necessary to punish ; but the apple should be placed beside the rod.”*

Luther at six years of age could read and write fluently.† Exhibiting at the same time great aptitude for study, and singular oratorical talent, his father determined, when he became of a sufficient age, to send him to the university, there to initiate himself into the mysteries of the law, then as now one of the grand avenues to fame and preferment.

Meantime Martin was continued at school in Mansfeldt until he reached his fourteenth year, being treated by the schoolmaster with no less severity than he met with at his father’s hearthstone. His master flogged him fifteen successive times in one morning. Afterwards, when relating this circumstance, Luther said, “ We must whip children, but we must at the same time love them.”‡

Having acquired at Mansfeldt the common rudiments taught in the lower schools of that day, the catechism, the apostle’s creed, some hymns, the Roman formulas of prayer, and having peeped into a Latin grammar, Martin received his father’s bless-

* Luther’s Opp. Works, 22, p. 1785.

† Audin’s Hist. de M. Luther.

‡ D’Aubigné’s History of the Reformation, Vol. I., p. 148.

ing and his mother's kiss, and left home for Magdeburg, where his father had resolved to place him in the Franciscan school.

“In the month of May, 1497, two scholars wended their way along the high road from Mansfeldt to Bernburg, knapsacks on their backs, sticks in their hands, and great tears rolling down their cheeks: they were Martin Luther, aged fourteen, and his comrade Hans Reinicke, about the same. Both had just quitted the paternal roof, and were proceeding on foot to Magdeburg, to avail themselves of the *currend schulen*, celebrated seminaries in the middle ages, which still exist. Here each boy paid for his board and education by means of alms collected from the richer townsmen, under whose windows they used to sing twice a week, and of money earned as choristers.”*

After the passage of a few months, Luther's parents, learning of the difficulty with which he supported himself at Magdeburg, transferred him to the free school at Eisenach, in which village he had a number of relatives. But despite that fact, the young student at the outset fared but little better than at the Franciscan school. As illustrating a singular phase of the social life of those times, it is worthy of notice that, at Eisenach as at Magdeburg, Luther supported himself by singing before people's houses; and it was a custom then of the poor students of Germany. Luther, after relating this circumstance, adds, “Let no one in my pres-

* Audin's “Histoire de M. Luther.”

ence speak contemptuously of the poor fellows who go from door to door singing and begging bread *propter Deum*. You know the psalm says, *Princes and kings have sung*. I myself was once a poor mendicant, seeking my bread at people's houses, particularly at Eisenach, my own dear Eisenach."* Eventually he obtained a more regular subsistence and an asylum in the house of Ursula Cotta, a hospitable and kind-hearted woman, who has been made famous by her connection with Luther.

The charitable lady had noticed Luther at church, and had been especially pleased by his singing, Martin then being engaged every Sunday as chorister. One evening, on opening her door, she noticed the boy standing dejectedly before her house and gazing wistfully at the board amply spread within. Recognizing him, the lady asked what he desired. Poor Luther, who was very hungry, and who while begging had already on that day been repulsed from three houses, won by the kind tones and benevolent aspect of dame Ursula, poured into her ear his whole story. She supplied his wants; and upon her husband Conrad's return, he also became so much interested in the bright and fascinating boy, that he was fain to invite him to take up his permanent residence with them, which a few days afterwards he did.

"Luther passed in Cotta's house a very different kind of life from that which he had hitherto known. His existence glided away calmly, exempt

* Michelét's Life of Luther, pp. 4, 5.



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Ursula Cotta that he uttered this beautiful thought: "There is nothing sweeter on earth than the heart of a woman in which piety dwells."

By the assistance rendered him by the Cotta family, Martin was enabled to remain at the Eisenach school during four years.* In that time he studied grammar, rhetoric, and poetry under a famous master, Trebonius, rector of the convent of the Barefooted Carmelites.

It was the custom of Trebonius to give his lessons with head uncovered, to honor, as he said, the consuls, chancellors, doctors, and masters who would one day proceed from his school. Martin's ready comprehension, his natural eloquence, his rare power of elocution, his skill in composition, both prose and poetical, soon made him the object of his master's special favor; at the same time, his open, cheerful, and obliging disposition made him exceedingly popular with his school-mates, and soon pushed him into the leadership in their frolics, as he had always been in their studies.†

From this pleasant and improving scene Luther was, in 1501, called away. His father, now in easier circumstances, wished his son to repair to the university of Erfurth. Accordingly Martin quitted, not without many sighs and tears, the dear Eisenach streets, and in his eighteenth year he was matriculated at Erfurth.

* Michelét's Life of Luther.

† Audin's "Hist. de Luther."

CHAPTER II.

IN the registers of the university, still open to the inspection of the curious, in the quaint old town of Erfurth, the name of Luther may still be deciphered, written there by the rector Jodoens Truttvetter, "*Martinus Ludher, ex Mansfield.*" This entry is made under the year 1501.

A year later, in 1502, the name once more appears: "*Martinus Luder, Baccalaurius philosophice.*"

"At Erfurth," says Melancthon, "Martin read most of the writings that remain to us of the ancient Latins, Cicero, Virgil, and the rest. At the age of twenty he was honored with the title of Master of Arts; and then, by the advice of his relations, he began to apply himself to jurisprudence. In the monastery, he excited general admiration in the public exercises by the facility with which he extricated himself from the labyrinths of dialectics. He read assiduously the prophets and the apostles, then the books of St. Augustine, his explanation of the Psalms, and his book on the "Spirit and the Letter." He almost got by heart the treatises of Gabriel Biel and Pierre d'Audilly, bishop of Cambray; he studied with earnestness the writings of Occam, whose logic he preferred to that of Scotus and Thomas Aquinas. He also read a great deal of the writings of Gerson, and above all, those of St. Augustine."*

* Melancthon's "Vita Lutheri."

While at the university, Luther mastered the subtle intricacies of the scholastic theology and of Aristotle's dialectics, both of which God destined him in after years to wound so fatally.

His instructors at Erfurth were Jodocus Truttveter, whose death he afterwards accused himself of hastening by his rebellion against and discomfiture of the *curriculum* of the schools ;* Jerome Emser, who explained the poetics of Reuchlin ; Gerard Hecker, an Augustin monk, who afterwards became a convert to the tenets of the Reformation, introducing it into his convent ;† Bartholomew Usinger, surnamed Arnoldi, who vigorously opposed the new doctrine ; John Grovenstein, who loudly protested against the execution of John Huss, and regarded the curate of Bethlehem as a martyr ; and John Bigaud, who remained throughout life zealously attached to his pupil.‡

Under the tuition of these able professors, young Luther made rapid progress in his studies. Here also, as at the schools of Magdeburg and Eisenach, his frank and generous temper melted all hearts into the warmest attachment ; while his retentive memory, his teeming imagination, his brilliant scholarship, his acute and soaring intellect, and his moral deportment, made "the whole university," as Melancthon assures us, "admire his genius."§

Although, in obedience to his father's wish,

* Audin's "Histoire de Luther." † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

§ "Sic igitur in juventute eminebat, ut toti academice Lutheri ingenium admirationi esset." Vita Lutheri.

Martin devoted himself assiduously to the study of the civil law, his heart was never in it. He infinitely preferred the belles-lettres and music. Of music he did not hesitate to say, that to him it appeared the first of the arts after theology. "Music," he affirmed, "is the art of the prophets; it is the only other art which, like theology, can calm the agitations of the soul and put the devil to flight."

"Not less remarkable, not less significant than his prose works, are the poems of Luther, those stirring songs which escaped from him in the very midst of his combats and his necessities, as a flower makes its way from between rough stones, or as a moonbeam glitters amid dark clouds. Luther loved music; he wrote indeed a treatise on the art. His versification accordingly is in a very high degree harmonious, so that under this head too he may be called the Swan of Eisleben: not that he was by any means gentle or swanlike in the songs which he composed for the purpose of exciting the courage of his people; in these he is fervent, fierce. The hymn which he composed on his way to Worms is a regular war song. The old cathedral trembled when it heard these novel sounds; the very crows flew from their nests on its towers. That hymn, the Marseillaise of the Reformation, has preserved to the present day its potent spell over German hearts, and we may yet hear it thundered forth."*

This inclination to music and literature, the

* Heine, in the "Revue de Deux Mondes" for March 1, 1834.

assiduous cultivation of the arts, which he alternated with the study of logic and the law, presented no indication that he was so soon to play the chief part in contemporaneous religious history. Various traditions moreover would lead us to believe that, notwithstanding his application and his high moral character, he took his share in the amusements of German student life at that period*—that gayety in indigence, those boisterous, hearty manners, that martial exterior, with a gentle spirit and peaceful disposition within.

Yet despite his enjoyment of those frolics which seem in all countries to be inseparably connected with university life, Luther still managed to spend a large portion of his leisure time in the alcoves of the Erfurth library. Passionately fond of books, he never tired of taking from the shelves the musty old volumes of half-forgotten lore, whose pages he scanned with hearty zest.

One day—he was then in his twentieth year, and had been at the university two years—while engaged as usual in glancing over the library manuscripts, he chanced to open an old volume, mouldy and cobwebbed. Attracted by its antique aspect, Luther read its title, and found it to be a *Latin Bible*, the first he had ever seen.† . This he read and reread with inexpressible and never-ceasing delight, mingled with some astonishment, for until then he had imagined that the fragments of Scrip-

* Michelét's Life of Luther.

† Audin, Michelét, Milner, Mosheim, Maimbourg, Seckendorf.

ture contained in the various collects of the Roman ritual embraced the whole word of God.

Thus in an obscure corner of a neglected library, locked up in the Latin text, was discovered to Martin Luther that book which he was so instrumental in restoring to its pristine dignity, purity, and authority, and which he did so much to popularize by that admirable German translation in which his countrymen still read the oracles of God.

Luther was particularly charmed by the story of Hannah and her son Samuel. "O God," he murmured, "could I have one of these books, I would ask no other worldly treasure." A great revolution then took place in his soul. Human words clothed in poetry, however noble, seemed to him worthless and tame in comparison with the inspired word. Distressed in his mind, experiencing a greater distaste than ever for the law, and worn by study, he fell ill. An old priest came to confess him. The patient was pale, and gave way to a depression which aggravated his sufferings. "Come, my son," said the good confessor to him, "courage, courage; you will not die of this sickness. God has a great destiny in store for you; he will make a man of you, and you will live to console others in your turn; for God loves those whom he chastens."*

In 1505, some time after his discovery of the Latin Bible, two incidents occurred which still further changed the current of Luther's thoughts, and drove him to new-model the plan of his life.

* Audin's "Histoire de Luther."

The assassination of one of his intimate college friends caused him much sorrow, which was suddenly increased to an agony by the self-put inquiry, "What if I should be called thus unexpectedly away?" This question, echoing and reëchoing in his ears, gave him no peace. The phantom of that thought he could not lay.

Shortly afterwards, while walking near Erfurth, he was overtaken by a terrific thunder-storm. The diapason of the elemental cannonade smote with crushing force upon his shrinking senses. The forked tongue of the lightning greedily licked the ground all about him. He seemed encompassed by the ghastly flames. The clammy fingers of death appeared to be tugging at his throat. Delirious with horror, the poor student fell prostrate to the ground, breathing a vow to heaven, that if he survived the perils of that awful hour, he would dedicate himself to God's service, and entering some monastic order, assume the cowl, the sandals, and the cord.*

Luther has himself informed us that it was not deliberately, or even willingly, that he became a monk. "Being suddenly encompassed by the terrors of death," he says, "I made a reluctant and forced vow." Nevertheless the conscientious student regarded this oath, wrung from him in a kind

* These incidents are narrated at length, and vouched for by all Luther's biographers—D'Aubigné, Audin, Michelét, Melancthon, Seckendorf, Milner, Maimbourg, Moreri, Du Pin, and the rest.



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CHAPTER III.

Now, just as Martin Luther's connection with the church commences through his entrance into the cloister, it becomes of interest to learn something of the ecclesiastical condition of Europe at the period which immediately preceded the Reformation.

The Roman see, originally a simple bishopric, which had risen from the despised church planted by St. Paul beneath the shadow of the throne of the Cæsars, under the sway of a series of unscrupulous, able, and ambitious prelates, had gradually, in the lapse of ages, arrogated to itself the supreme ecclesiastical control. Receiving from the neighboring princes a voluntary recognition of their claims to *spiritual* authority, it was not long ere the new-born hierarchy of the church began to cast longing eyes upon *temporal* superiority. In those rude and stormy times, princes were often shaken from their thrones, either by the onset of the Saracens, or by internecine broils. They were in consequence obliged to have recourse to some central power for protection and support. Rome offered to princes so situated her active countenance, on condition that they would concede to her both spiritual and temporal supremacy. Too often their straits compelled them to comply with this requisition. It was no uncommon thing for the early European

sovereigns to sign away one-half their domains, and pay their allegiance to Rome for the whole, on condition of their partial reinstatement into their rights in the remaining half of their territory. The Roman see thus became the usurer of the nations. It gradually hardened into a gigantic Shylock. Forgetful of its design, it became greedy only to swallow the usurped dominions of its neighbors ; and the atrocious spectacle was presented of a church planted to garner up souls for the heavenly kingdom, anxious mainly to acquire the temporal possession and enjoy the emoluments of this world.

In this encroachment of the Roman church the western bishops acquiesced, partly perhaps from jealousy of their eastern brethren, and partly because they preferred to submit to the supremacy of a pope, rather than to bow in submission to the dominion of an independent temporal power.

Thus the living church retired into the lonely sanctuary of a few true hearts, and an external church, abounding in pompous forms, and inflated with earthly pride, at length supplanted it, and impiously declared itself to be of divine appointment.

Under a succession of ambitious churchmen, the Benedicts, Hildebrands, and Gregorys of ecclesiastical history, this usurped power was consolidated and increased until, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, the Roman pontiffs were the acknowledged and undisputed arbiters of Christendom.

Of course it was not possible but that terrible abuses and corruptions should disfigure and disgrace an ecclesiasticism which had departed so radically from the original and simple purpose of its institution.

In 1505, at the time when Luther entered the cloister, the religious condition of Europe was singularly wretched and scandalous; yet not a ripple of rebuke stirred the placid sea of papal corruption. Against the flagitious and abounding profligacy of the times no voice dared protest. Over the minds of the few earnest and sincere ecclesiastics who still lingered in the cloisters there settled a sullen gloom. The ponderous and merciless machinery of the Roman hierarchy clanked unquestioned, and without a hitch. The so-called heresy of the Waldenses, who had attempted to inaugurate a purer *régime*, had been choked in blood. The Council of Constance had recently burned John Huss in the public market-place, because he ventured to differ from the Roman theologians; while the doctors of the *Sorbonne* openly declared the faggot and the stake to be the only light fit to guide the erring.

The agents of the Inquisition occupied themselves in suppressing all books which did not bear the *imprimatur* of the Vatican; thus wronging not the living only, but the dead; for “many a man,” says Milton, “lives a burden to the earth, but a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.”

Effeminate philosophers stooped to the grave discussion of the emptiest and most frivolous propositions, growing heated over such topics as these: “Do $2 \times 2 = 4$ or 5?” and, “Can angels fly from end to end without passing through the middle?”*

Struggling intellects and troubled hearts could expect but little aid or sympathy from the childish and emasculated philosophy inculcated by these bastard teachers. “Science,” said Lord Bacon, “was chained in that dark dungeon to which the ignorance or the spite of suspicious priests had consigned her, while as yet no knight-errant had appeared to effect her deliverance.”†

At this period not the slightest cultivation of Christian metaphysics was even attempted.

Frederic Myconius, an able coadjutor of Luther, who has left a manuscript history of the Reformation, paints this dreary picture of the ecclesiastical condition of that epoch :

“The sufferings and merits of Christ were looked upon as an idle tale, or as mere fictions, like the Odyssey of Homer. There was no thought of the faith by which we become partakers of the Saviour’s righteousness and of the heritage of eternal life. Christ was looked upon as a severe Judge, prepared to condemn all who should not have recourse to the intercession of the saints, or to the papal indulgences. In the place of Christ appeared other saviors and intercessors, the Virgin Mary like a Pagan

* Seckendorf’s History of Lutheranism.

† Bacon’s Essays.

Diana, and various saints who from time to time had been created by the popes.

“These mediators granted their intercessions only to such applicants as had deserved well of the orders founded by them. For this it was necessary to do, not what God has prescribed in the decalogue and enjoined on all mankind, but to perform works invented by monks and priests, and which brought money into the treasury. These works were Ave Marias, the prayers of St. Ursula and of St. Bridget; they must chant and cry night and day.

“There were as many resorts for pilgrims as there were mountains, forests, and valleys. But these penances might be compounded for money. The people therefore brought to the convents and to the priests money and every thing that had any value—fowls, ducks, geese, eggs, wax, straw, butter, and cheese. Then the hymns resounded, the bells rang, incense filled the sanctuary, sacrifices were offered up, the larders overflowed, the glasses went round, and masses terminated and concealed these pious orgies. The bishops no longer preached, but they consecrated priests, bells, monks, churches, chapels, images, books, and cemeteries; and all this brought in a large revenue. Bones, arms, and feet, the relics of pretended saints, were preserved in gold and silver boxes: they were given out during mass for the faithful to kiss; and this too was the source of great profit. All these people maintained that the pope, ‘sitting as God in the temple of

God,' 2 Thess. 2:4, could not err, and they would not suffer any contradiction."*

The priests, by attempting to exalt themselves, had become abased. They had aimed at robbing God of a ray of his own glory, and placing it in their own bosoms; but their attempt had proved vain, and they had only hidden there a leaven of corruption stolen from the power of evil.† The history of the age swarms with scandals. In many places the people were delighted at seeing a priest openly keep a mistress, thinking that the married women would thus be safe from his seductions.‡

The rural districts were the scene of riotous disorders. The abodes of the clergy were often dens of corruption. Corneille Adrian at Bruges,§ the abbot Trinkler at Cappel,|| in imitation of the eastern emirs, kept open harems. Priests, consorting with dissolute characters, frequented the taverns, played at dice, and crowned their orgies with quarrels and blasphemies.¶

The Council of Schaffhausen forbade the priests to dance in public except at marriages, and to carry more than one kind of arms. They decreed also that all priests discovered in brothels should be unfrocked.**

* Myconius' Hist. of the Ref. Seckendorf's Hist. of Luth.

† D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation.

‡ Nicol. De Clemangis de Præsulib. Simoniacis.

§ Metene. Nederl. Hist. VIII.

|| Hottinger, Hist. Eccles., Vol. IX.

¶ Mandate of Hugo, bishop of Constance, March 3, 1517.

** Müller's "Reliques," Vol. III., p. 251.

“In the archbishopric of Mentz, the priests often scaled the walls by night, and created all kinds of disorder and confusion in the inns and taverns, and broke the doors and locks.”*

Erasmus relates that in many places the priests paid their bishop a regular tax on the women with whom they lived, and for each child had by them. A German bishop said publicly one day, at a great entertainment, that in one year eleven thousand priests had presented themselves before him for that purpose in his single diocese.†

What was then true of Christendom at large, was especially and still more strikingly true of Italy. Who can paint in detail that Italy of the Borgias? “It certainly,” says Michelét, “presented at this period something which has seldom, nay, which has at no other time been exhibited in history—a systematic and scientific perversity, a magnificent ostentation of wickedness; in a word, the atheist priest proclaiming himself monarch of the universe.”‡

Two years before the commencement of Luther’s cloister life, Pope Alexander Sixth, of the house of Borgia, perhaps the most flagitious of an infamous dynasty of pontiffs, died, having himself partaken of some poisoned sweetmeats which he had designed for a certain cardinal who had offended him.

* D’Aubigné’s History of the Reformation.

† “Uno anno ad se delata undecim millia sacerdotum palam concubinariorum.” Erasmi Opp. IX.

‡ Michelét’s Life of Luther, p. 13.



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continent in blood, simply to glut the martial appetite of this atrocious priest.

But the college of Cardinals took good care that the reign of no one of the pontiffs of that age should be over-long. Poison and the stiletto were constantly invoked by unscrupulous and ambitious prelates anxious to abridge for their own benefit the lives of the successors of St. Peter, while one pope followed another in rapid succession, hurled from the pontifical throne into a bloody and untimely grave.

If any learning was found among the clergy, it was not in sacred literature. The faculty of theology at Paris made this declaration to the Parliament: "Religion is ruined, if you permit the study of Greek and Hebrew." Heresbach, a friend of Erasmus, reports that the monks commonly held that Greek and Hebrew were the nurseries of heresy.* A certain monk was one day heard to affirm that "the New Testament is a book full of serpents and thorns. Greek," he continued, "is a new and recently invented language, and we must be upon our guard against it. As for Hebrew, my dear brethren, it is certain that all who learn it immediately become Jews."†

The Ciceronians of Italy affected a great contempt for the Bible on account of its style. Pretended priests of the church of Christ translated the writings of holy men, inspired by the Spirit of God, in the style of Virgil and of Horace, to accom-

* D'Aubigné.

† Ibid.

moderate their language to the ears of polite society. Cardinal Bembo, instead of the *Holy Ghost*, used to write, *the breath of the heavenly zephyr*; for the expression, *to forgive sins*, he substituted, *to bend the manes of the sovereign gods*; and for Christ the Son of God, the impious pedant wrote, *Minerva sprung from the head of Jupiter*. Discovering Sadollet one day engaged in translating the epistle to the Romans, Bembo said to him, "Leave these childish matters; such fooleries do not become a sensible man."*

Thus scarcely a vestige remained of the noble simplicity and holiness which had given such an influence to the earlier Christian teachers. Even the boasted unity of the Roman church had ceased to exist, save in name.

It is a remarkable fact, that the various monastic orders claimed support on directly contrary principles. The order of St. Francis contended that the perfection of the Christian character could only be attained by the discipline of poverty. The Dominicans and others seemed to consider that the dignity of holiness could only be supported by princely revenues, and they accordingly amassed as much wealth as they could gather.† There was no unity of faith. The pope held one thing; the various bishops held different tenets, or were open scoffers; while the masses looked on bewildered and aghast.

* D'Aubigné. Felleri, man. ined., p. 400.

† Stebbing's History of the Reformation.

Such was the thin film of that rotten civilization beneath which the earthquake of the Reformation began to heave.

This is a tame picture of the scandal and the infamy which had crept into ecclesiasticism, and which God commissioned Martin Luther remorselessly to expose and grandly to remedy.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the morning of his entrance into the monastery, the 18th of July, 1505, Luther sat down to write his father of the resolution he had carried into effect, and to beg his forgiveness and his blessing. He also wrote to several of his Erfurth friends, one of whom he requested to send to his parents the rings and gown which he had received from the University upon being admitted to his Mastership of Arts. This done, feeling the hold which the world still had upon him, and fearful of meeting the test of his father's venerated features grief-stricken and tearful, he shut himself up resolutely in the lonely seclusion of his cell, into which he would allow none but the Augustinians to enter for the space of a month.*

Meantime his fellow-students and relatives literally beset and besieged the cloister for several days, grieved even to tears that a genius of so high an order should be buried alive in a monastery, and determined if possible to regain him—all in vain, however, for Luther could not even be reached, much less moved.

Martin's father returned a written answer to his son's letter, in which he announced his withdrawal of all favor and parental good-will. A few weeks after this missive had been dispatched, the plague

* Michelét's "Hist. of Luther."

carried two of the remaining sons of John Luther to early graves. Being informed at the same time that Martin was ill, and in danger of falling a victim to the dread disease, his friends urged him to sacrifice his personal wishes, and, bowing to the inevitable, give his consent to his son's entrance into the Augustinian order. These entreaties at first met with a resolute refusal; but the indignant and disappointed father was at length won to hesitate, and finally to mutter, "Be it so. God grant that he may do well."*

Luther, meantime, had laid aside his name Martin, as was the custom in cloisters, and was thenceforth called *Augustinus*, a change which he afterwards greatly abhorred.†

We have seen that Luther, at that period of shameless apathy and of general debauchery, had been influenced purely by conscientious motives in assuming the livery of that flagitious church whose iniquities God afterwards appointed him so completely to uncloak. It is certain that at this time he had no predisposition towards heresy. Romanism did not then possess a more loyal, unquestioning, and devoted son.‡ Indeed he had some claim to say with St. Paul, I was "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers."§

In the comparatively quiet and pure atmosphere of an isolated Thuringian village, shut up in a clois-

* Meurer's Life of Luther.

† Varillas.

‡ Ibid.

§ Acts 22:3.

ter, immersed in study, every moment occupied in the manifold labors of his novitiate, Luther slumbered in happy ignorance of the demoralization of the Roman see. If occasionally reports of the dissolute manners of the age, and of the profligacy of the priesthood, penetrated his cell, the fresh enthusiasm of the young Augustinian led him to regard them as the whisperings of malice, or as the idle gossip of wicked scoffers. Burning with a desire for that holiness which he then imagined could only be found amid the austerities of the cloister, he gave himself completely up to the full rigors of asceticism.

His monastic life was that of a thorough hermit. Sometimes, however, he alleviated the monotony of his days by singing. He was particularly fond of the Gregorian chant; and his greatest delight was to find some young chorister who would take a part with him in chanting it.

At other times, he would leave his cell at day-break, proceed into the country, and at the foot of some tree familiarize himself with the forms of extemporaneous preaching by expounding the word of God to the astounded shepherds. Then he would lie down and chat with them, or fall to sleep, lulled by their simple minstrelsy.*

But these were the gala-days of the young recluse. Ordinarily his novitiate was one of peculiar hardship and trial. It was customary with the monks to impose upon novices all the meaner drudg-

* Audin's "Histoire de Luther."

eries of monastic life. Luther's superiors, who had marked the somewhat haughty tendency of his mind, thought it necessary to break down the walls of his pride; and they accordingly tried his fitness for his adopted vocation in various vexatious ways. At the outset, poor Martin had not only to officiate as porter, sexton, and servant, but he had no sooner performed these duties than, given scanty time for study and meditation, he was driven into the streets to beg for his order. One day when he ventured to request more time for his scholarly and theological pursuits, this Latin was flung into his ears: "*Cum sacco per civitatem*," with the bag through the town; "by mendicancy, not by study, are cloisters served and enriched."

This severity of discipline was ere long somewhat relaxed, owing to the intercession of the Erfurth University, and especially to the remonstrances of Dr. Staupitz, vicar of the Augustinian order, who, upon the novice's complaint, reminded the prior, on one of his regular visits of inspection to the monastery, that Luther was a studious man and a magister, and that in consequence more time ought to be allowed him for study and reflection.*

And here, at the mention of John Staupitz's name, it is fitting to turn aside for a moment, for the purpose of quoting D'Aubigné's sketch of this amiable and worthy vicar, who played so large a part in the introductory scenes of Luther's life.

"The gloomy walls of the cloisters often conceal-

* Meurer's Life of Luther.



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could not do much towards eternal salvation. He therefore began to study divinity; but especially endeavored to unite practice with knowledge. ‘For,’ said one of his biographers, ‘it is in vain that we assume the title of divine, if we do not confirm that noble title by our lives.’* The study of the Bible and of the Augustine theology, the knowledge of himself, the battles that he, like Luther, had to fight against the deceits and lusts of his heart, led him to the Redeemer. He found peace to his soul in faith in Christ. The doctrine of election by grace had taken strong hold of his mind. The integrity of his life, the extent of his knowledge, the eloquence of his speech, not less than a striking exterior and dignified manners,† recommended him to his contemporaries.

“Frederic the Wise, Elector of Saxony, made him his friend, employed him in various embassies, and founded the University of Wittemberg under his direction. This disciple of St. Paul and St. Augustine was the first dean of the theological faculty of that school whence the light was one day to issue to illumine the schools and churches of so many nations. He was present at the Lateran Council as proxy of the archbishop of Saltzburg, became provincial of his order in Thuringia and Saxony, and afterwards vicar-general of the Augustines of all Germany.

“Staupitz was grieved at the corruption of morals

* Melch. Adam, Vita Staupizii.

† “Corporis forma atque statura conspicuus.” Cochläus, 3.

and the errors of doctrine that were devastating the church. But the mildness and indecision of his character, his desire not to go beyond the sphere of action he thought assigned to him, made him fitter to be the restorer of a convent than the reformer of the church.”*

Such was John Staupitz at the period of his memorable visit to the Erfurth monastery, when he discovered Martin Luther sad and broken by conventual rigor, and felt himself irresistibly drawn towards the sombre and agitated novice.

After administering to his remarkable young brother all the consolation possible, Staupitz advised him above all things to study the Holy Scriptures, and to gain a local knowledge of them; counsel which Luther followed with such success as to cause the vicar-general to marvel, and in consequence to prefer his company to that of all others.†

Although, as we have seen, Luther's father had given a reluctant consent to his son's entrance into the cloister, it was not until the term of Martin's novitiate was ended, two full years after his flight from the university to the monastery, that the miner could be persuaded to promise to be present at the ceremony which was to snatch his son for ever from the world, and give him wholly to the service of the heavenly King.

At length, however, he consented to this also, and a day was selected for the ceremony on which

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref, Vol. 1., pp. 172-4.

† Meurer's Life of Luther.

the miner could conveniently quit his business. Accordingly on Sunday, the 2d of May, 1507, the elder Luther came to Erfurth, accompanied by several friends, taking with him some twenty florins, savings which he had managed to put by ; and these he gave to the son whom he was about to lose.*

On the same day the ceremony of Luther's ordination as a priest occurred. Jerome, bishop of Brandenburg, officiated. Luther long afterwards thus referred to the occasion: "As he instituted me a priest, and placed the chalice in my hand, he spoke these very words: '*Accipe potestatem sacrificandi pro vivis et mortuis.*'† That the earth did not then swallow us both up, was an instance of the patience and long-suffering of the Lord."

Luther trembled greatly when he ascended the altar; at the canon he was seized with such fear that he would have fled without completing the ceremony, had he not been detained.‡

At length, however, all was finished, and the young priest sat down with his friends to dinner. John Luther sat by his son, who had hoped to hear from his father's lips expressions of joy and congratulation. "My dear father," said he at last, "why are you so sad? why should you regret my assuming the monk's robe? It is a becoming gown, is it not?" The father rose, and addressing the

* Michelét's Life of Luther. D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation.

† "Receive the power to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead."

‡ Pfizer's "Luther's Leben."

company, said, "Is it not written in the word of God that a man should honor his father and his mother?" "It is," replied all. John Luther looked expressively at his son; then resuming his seat, relapsed into gloomy silence. The rest began to talk of indifferent matters, when suddenly the miner exclaimed, "Pray heaven this whole ceremony be not a snare of the devil."*

Luther felt at this time no peculiar religious fervor. "When I said my first mass at Erfurth," he remarks, "I was well-nigh dead, for I had no faith. My only notion about myself was, that I was a very worthy person indeed. I did not regard myself as a sinner at all. The first mass was a striking thing, and produced a great deal of money. They brought in the *horas canonicas*, surrounded by large flambeaux. *The dear young lord*, as the peasants used to call their new pastor, had then to dance with his mother, if she were still alive, the spectators all weeping tears of joy; if she were dead, he put her, as the phrase ran, under the chalice, and saved her from purgatory."†

Luther having now taken the irrevocable step, having become a priest—all being accomplished, and the door of the world closed upon him, all exit cut off—fell a prey, not to regret, but to sadness, to perplexities, to temptations of the flesh, to the mischievous shafts and subtleties of Satan. "We of the present day," says Michelét, "can hardly comprehend this rude strife of a solitary soul. We

* Pfizer's "Luther's Leben."

† Tischreden, p. 281.

keep our passions more in order, or rather, we kill them at the birth. Amid our enervating distraction of business, of facile studies and enjoyments, our precocious satiety of the senses and of the mind, we can scarcely place ourselves *en rapport* with the spiritual warfare which the lonely conventualists of the middle ages waged with themselves and with the dolorous mysteries of a life of abstinence and fanatic dreamings—the infinite hard fights that have been fought, noiselessly and unrecorded, in the monk's dark, narrow cell.”*

In all his doubts and misgivings, Luther found in Dr. Staupitz a wise counsellor and a sympathizing friend. He had himself fought to some extent the same intellectual battle; years of trial and suffering had familiarized him with the plenteous mercies of the great Consoler, and he could cry understandingly, “Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ*.”

Religious liberty owes much to Staupitz for his nurture of Luther at this crisis. Watching with the tenderest solicitude the religious infancy of the young monk, the good vicar taught him also where to look for the benediction which should soothe his troubled heart. He constantly enjoined upon his young brother to look above the formulas, the ceremonies, and the empty prayers of the church—outside that letter of the law which kills, to the Saviour “who taketh away the sins of the world.”

* Michelét's Life of Luther.

“When I was a monk,” says Luther, “I frequently corresponded with Dr. Staupitz. Once I wrote to him, ‘Oh my sins, my sins, my sins!’ Whereunto he replied, ‘You would fain be without sin. You have no right sin, such as murdering of parents, blaspheming, adultery, and the like. Thou hadst better keep a register of right and true sins, that so thou mayest not afflict thyself about small matters. Remember that Christ came hither to pardon our sins.’”*

Luther did not find peace from this counsel. Often was he seen at the foot of the altar, his hands clasped, his eyes full of tears raised towards heaven, earnestly beseeching pardon for his sins. Frequently, on returning to his cell for the night, he would kneel at the foot of his bed, and remain there in prayer till daylight.†

Sometimes his questions went too deep for Staupitz to answer. “I often,” he says, “confessed to Dr. Staupitz, and put to him, not trivial matters, but questions going to the very knot of the matter. He assured me, as all other confessors have assured me, ‘*I do not understand.*’ At last he came to me one day when I was at dinner, and said, ‘How is it that you are so sad, brother Martin?’ ‘Ah,’ I replied, ‘I am sad indeed.’ ‘You know not,’ said he, ‘that such trials are good and necessary for you, but would not be so for any one else.’ All he meant to imply was, that as I had some learning, I might, but for these trials, have become haughty and super-

* Tischreden.

† Pfizer’s “Luther’s Leben.”

cilious; but I have felt since that what he said was, as it were, a voice and an inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”*

Meantime these mental struggles wore terribly upon the physique of the agitated monk. One morning, the door of his cell not being opened as usual, the brethren became alarmed. They knocked; there was no answer. The door was then burst in, and poor Martin was found stretched on the ground in a kind of ecstasy, scarcely breathing, well-nigh dead. A monk taking up his flute, played gently upon it one of those airs which Luther loved, and thus brought him gradually back to his senses.†

His trials at one time reduced him to such a state that for a whole fortnight, he assures us, he neither ate, drank, nor slept.

“Ah,” he says, “if St. Paul were alive now, how glad I should be to learn of himself what sort of temptation it was that he underwent. It was not the thorn in the flesh; it was not the worthy Thecla, as the Papists dream. Oh no, it was not a sin that tore his conscience. It was something higher than despair resulting from the sense of sin; it was rather the temptation of which the Psalmist speaks: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ as though the Psalmist would have said, ‘Thou art my enemy without cause;’ and with Job, ‘Yet I am innocent, nor is iniquity in me.’ I am sure that the book of Job is a true history, of which a poem

* Luther’s “Table Talk.”

† Seckendorf’s History of Lutheranism.



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Luther's heart was carried by storm. He learned to appreciate and to accept the doctrine of *justification by faith*, in contradistinction from the ethical system of Aristotle, then universally in vogue, which inculcated the old Pagan idea, which Socrates taught two thousand years ago in the streets of Athens, of an ideal morality, and which Luther had imbibed at the schools. But from this time Luther held to the grace of God as the sheet-anchor of his hope.

Still it will hardly be imagined, from what has preceded, that Luther was remiss in his observance of the peculiar rites of the monastery. "If," said he, "Augustine went straight to heaven from the walls of an abbey, I too ought to do so: all my brethren will bear me this testimony. I fasted, I watched, I mortified, I practised all the cenobite severities, till I absolutely made myself ill." Again he says, "If there was ever any one under the papacy, before the gospel again was brought to light, who truly esteemed the traditions of the pope and of the fathers, and contended for them with unfeigned ardor, I may say that I did so especially; contending for them with great earnestness and sincerity, and defending them as if they had been holiness itself." Once more he writes, "I was a pious monk, and so strictly observed the rules of my order, that I can declare that if ever a monk by monastic exercises obtained salvation, I would have obtained it too. In this, all my monastic associates who knew me will bear me witness; for if I had continued longer, I would have tormented myself

to death by keeping vigils, saying prayers, by reading, and by other works.”

Luther had some difficulty in supporting the obligations imposed upon him by the monastic regulations. It will be readily understood how heavily they must have weighed upon an energetic and impetuous temperament like his. “If I had done nothing,” he said in the twilight of his life, “but relieve men from this tyranny, they would owe me a large debt of gratitude.” This constant repetition, at a fixed hour, of the same meditations, this mechanization of prayer, which weighed so heavily upon the impatient mind of Luther, his contemporary, Ignatius Loyola, endeavored a little later to exalt into still greater honor by his singular “*Religious Exercises*.”*

But in 1507, the future colossus of the Reformation bade fair to become one of the chief pillars of the temple of Romanism. The traits which are most prominent in his cloister life, are his stout defence of the minutest and most ludicrous trifles of his creed, his rigid adherence to the papal decretals, his monastic obedience, his deference to his ecclesiastical superiors, and his remorseless asceticism—characteristics as rare in the rotten morals of that epoch, as they were honorable to the honesty and convictions of the recluse monk.

Indeed the flaming zeal, the manifold labors, the submissive spirit, and the tireless energy of Luther at this time, would have called forth the enthusias-

* Michelét's Life of Luther, p. 9. See note.

tic encomiums of the most rigorous ascetic that ever trod barefoot the sands of the Syrian deserts, made proselytes in the depths of the Peruvian mines, or taught in barbarous tongues on the shores of the Spice islands, and at the marts of the African slave caravans. Gian Pietro Caraffa would have welcomed him as a brother and an equal, and Ignatius Loyola would have gotten from him brave help in the organization of that protean propaganda, the "Society of Jesus."

It now becomes of interest to the student of Luther's life, to trace some of the causes which served to awaken the young cenobite from his dream of monastic piety, and which opened his eyes to the true nature of the ecclesiastical polity whose interests he so blindly struggled to advance.

And in the first place, there was an inner fact which troubled Luther. He "did not find, in the tranquillity of the cloister and in monkish perfection, that peace of mind which he had looked for there. He wished to have the assurance of salvation: this was the great want of his soul. Without it there was no repose for him. But the fears that had agitated him in the world pursued him to his cell: nay, they were increased. The faintest cry of his heart reëchoed loud beneath the silent arches of the cloister. God had sent him thither that he might learn to know himself, and to despair of his own strength and virtue. His conscience, enlightened by the divine word, told him what it was to be holy; but he was filled with terror at finding neither in his

heart nor in his life, that image of holiness which he had contemplated with admiration in the word of God. A sad discovery, and one that is made by every sincere man. No righteousness within, no righteousness without; all was omission, sin, impurity.”*

The monks and divines of the day encouraged him to satisfy the divine requirements by meritorious works. But his letters written from the cloister show that he was sad and dejected from the very outset, getting no consolation from the *pater-nosters*, the ceaseless vigils, and the physical mortifications prescribed for penitents by the formulas of Romanism, and pronounced so efficacious by the possessors of the forged keys of St. Peter.

Proving their inefficacy by his own bitter experience, he eventually became suspicious of their potency in other cases. This reflection unquestionably gave Luther great anxiety and deep distress long before he formally broke the fetters which bound him to the pontifical throne.

In seeking for the exterior and more perceptible causes which influenced the mind and action of the nascent reformer, it will be necessary to recur once more to history, and to recite the several ecclesiastical abuses which first engrossed his attention, and provoked the thunders of his dissenting eloquence.

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. 1, p. 169.

CHAPTER V.

IN 1502, Frederic, Elector of Saxony, surnamed the Wise, founded at Wittemberg the celebrated university within whose cloisters the Reformation was born.

This humane and enlightened prince, who was born at Torgau in the year 1463, had succeeded his father Ernest in the electorate in 1486, when in his twenty-fourth year, though he shared a divided throne—his brother, Duke John of Saxony, participating with him in the government of his dominions.

Although Frederic never openly accepted the tenets of the Reformation, he frequently bent from his throne to succor and defend the menaced reformers, who in return gratefully bestowed upon him the magnificent but then dangerous appellation of “Protector of the Reformation.”

He had, some years previous to the foundation of the University of Wittemberg, contracted an intimate friendship with John Staupitz. When Frederic determined upon the establishment of his school, he selected Dr. Staupitz, and another distinguished opponent of the prevailing scholastic system, Pollich de Mellerstadt, doctor of medicine, law, and philosophy, and charged them with the arrangement of its details.

Staupitz, being especially anxious to promote

the study of religious philosophy in the new University—so that it should become indeed what the Elector, in his charter confirming its privileges, had declared that he and his subjects would always regard it, an oracle—familiar with Luther's earnest piety, rhetorical ability, profound scholarship, and brilliant genius, determined to seat the young Augustinian in the chair of metaphysics.

Accordingly in the latter part of 1508, Frederic sent a missive to Luther inviting him to assume the professorial gown at his University of Wittemberg, and enjoining upon him to make all haste in repairing to his post, should he accept the appointment.

Instantly deciding to comply with this request, he quitted his monastery so hastily that he had not even time to acquaint his most intimate friends with this great change in his life.

Writing several months later from Wittemberg to his well-beloved master, John Braun, curate of Eisenach, he says, "My departure was so hasty that those with whom I was living were almost ignorant of it. I am further away, I confess, but the better part of me remains with you."*

Ignoring the artificial systems of the schoolmen, unperplexed by the sophistical babble of the philosophers, Luther had made in the dreamy quiet of his cloister rapid progress in the study of divinity. He had acquired during his three years' residence in the monastery an intimate knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew tongues. He had previously

* Epp. I, p. 5. March 17, 1509.

met and mastered the cavilling dialectics of the age, and the ethics of Aristotle; and he had recently been engaged in the still more difficult task of attempting to reconcile the subtle sophistries of the Roman see with the word of God.

Probably no theologian of the age received a more careful and elaborate preparatory training. It is certain that his theological course was singularly broad, thorough, and complete.

Thus naturally and educationally biased towards theology, Luther declared that he would greatly have preferred to fill that chair at the University; but since it seemed ordered otherwise, he was forced to acquiesce.

The universities of that age were customarily connected with some one of the various monastic orders, and the monks were the instructors of the students who resorted to them. Frederic had selected St. Augustine as the patron of the Wittemberg school, and it was therefore under the supervision of the Augustinians. Luther, as a priest, was not suffered on account of his professorship to relax the austere discipline of his order; but, inhabiting a cell as at Erfurth, occupied his leisure hours as before, in practising all the mummeries of the Roman ritual.

Luther seized every moment which he could spare from his university duties, and from the exercise of his monastic forms, to devote to private study, and applied himself with special zeal and success to the perfect acquisition of the ancient languages,



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babble of the heathen philosophers, or than the later sophistries of conceited schoolmen.

Singular as it may now appear, this plain and unquestionable truth excited the indignant surprise and dissent of the papal theologians of that generation, and the epithet “heretic” was hurled at the audacious monk from countless pulpits.

These doctrines, so new and startling, made from the outset a great noise, and attracted to the newly established university a crowd of students. Indeed “Luther’s lectures, thus prepared, had little similarity to what had been heard till then. It was not an eloquent rhetorician alone, or a pedantic schoolman, that spoke, but a Christian who had felt the power of revealed truths—who drew them from the Bible, poured them out from the treasures of his heart, and presented them all full of life to his astonished hearers. It was not the teaching of a man, but of God.”*

This brave preaching, though receiving the execrations of the apostles of scholasticism, still called several eminent thinkers to the side of the young Augustinian; among others, Dr. Mellerstadt, first rector of the university, who had already at Leipsic combated the ridiculous instructions of the scholastics, and who used frequently to say, after listening attentively to one of Luther’s discourses, “This monk will confound all our doctors, establish new doctrines, and reform the whole Roman church; for he bases himself upon the writings of the prophets

* D’Aubigné’s History of the Reformation, Vol. I., pp. 186, 187.

and apostles, and is firmly planted on the word of God: this no one can successfully oppose or eventually subvert, be it with philosophy, sophistry, albertistry, thomastory, or the whole array of authorities.”*

Dr. Staupitz, “who was the instrument of God to develop many of the gifts and treasures hidden in Luther,” remarking the singular eloquence of the young monk, his mastery over the passions of his auditors, his felicitous acquaintance with the strong idioms and with the elegancies of his native tongue, and the overpowering energy of his oratory, insisted upon his preaching regularly in the village chapel of the Augustinians.

Luther, solemnly impressed with the august nature of that work, long refused to comply with this request of the vicar-general of his order.

“Ascend the pulpit and preach,” said Staupitz. “No,” said the modest professor, “it is no light thing to speak to man in God’s stead.”† Staupitz insisted. “Fifteen arguments, pretexts, or evasions,” reports a contemporary, “did the ingenious Luther find to excuse himself from this service.” “Ah, worthy doctor,” he supplicated, “it would be the death of me.” “What then?” was the response; “be it so, in God’s name.”‡ The pertinacity of his ecclesiastical superior at length triumphed, and the over-humble monk began to preach.

* Meurer’s Life of Luther.

† Milner, Maimbourg, Varillas, Du Pin.

‡ Adam’s “Words that Shook the World,” p. 29.

In the middle of the square at Wittemberg stood an ancient wooden chapel, thirty feet long and twenty wide, whose walls, propped up on all sides, were falling into ruin. An old pulpit, made of planks, and three feet high, received the preacher. It was in this wretched place that the preaching of the Reformation began. The foundations of the new Augustinian church had just been laid, and in the meanwhile this miserable place of worship was used.*

“This building,” adds Myconius, “may well be compared to the stable in which Christ was born. It was in this wretched enclosure that God willed, so to speak, that his well-beloved Son should be born a second time. Among those thousands of cathedrals and parish churches with which the world is filled, there was not one at that time which God chose for the glorious preaching of eternal life.”†

“Every thing was striking in the new minister. His expressive countenance, his noble air, his clear and sonorous voice, captivated all his hearers. Before this time, the majority of preachers had sought rather what might amuse their congregations, than what would convert them. The great seriousness that pervaded all Luther’s sermons, and the joy with which the knowledge of the gospel had filled his heart, imparted to his eloquence an authority, a warmth, and an unction that his predecessors had not possessed.”‡

* D’Aubigné’s History of the Reformation, Vol. I., p. 188.

† Myconius’ MS. Hist. of the Ref.

‡ D’Aubigné.

Ere long the little wooden chapel of the Augustinians could not contain the crowds who flocked to listen to the young professor-monk. Then the town council of Wittemberg appointed Luther their chaplain, and he henceforth preached in the large city church. The energy of his genius, the animation of his style, and the excellence of his doctrine soon extended his reputation throughout Germany, and once the Elector himself travelled to Wittemberg on purpose to hear him.

The testimony which supports the oratory of Demosthenes is not more voluminous than that which relates to the fiery eloquence of Martin Luther. The willing and admiring tongues of scores of his contemporaneous friends and adherents proclaim it. The hesitating lips of the most prejudiced and reluctant of the Jesuits avow it.

“He possessed,” says the Jesuit historian Maimbourg, “a quick and penetrating genius; he was indefatigable in his studies, and he was frequently so absorbed in them as to abstain from meat for whole days together. He acquired great knowledge of languages and of the fathers. He was remarkably strong and healthy, and of a sanguine, bilious temperament. His eyes were piercing and full of fire; his voice sweet and vehement, when fairly raised.”*

“Endowed,” says another of his opponents, “with a ready and lively genius, with a retentive memory, and employing his mother tongue with

* Maimbourg’s History of Lutheranism.

wonderful facility, Luther was inferior to none of his contemporaries in eloquence. Speaking from the pulpit as if he were agitated by some violent emotion, suiting the action to the words, he affected his hearers' minds in a surprising manner, and carried them like a torrent, wherever he pleased."*

"He had," says Bossuét, himself the most eloquent of the French Romanists, "a lively and impetuous eloquence, that charmed and led away the people."†

Varillas, a celebrated French Jesuit, paints this picture of the great reformer: "To the robustness, health, and industry of a German, nature seems here to have added the spirit and vivacity of an Italian. Nobody excelled him in philosophy and scholastic theology; nobody equalled him in the art of speaking. He was a most perfect master of eloquence. He had completely discovered where lay the strength and where the weakness of the human mind; and accordingly he knew how to render his attacks successful. However various or discordant might be the passions of his audience, he could manage them to his own purposes, for he presently saw the ground upon which he stood; and even if the subject were too difficult for argument, he carried his point by popular illustration and the use of figures. Even in ordinary conversation he displayed the same power over the affec-

* Florimond Raymond's *Hist. Hæres.*, cap. 5.

† Bossuét's "*Hist. des Variations*," p. 1.

tions which he had so often demonstrated in the professional chair and in the pulpit.”*

We remember nothing recorded of the oratory of Cicero or Pericles more highly eulogistic than this entire mass of testimony gleaned from the works of Martin Luther’s bitterest haters and revilers.

In the many days gone by there was a king who said unto his prophet, “Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel;” and the prophet “lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents,” and he took up his parable, and said, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as the gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee!” And the king’s anger was kindled, and he said, “I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them. Therefore now flee thee to thy place.”† The prophet’s name was not Maimbourg, or Raymond, or Bossuét, or Varillas, but the moral will do for them.

So ripely learned, so rich in his experience, so varied in his accomplishments, was Martin Luther, when, at the age of twenty-six, he began publicly to expound the Scriptures in the academic hall and in the church at Wittemberg.

* Varillas. See Milner’s Church History, vol. II., pp. 220, 221.

† Numbers, chaps. 23 and 24 *passim*.

CHAPTER VI.

THROUGH all the manifold and severe labors of Luther's initiatory period at Wittemberg, he continued to feel anxious and disturbed—got little consolation. An aching void still yawned in his soul, which penances, vigils, and the incessant repetition of the *credo* did not bridge over.

In this state of mind it happened that seven convents of his order were at variance on certain points with the vicar-general;* and Luther, on account of his acuteness of mind, his powers of language, and his extraordinary talents for discussion, was selected to proceed to Rome and lay the matter before the pope for his adjudication.

He was in an ecstasy. "Here at length," he murmured, "I shall find rest." Filled with the prejudices of the cloister, he regarded the "Eternal City" as the shekinah—as the earthly tabernacle of the most high God. His vivid imagination pictured it as the seat of austere piety, learned ecclesiasticism, and saintly virtue. The Vatican was there, and the archives of the church. The memory of sixteen Christian centuries hallowed its churches, built of porphyry, amethyst, ivory, and alabaster, its ecclesiastical palaces, and its sacred

* Quod septem conventus a Vicario in quibusdam dissentirent. Cochläus, II.



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ventual dress. He knew not what to make of this magnificence of humility—this regal splendor of penitence.*

In this palace of the Benedictines Luther tarried several days, one of which chanced to be Friday. What was his horror at beholding the luxurious table of the monastery groaning beneath a load of meat. Venturing to expostulate with his epicurean brethren on account of this gross dereliction of monastic austerity, the irritated monks threatened to deprive him of his life if he dared to complain to the pope of their irregularities. Making his escape with considerable difficulty, and through the connivance of the porter,† from this den of epicures, the astounded young German pressed on towards Rome, where he aspired to lay aside all his growing burden of uneasy doubt at the tomb of the apostles.

His object in making all haste was to arrive in Rome by St. John's eve; "for," says Luther, "you know the old Roman proverb: 'Happy the mother whose child shall celebrate mass in Rome on St. John's eve.' Oh, how I desired to give my mother this happiness; but this was impossible, and it vexed me greatly to find it so."‡ On reaching Bologna, both he and his companion fell dangerously ill—sickness caused, undoubtedly, by the great change in their diet. The traveller's poor head had also been too violently assailed by the sun of Italy, and even more than this, by the strange things, the un-

* Michelét's Life of Luther.

† Ibid.

‡ Tischreden.

wonted sights, and the singular manners which he had seen and heard all along his route.

He was obliged to keep his bed for some time at Bologna, the throne of the Roman law and of the legists. Here he fell a prey to the most terrible depression: a stranger in a foreign land, far from his loved Germany, this of itself was sufficient to sadden him. But in addition to this, "the sense of his sinfulness troubled him; the prospect of God's judgment filled him with dread. But at the very moment that these terrors had reached their highest pitch, the words of St. Paul recurred forcibly to his mind, *The just shall live by faith*, enlightening his soul like a ray from heaven."*

Restored and comforted by these words, the Wittemberg monk soon regained sufficient strength to enable him to pursue his journey; merely passing through Florence without pause, he at length reached Rome—Rome, so long the object of his holy love, and of his enthusiastic dreams. He proceeded at once to the convent of his order, near the *Porto del Popolo*.†

"Upon arriving," he says, "I fell on my knees, raised my hands to heaven, and exclaimed, Hail, holy Rome; made holy by the holy martyrs, and by the blood which has been spilt here." It was with a different salutation that he afterwards greeted Rome.

In his fervor he adds, "I hastened to visit the

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. 1, p. 190.

† Tischreden.

sacred places; saw all, believed all.” He soon perceived, however, that he was the only person who did believe; Christianity seemed totally forgotten in the very capital of Christendom. The pope was no longer the infamous Alexander Borgia, but the choleric and warlike Julius II. “We know,” says Michelét, “that his great artist Michael Angelo represented him overwhelming Bologna with his benediction. The pope had just at this time commanded the sculptor to chisel for him a funereal monument as large as a church: of this projected monument, the *Moses*, with some other statues which have come down to us, were to have formed a part.

“The sole thought which occupied the pope and Rome at this juncture, was the war against the French. Luther had manifestly slight chance of a favorable opportunity for discoursing of grace and the inefficacy of works to this singular priest, who besieged towns in person, and who only just before had refused to enter Mirandola otherwise than by the breach he had made in its walls. His cardinals, apprentice-officers under him, were politicians, diplomats, or more generally upstart *savans*, who read nothing but Cicero, and who would have feared to hurt their Latinity by opening the Bible. When they spoke of the pope, it was of the *Pontifex Maximus*; a canonized saint was, in their language, a man *relatus inter Divos*; and if they at any time referred to grace, they phrased it thus: *Deorum immortalium beneficiis*.”*

* Michelét's Life of Luther, pp. 16, 17.

In one of his conversations Luther gives us naively an idea of how terrible Italy was to the imagination of the simple-hearted Germans: "The Italians only require you to look in a mirror to be able to kill you. They can deprive you of all your senses by secret poisons. In Italy the air itself is pestilential; at night they close hermetically every window, and stop up every chink and cranny."*

Luther was speedily attracted by the ruins of pagan Rome. Treading everywhere on the ashes of the past, he recalled Scipio's sad presentiment, when he stood gazing upon the tottering walls and burning palaces of that Carthage which his military genius had brought to ruin: "Thus will it one day be with Rome." "And in truth," exclaimed Luther, "the Rome of the Scipios and Cæsars has become a corpse. There are such heaps of rubbish that the foundations of the houses are now where once stood the roofs. It is there that once the riches and treasures of the earth were heaped together."

"But with these profane ashes were mingled other and holier ones: he recalled them to mind. The burial-place of the martyrs was not far from that of the generals of Rome, and of her conquerors. Christian Rome with its sufferings had more power over the heart of the Saxon monk than pagan Rome with all its glory. Here that letter arrived in which Paul wrote, *The just shall live by faith*. He might gaze upon the Appii Forum and the Three Taverns. Near by was the house of Narcissus; there was the

* Tischreden, p. 440.

palace of Cæsar, where the Lord delivered the apostle from the jaws of the lion.”*

But Luther was destined to enjoy at Rome nothing but the consolation of these memories. He could have no sympathy with the revelations of the babbling pedants and worldly priests of the pontifical court. And if the bewildered ambassador turned for comfort to the churches, he did not even hear a decent mass. The blasphemous haste with which the Roman priests celebrated the sacrament of the altar, and the profane mechanism to which they had reduced the entire ceremony, astounded the Saxon monk, while they stood laughing at his simplicity. On one occasion when himself officiating, he discovered that the priests at an adjoining altar had repeated seven masses ere he had completed one. “Quick, quick,” cried one, “send our Lady back her Son;” making an impious allusion to the transubstantiation of the bread into the body of Jesus Christ.† At another time Luther himself relates that he had not got through the gospel, ere the priest who was officiating with him had dispatched with impious celerity the whole service, and stood whispering to him, “*Passa, passa; ite, missa est*”—Haste, haste; make an end of it.‡

Being one day at table with several prelates, open buffoonery of manner and impious conversation were indulged in. The indecent churchmen did not hesitate to give utterance to the most ribald jests

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. 1., p. 192.

† Ibid.

‡ Tischreden, p. 441.

in his presence—doubtless believing that his morals were as rotten as their own. Among other things they related, laughing and priding themselves upon it, how, when saying mass at the altar, instead of the sacramental words which were to transform the elements into the body and blood of Christ, they pronounced over the bread and wine these words: *Panis es, et panis manebis; vinum es, et vinum manebis*—Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain; wine thou art, and wine thou shalt remain. “Then,” said they with a leer, “we elevate the pyx and all the people worship.”*

Ulric Von Hutten, a famous knight and pamphleteer of that age, in a caustic satire entitled, “The Roman Trinity,” says pungently, “There are three things which we commonly bring away from Rome: a bad conscience, a vitiated stomach, and an empty purse. There are three things which Rome does not believe in: the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and hell. There are three things which Rome trades in: the grace of Christ, the dignities of the church, and women.”

Luther's eyes were not immediately opened to these things, for he makes this record of himself: “While at Rome I too was such a foolish saint as to run to every church, nook, and corner, believing all their ridiculous stories and detestable falsehoods.” He adds with grim humor, “I likewise said a mass or two at Rome, being at the time very sorry that my parents were not dead, as I would

have liked, by means of my masses and other precious works, to have delivered them from purgatory.”

Seckendorf relates that Luther, during the earlier days of his tarry at Rome, wishing to obtain an indulgence promised by a recent decretal to all who should ascend upon their knees the steps of what was styled “Pilate’s Staircase,” which was said to have been miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome, determined to creep to its summit. But while toilsomely engaged in the accomplishment of this meritorious work, he heard a voice thundering from the bottom of his heart those words of Paul which twice before, at Erfurth and at Bologna, had sounded in his ears, “*The just shall live by faith.*” Pausing in amazement, he rose to his feet, and hastily descending those steps up which he had just been so toilsomely dragging his body, he rushed from the scene, shuddering and ashamed at the depth into which superstition had plunged him.*

Luther had expected to confirm his wavering faith in the holy city; but the consolation to be gotten by a soul like his, beset with doubt, was small indeed in this mediæval Golgotha. He expected to find there earnest piety and sober living; he found only folly with the cap and bells. He looked for the evidences of Christian life and example; he beheld the dissolute morals of an age blacker than the pagan. The home of the pontiffs, he thought he should see model order and abounding faith,

* Seckendorf’s Hist. of Lutheranism, p. 56.



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the nearer people approach the capital of Christendom, the less Christian spirit is found in them. The scandalous examples and the crimes of the court of Rome are the cause why Italy has lost every principle of piety and all religious feeling. We Italians are indebted principally to the church and the priests for having become impious and immoral.”*

From what he had himself seen and heard, it is scarcely to be wondered at that Luther carried back with him into Germany the condemnation of Italy and the Roman church. “In truth,” says Michelét, “for a mind intent upon the moral view of Christianity, there needed a rare effort of philosophy, a historical enthusiasm hardly to be expected in those days, to discover religion in that world of art, of jurisprudence, of politics, which constituted Italy.”†

Infinitely disgusted by the orgies of the Roman capital, Luther hastily quitted it after a fortnight’s tarry, returning to his duties at Wittemberg dispirited, wrapped in thought, and silent as a man in a deep dream.

The grand result of this Roman tour was, that it emancipated him from many monkish prejudices, fatally shook his faith in the immaculateness of the pontifical see, drove him to lean more firmly than ever upon the Scriptures for support, and thus helped largely to prepare him for that dread conflict with the merciless and impious hierarchy of Rome which was shortly to be inaugurated.

* Machiavelli’s Dissertation on the First Dec. of Livy.

† Michelét’s Life of Luther, pp. 16, 17.

CHAPTER VII.

It may not be amiss to turn aside at this point from our direct narrative, for the purpose of devoting a chapter to the consideration of what is termed the “revival of learning,” always considered by historians to have had an important influence upon the initiatory phases of the Reformation.

That night of ignorance which had spread like a pall over Europe upon the conquest of Rome by the barbarous legions of Attila, and the consequent extinguishment of the last lingering ray of Roman learning and civility, continued to deepen during the Middle Ages, enlightened only by the twinkling stars of priestly intelligence which shone from a few isolated monasteries, and was only broken a few scores of years previous to the Reformation, by the rising sun of knowledge which then began to redden and broaden upon the intellectual horizon.

It is a remarkable and pregnant fact, sufficiently significant to the thoughtful student, that it was during this period of the most servile, abject ignorance, that the Roman see reached the acme of its omnipotence, hurling its mailed crusaders, gathered from the remotest corners of Christendom, and melted into the hottest enthusiasm by the eloquence of Roman monks, against the Saracenic conquerors of the holy sepulchre; enthroning and deposing kings by the simple promulgation of a papal bull;

dictating unquestioned the policy of Europe, and swaying an undisputed sceptre over both the spiritual and the temporal worlds.

But the intellect of man has a natural tendency to expand, to investigate, to satisfy itself in regard to the *rationale* of established systems.

This tendency first manifested itself in Italy. In that land where the human mind had sunk to the basest depths of bigotry and superstition, it was just that it should make amends to intelligence by first beginning to soar.

Melancholy as the condition of Europe continued to be through the fifteenth century, the interests of learning had been grandly advanced by Dante and Petrarch ; both of them men of immense capacity, and enthusiastic in the defence of truth and liberty. Dante and Petrarch early laid the foundations of a noble literature in Italy. Their writings prove how they yearned after knowledge, how high a value they placed on every ray of light which shone upon them from the past, and how they rejoiced when the truths which had taken shape in their solitary dreamings were discovered, demonstrated, and deposited in the records of antiquity. Dante placed the mightiest popes in his “Inferno ;” Petrarch called with bold perseverance for the return of the church to its primitive condition.

“ At the beginning of the fifteenth century, John of Ravenna taught the Latin literature with great renown at Padua and Florence ; and Chrysoloras

interpreted the masterpieces of Greece at Florence and at Pavia.

“While learning was thus issuing from the prisons in which it had been held captive in Europe, the East imparted fresh light to the West. The standard of Mahomet planted on the walls of Constantinople in 1453, had driven its learned men into exile. They had carried the learning of Greece with them into Italy. The torch of the ancients rekindled the minds that had been for ages quenched in darkness.”*

These teachers soon communicated to the impressible Italians their own enthusiasm for Grecian art and literature. At the same time the patriotism of Italy was aroused, and multitudes of learned men arose who aspired to restore the noble works of their earlier countrymen of the days of the empire and the republic to their pristine honor.

“It was necessary that the task of reviving learning should devolve upon men like these; that the value of what had passed into oblivion should be made manifest by men who had much of what was precious to offer from the treasure-house of their own intellects. Had the zeal of the *mere* scholar been employed, the dry bones of the past might have been dug up, the skeleton shown complete, but men would never have been won to gaze upon the cold and fleshless forms thus summoned from the tomb.”†

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. I., p. 103.

† Stebbing's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. I., p. 6.

But the fertile and original minds of such thinkers as Dante and Petrarch gave instant life and beauty to the creations which they recovered from the past. They made the treasures they brought forth bewitchingly attractive to the mind and eye of the meanest of men, and consequently they were instrumental in creating a general thirst for knowledge, which in its turn ere long produced a change in the mental habits of mankind.

Thus it was that Europe grew to be, so to speak, twenty-one years of age—reached its legal majority. The credulous simplicity of its mental infancy and ignorance began to be replaced by the spirit of inquiry. Men's eyes partially opened; and they began to demand a reason for the steps taken by the papacy, that long venerated guide under whose direction they had walked in passive, unquestioning silence when their eyes were closed.

“But we must be careful,” says an acute historian, “not to attribute to the cultivation of classical literature too important a place among the efficient causes of the Reformation. Its chief value consisted in the models which it afforded for the arrangement of thought; and in those beautiful forms of expression which arose from the same delicate perception of the fit and the graceful, as the noble productions of the sculptor and the architect. In these respects it offered a rich reward to the careful student; he learned thereby to express his opinions with truer force; the mirror he held up reflected the images of things with greater vividness, and he was

taught by what methods the finest minds had communicated to each other as much of wisdom as unassisted reason could acquire.

“These advantages would be rejected by no one who paid due attention to the cultivation of his intellect; and the good thereby produced was sufficient to fill the hearts of enlightened men with the liveliest admiration for revived literature.”*

Learning then was not the *cause* of the Reformation, it was simply the vehicle upon which God appointed it to ride to its triumph; it was the engine of which the reformers made use to spread their truths.

This fact the most superficial resort to history will affirm. It has been well said by an elegant historian, that “the paganism of the poets, as it reappeared in Italy, rather confirmed the paganism of the heart. The scepticism of the followers of Aristotle, and the contempt for every thing that did not appertain to philology, took possession of many literary men, and engendered an incredulity which, even while affecting submission to the church, attacked the most important truths of religion.” One of the scholastic manuscripts of that day assures us that a philosopher named Peter Pomponatius publicly inculcated at Bologna and Padua the doctrine, that the immortality of the soul and the idea of a Providence were mere philosophical problems.†

* Stebbing's Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. I., pp. 8, 9.

† “De Immortalitate Animæ, de Prædestinatione et Providentia.”

John Francis Pico, nephew of Pico of Mirandola, speaks of one pope who did not believe in God; and of another, who, having acknowledged to a friend his disbelief in the immortality of the soul, appeared to him one night after death, and said, "Alas, the eternal fire that is now consuming me makes me feel but too sensibly the immortality of that soul which I had thought would die with the body."*

When Leo X. and his train of glittering courtiers and pedantic scholars took possession of the Vatican, the church was not reformed, nor was Christianity revived. It required something very different from the maxims of Aristotle, the mystic philosophy of mediæval hermits, the decrees of councils, the bulls of conceited pontiffs, and the platonism with which the Medici were identified, to medicine the wound which rankled in the heart of Europe.

In 1513, Julian de Medici, a son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, a Florentine of the illustrious house of the Medici, was elected to the vacant throne of the Pontifical see, under the name of Leo X.

Upon Leo, whose reign was destined to witness and to occasion the commencement of the Reformation, the muse of history can pronounce no higher eulogium than that he was a liberal patron of the arts and of *belles-lettres*. Himself no mean proficient in scholastic lore,† he had inherited the magnificent spirit and the elegant tastes of his family. But

* J. F. Pici de Fidé, Opp. II, 820.

† Ranke's Hist. of the Popes. Leo X.



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ably carried with him to the papal throne. It is very certain that his prelates, learned and unlearned, paid little respect to their sacred calling.

“They regarded those Christian mysteries of which they were the stewards, just as the Augur Cicero and the Pontifex Maximus Cæsar regarded the Sibylline books and the pecking of the sacred chickens. Among themselves they spoke of the incarnation, the eucharist, and the Trinity in the same tone in which Cotta and Velleius talked of the oracle of Delphi, or of the voice of Faunus in the mountains.

“Their years glided by in a soft dream of sensual and intellectual voluptuousness. Choice cookery, delicious wines, lovely women, hounds, falcons, horses, newly discovered manuscripts of the classics, sonnets and burlesque romances in the sweetest Tuscan—just as licentious as a fine sense of the graceful would permit; plates from the hand of Benvenuto, designs for palaces by Michael Angelo, frescoes by Raphael, busts, mosaics, and gems just dug up from among the ruins of ancient temples and villas—these things were the delight and even the serious occupation of their lives.”*

This picture of the occupations of the most learned court of modern Europe sufficiently demonstrates the utter worthlessness of unassisted learning in regenerating society. That herculean task required for its accomplishment a mightier power than could be supplied by human wit. “This arti-

* Macauley's Essay on Ranke's History of the Popes.

cle of justification by faith,” said Luther, “is what creates the church, nourishes it, edifies it, preserves and defends it. No one can teach worthily in the church, or oppose an adversary with success, if he does not adhere to this truth. This is the heel that shall bruise the head of the serpent.”*

* Luther to Brentius.

CHAPTER VIII.

LUTHER, upon his return from the Roman capital, thankful to God for his escape from its abominations, and more fiercely beset by doubts than ever, had constant recourse to the Scriptures for consolation and support. No longer dazzled by the flickering blaze of consular decisions and papal decretals, he now lighted his torch at the heavenly altar.

Resuming the daily lectures which had been interrupted by his Roman journey, and which had created so great a sensation, the ardent professor continued those terrific attacks upon scholasticism which ere long completely demolished that citadel of self-righteous priestcraft; while he drew the Wittenberg students, and the thousands of others who crowded from the remotest parts of Germany to hear him, towards Christ, and inducted them into that knowledge of the Scriptures which had already raised his own soul to such a height that he could hear, echoing from the heavenly courts, “a seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.”

Meantime the Elector Frederick, upon whom the preaching of the Augustinian had made a lasting impression, and who greatly admired his sound learning, splendid eloquence, self-abnegation, and candid truthfulness,* summoning Staupitz to his

* Melancthon's “Vita Lutheri.”



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“The elector is not poor, and he will take charge of the expense,” was the ready reply.

Beaten thus from his last defence, the reluctant monk was forced to comply; and accordingly the 18th of October, 1512, was the time appointed for the ceremony to take place.

At the close of the summer of 1512, Luther went to Leipsic, then the seat of the elector's court, for the purpose of receiving from the electoral treasury the money which had been promised for the purpose of defraying the expenses incidental to his doctorate. He suffered there a vexatious detention of some weeks, owing to the negligence of the treasurers; so that it was not until the 4th of October that he received the fifty florins which had been set aside for him. In his receipt for that sum, given to Pfeffinger and John Doltzig, the ever-present modesty of the young professor is shown conspicuously, on the very eve of his promotion, by his signature, “Martin, Brother of the Order of Hermits.”*

At length the eventful day arrived on which Luther was to receive his licentiate in divinity. Singularly enough it happened that it fell to the duty of Andrew Bodenstein, surnamed Carlstadt, from the city in which he resided, and who years after created a schism in the Reformation, to confer upon Martin Luther the highest dignity of the university.

Carlstadt was a man of vast learning, of capa-

* Luther's L. Epp. I., p. 11.

cious mind, and assiduous temper, but jealous, morose, and gloomy. He was at this time a doctor of divinity, held a professorship in the university at Wittenberg, and performed besides the offices of canon and archdeacon. “At this time,” he afterwards acknowledged, “I had not yet read the holy Scriptures*—a remark, it has been well said, which gives us a very correct idea of what theology then was. Here was a *doctor of divinity*, who had studied at half a dozen universities, and under the shadow of the Vatican itself, and yet who had never perused that Bible from which divinity is derived.

It has been charged that, though Carlstadt at this time considered Luther to be his inferior, he came ere long to cherish a most unchristian jealousy of him, going so far as to exclaim one day, “I will not be less great than Luther.”†

Be this as it may, Carlstadt presided at this ceremony, solemnly conferring upon his future rival the insignia of doctor of divinity, previous to which Luther took this oath: “I swear to defend the evangelical truth with all my might.” “He was made,” says Melancthon, “a biblical doctor, and not a doctor of sentences;‡ and was thus called to devote himself to the study of the Bible, and not to the exposition of human traditions.” “I then,” says Luther, “pledged myself to my well-beloved Scriptures, to preach them faithfully, to teach them with

* Wiesmanni, Hist. Eccl., p. 1416.

† Ibid. Also D'Aubigné, Vol. I., pp. 203, 204.

‡ Doctor biblicus, *et non* sententarius. Melanc. Vita Luth.

purity, to study them all my life, and to defend them, both in disputation and in writing, against all false teachers, so far as God should give me the ability.”*

“This solemn oath was Luther’s call to the Reformation. By imposing on his conscience the holy obligation of searching freely and boldly proclaiming the Christian truth, this oath raised the new doctor above the narrow limits to which his monastic vow would perhaps have confined him. Called by the university, by his sovereign, in the name of imperial majesty, and of the see of Rome itself, he became from that hour the most intrepid herald of the word of life. On that memorable day Luther was armed champion of the Bible.”†

This matter of his doctorate finally settled, Luther gave himself with renewed strength and animation to his chosen work at Wittemberg, pointing out with marvellous clearness and wealth of illustration the vital distinction between philosophy and faith. He was constantly heard to repeat that “the writings of the apostles and prophets are more certain and sublime than all the sophisms and theology of the schools.”

“Within my heart,” he was accustomed to add, “reigns alone, and must reign alone, faith in my Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the beginning, the middle, and the end of my thoughts.”

“He who receives Christ as a Saviour,” he said

* Luther’s Latin Op. W. XVI., p. 2061.

† D’Aubigné’s Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. I., pp. 203, 204.



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those learned and progressive spirits who lend a lustre to that epoch.

It was in this way that he now formed a friendship which has become historic, and which was of great importance to him throughout his life.

“There was at that time at the elector’s court a person remarkable for his wisdom and candor: this was George Spalatin. He was born at Spalatus or Spalt, in the bishopric of Eichstadt, and had been originally curate of the village of Hohenrich, near the Thuringian forests. He was afterwards chosen by Frederick the Wise to be his secretary, chaplain, and tutor to his nephew John Frederick, who was one day to wear the electoral crown.

“Spalatin was a simple-hearted man in the midst of the court; he appeared timid in the presence of great events; circumspect and prudent, like his master, before the ardent Luther, with whom he corresponded daily. Such men are necessary; they are like those delicate substances in which jewels and crystals are wrapped to secure them from the injuries of transport. They seem useless, and yet without them all these precious objects would be broken and lost.

“Spalatin was not a man to effect great undertakings; but he faithfully and noiselessly performed the task imposed upon him. He was at first one of the principal aids of his master in collecting those relics of saints of which Frederick was so long a great admirer. But he, as well as the prince, turned by degrees towards the truth. The faith which

then reappeared in the church did not lay such violent hold upon him as upon Luther; it guided him by slower methods. He became Luther's friend at court: the minister through whom passed all matters between the reformer and the princes; the mediator between the church and the state.

“The elector honored Spalatin with great intimacy. They always travelled together in the same carriage. Nevertheless the atmosphere of the court oppressed the good chaplain; he was affected by a profound melancholy; he could have desired to quit all these honors, and become once more a simple pastor in the forests of Thuringia. But Luther consoled him, and exhorted him to remain at his post.

“Spalatin acquired general esteem; princes and learned men showed him the most sincere regard. Erasmus used to say, ‘I inscribe Spalatin's name not only among those of my principal friends, but still further, among those of my most honored protectors; and that not upon paper, but on my heart.’ ”*

To Spalatin Luther poured out his full heart, laid bare his hopes, his fears, and detailed the progress he was making in his warfare against scholasticism at Wittemberg.

Writing to another friend, the monk George Spenbein, in 1516, he said, “I desire to know what your soul is doing; whether, wearied at length of its own righteousness, it leans to refresh itself and to rest in the righteousness of Christ. The temp-

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Ref., Vol. I., pp.107, 208.

tation of presumption in our age is strong in many, and especially in those who labor to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon us with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God adorned with virtues and merits, which is an impossible attempt.

“You, my friend, used to be of this same opinion, or rather this same mistake; so was I; but now I am fighting against the error, but have not yet prevailed:”*

“Thus,” says an eloquent historian, “the doctrine of grace, which had already saved the world in the days of the apostles, and which was a second time to save it in the days of the reformers, was set forth by Luther fearlessly and clearly. Reaching across many centuries of ignorance and superstition, he, in this, gave his hand to St. Paul.”

* Seckendorf's Hist. of Lutheranism, p. 20.



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one of the monks had fled from his monastery, and had been received by the prior of the Augustines at Mentz. Thereupon Luther wrote requesting the prior to return the stray sheep to his own fold, adding these gentle words :

“I know that offences must needs come. It is no marvel that man falls ; but it is so, that he rises again, and stands upright. Peter fell, that he might know that he was but a man. Even in our days, the cedars of Lebanon are seen to fall. The very angels—a thing that exceeds all imagination—have fallen in heaven, and Adam in Paradise. Why then should we be surprised if a reed is shaken by the whirlwind, or if a smoking taper is extinguished ?”*

Luther appointed his good friend John Lange, a learned and Christian man, but inclined to severity and quickness of temper, to the priorship of his old monastery at Erfurth, particularly exhorting him to the exercise of patience and gentleness. Lange had had a severe quarrel with the prior of Nuremberg, and Luther wrote him shortly after his instalment at Erfurth : “Put on a spirit of meekness towards the prior of Nuremberg ; this is but proper, seeing that he has assumed a spirit of bitterness and harshness. Bitterness is not expelled by bitterness ; that is to say, the devil by the devil ; but sweetness dispels bitterness ; that is to say, the finger of God casts out the evil spirit.”†

After an absence of six weeks, during which

* L. Epp. XVII.

† Ibid. I., 36.

time he had done his utmost to inculcate his fundamental doctrine, that "Holy Scripture alone shows us the way to heaven," and exerted all his powers of eloquence to persuade his Augustinian brethren to "dwell together in unity," holiness, and peace, the young doctor returned to Wittemberg.

"There is no doubt," says a historian of those times, "that much good seed was sown in the different Augustine convents during this journey of the reformer. The monastic orders which had long been the support of Rome, did perhaps more for the Reformation than against it. This is true in particular of the Augustines. Almost all the pious men of liberal and elevated mind who were living in the cloisters turned towards the gospel. A new and generous blood ere long circulated through these orders, which were, so to speak, the arteries of the German church.

"As yet little was known in the world of the new ideas of the Wittemberg Augustine, while they were already the chief topic of conversation in the chapters and monasteries. Many a cloister thus became a nursery of reformers. As soon as the great struggle took place, pious and able men issued from their obscurity, and abandoning the seclusion of a monastic life, entered upon the active career of ministers of God's word. At the period of this inspection of 1516, Luther awakened many drowsy souls by his words. Hence this year has been named 'the morning star of the gospel day.'"

Upon reaching Wittemberg, Luther discovered

that the affairs of the university had fallen into some disorder during his absence. He was accordingly obliged, without pausing to rest from the severe labors of his recent visitation, to overwhelm himself with work.

On the 26th of October, 1516, he wrote John Lange, "I have need almost continually of two secretaries, for I do nothing all the day long but write letters. I am preacher to the convent, I read the prayers at table, I am pastor and parish minister, director of studies, the prior's vicar—that is to say, prior eleven times over—inspector of the fish-ponds at Litzkau, counsel to the inns of Herzberg at Torgau, lecturer on St. Paul, and commentator on the Psalms. . . . I have rarely time to repeat the daily prayers and sing a hymn; without speaking of my struggles with flesh and blood, with the devil and the world. Learn from this what an idle man I am."*

In this same month of October, Luther's cares were aggravated by the appearance of the plague at Wittemberg. Of course this dreaded epidemic created great excitement, and half depopulated the town. Teachers, students, and citizens alike fled. In the midst of the excitement, the brave and placid monk wrote Lange, "I am not certain that the plague will let me finish the epistle to the Galatians. Its attacks are sudden and violent. It is making great ravages among the young in particular. You advise me to fly. Whither shall I fly? I hope that the world will not come to an end if broth-

* Letter to John Lange, Epp. I., p. 41.



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not conceal it from them, for I am ready myself, and on all occasions, to tell it them both to their faces. Why would you surround this poor Staupitz with all the whirlwinds and tempests of episcopal cares?"*

We are assured that Frederick was not offended by Luther's frank rebuke, but on the contrary often spoke of him in high and honorable terms, and shortly after sent him some fine cloth for a gown. Luther informed Spalatin that he should think it "too fine, if it were not a prince's gift." He added, "I am not worthy that any man should think of me, much less a prince, and so great a prince as Frederick. Those are my best friends who think worst of me. Thank our prince for his kindness to me, but I cannot allow myself to be praised either by you or by any man; for all praise of man is vain, and only that which comes from God is true."†

In July, 1517, George, duke of Saxony, uncle of the elector Frederick, and afterwards a determined opponent of the Reformation, requested Staupitz to recommend to him some learned and eloquent preacher. Luther was instantly suggested, and he shortly received from the prince an invitation to visit Dresden, and to preach in the castle chapel on the feast of St. James the Elder.

Luther accordingly repaired to Dresden, and preached there before a crowded auditory and with great effect, though his boldness and reformatory doctrines displeased the haughty Saxon prince, who muttered angrily at dinner, "I would give a large

* Luther's L., Epp. I., 25.

† Ibid., Epp. 45.

sum not to have heard this monk, for such discourses are only calculated to make people sin with assurance.”*

Jerome Emser, then a licentiate in canon law, counsellor, and secretary to the duke, who was shortly after to break so many intellectual lances with Luther, had listened to the young monk's sermon with deep attention, and it fell to his duty to do the honors of the Dresden palace to his master's guest.

This subtle and intriguing lawyer, hoping to entrap the Saxon monk into some expression of heretical sentiment, brought in a number of schoolmen to argue with him, and then stationing a Dominican at the door to overhear the conversation, went with a smiling face but a treacherous heart, and invited Luther to walk into his trap by accepting an invitation to sup with him. Luther, feeling somewhat indisposed, at first refused, but as Emser pressed him, he went, and was surprised to find such a company collected. It was not long ere the cunning secretary managed to make the conversation drift into a theological current.

Luther, who was instant in season and out of season in his Lord's service, determined to seize this opportunity to stab scholasticism in the very house of its friends. A perfect master of the cavilling dialectics of the schoolmen, singularly gifted in conversation, familiar with every weapon in the intellectual armory, this champion of the Bible speed-

* Mathesius.

ily discomfited the upstart pedants who had been imported from Leipsic by Emser, and by his brilliancy of repartee, his wealth of illustration, and his pungency of satire, soon actually drove his adversaries from the table in a rage.

Emser, with hatred gnawing at his heart on account of his defeat, dissembled to Luther, and was profuse in his apologies for the manner in which the evening had passed,* while the young professor returned to Wittemberg praising God, who had given him the victory.

. * Luther's L., Epp. I., 85.



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now issuing from the obscurity of some squalid dungeon.”*

Excellent men had proclaimed many of these truths before ; and yet, through inadvertency, or because they had remained unconscious of the manifold absurdities of Romanism, died obedient children of the church. Luther's modesty, love of peace, and attachment to order, might have held him fettered to the pontifical throne, had not God, who had decreed as a necessity the radical reformation of the corruptions of the Roman hierarchy, now ordered an event which drew the Wittemburg professor undesignedly into a contest so salutary to Christian liberty, so grandly beneficent to Christendom.

On its part, the papacy still slumbered in tranquil ignorance of the danger that menaced its omnipotence. If it had ever heard of Luther and his doctrines, it had heard only to smile at all thought of danger from the new-fledged tenets of an obscure German monk, who expounded his creed to an ignorant rabble of barbarous students at an unknown university buried in the depths of the Thuringian forest. Had not men, from the thirteenth century, been disputing with its theologians, and railing against its formulas to their own bloody destruction ? Had it not, indeed, been lulled to sleep by the dull and uniform clatter of the schools ?

Surrounded by the satellites of his brilliant

* “ Quasi ex tenebris, carcere, squalore, educi Christum, prophetas, apostlos.” Melancthon's Vita Lutheri.

court, supported by the sciences, the fine arts, and the letters of his age, Leo might gaze proudly from his ecclesiastical throne over the universe lassoed in servile submission at his feet, and say complacently, "My mountain stands strong; I shall never be moved."

Leo X. had, as we have seen,* assumed the tiara in 1513. Addicted to the most expensive personal habits, this luxurious pontiff, besides those fabulous amounts which he lavished upon his ecclesiastical establishment, yearly expended immense sums in the collection and transcription of rare manuscripts, dispatching agents for that purpose to the four corners of the globe, scattering them throughout Europe, and through Egypt, Syria, Irak, and Persia.

With so many avenues of expense already open and in active use, a new one had been created by the efforts to finish the magnificent cathedral of St. Peter's at Rome, which had been designed by Michael Angelo in the preceding pontifical reign, and which Julius II. had dedicated, on his death, to his successor as a sacred legacy, urging that every nerve should be strained for its early completion. The heavy demands made upon the Roman treasury by these magnificent projects taxed to the utmost the financial skill of the pope and his advisers.

But Cardinal Pucci, then minister of the exchequer, was almost as ingenious in the art of amassing money as the pontiff was in that of expending it.

* Chapter VII., p. 96.

By his advice, Leo had commenced his pontificate by selling to Francis I. what did not belong to him, the rights of the church of France.* On the 13th of June, 1517, the pope, as a means of raising money, created thirty-one cardinals at one stroke of the pen. That same day it was noted by the populace, as ominous of approaching evil, that a storm overthrew the angel that stood on the top of the castel di San Angelo, struck an infant Jesus in a church, and knocked the keys out of the hands of a statue of St. Peter.†

But these proceedings were peccadilloes compared with the impious usurpations of authority which followed.

“Leo,” says Michelét, “had no Mexico to which he might have recourse. His mines were the old faith of the nations, their easy credulity. He had intrusted the workings of this mine in Germany to the Dominicans.”‡

The money raised from the French king, and from the creation of the mushroom cardinals, having leaked out of his treasury, Leo next had recourse to the sale of what were termed “indulgences,” assuring the faithful in his bull that the sums thus realized should be applied to the erection of Angelo’s temple of sacerdotal magnificence.

This papal doctrine of indulgences, which has always figured more or less prominently in the

* Michelét’s History of Luther, p. 20.

† Ruchal, I. 36.

‡ Michelét.



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case also, how indulgences extend beyond the grave, and how the living friends of those deceased might effect their deliverance from the purgatorial pangs by a prescribed formula of commutation for their offences, which should be held to be valid in heaven.

The foundation of the whole system was this:

There was supposed to be an infinite treasure of merit in Christ and the saints, which was much more than sufficient for themselves. Thus, what is true of the Saviour was asserted also of the saints, that they had done works of supererogation. This supererogation was deposited with the church, with plenary power over it, and it might be disposed of at the discretion of the see of Rome.

It may easily be conceived what a source of influence and profit the universal belief in this doctrine might become in the hands of a horde of rapacious and unscrupulous priests. If the pope required money to satisfy the wants of his mistress, to complete the erection of a church, to squander upon parasite prelates, or to publish the books of Roman poets and historians,* he issued a bull announcing a general indulgence: instantly the pontiff rolled in wealth; for the pardon of God, hawked in the churches, the streets, the taverns, and the ale-houses of Christendom by perambulating monks as a saleable commodity, found speedy purchase from

* In November of 1517, Leo required of his commissary of indulgences 147 gold ducats to purchase a MS. of the 33d book of Livy. "It was a strange thing," remarks D'Aubigné, "to deliver souls from purgatory, to procure the means of purchasing a manuscript history of the Roman wars!"

those multitudes who are unwilling to undergo themselves, or to suffer their deceased friends to undergo, a course of severe penance or of unpleasant austerities, when they might indulge in any wickedness they chose, and still be sure of the remission of their sins if they could commute for them by pecuniary payments.*

It was then to this system, at once so prolific and so scandalous, that Leo X. now applied for the purpose of replenishing his empty coffers.

Sometimes the popes themselves kept an oversight of the sale of their indulgences; but ordinarily they were “farmed out,” as it was called, that is, taken charge of by the higher dignitaries of the church in various countries, who stipulated that they should receive a certain portion of the proceeds as a recompense for their trouble.

In this way it happened that Albert, Archbishop and Elector of Mentz and of Magdeburg, and brother of the Elector of Brandenburg, a youthful prince who was a kind of pocket edition of Leo, witty, handsome, vain, frivolous, extravagant, and sumptuous, having gotten deeply in debt to the Fuggers, wealthy bankers who were the Rothschilds of that age, being like the pontiff pressed for money, solicited from Leo the farming of “the sins of the Germans,” as these indulgences were termed at Rome.

“The pope and the archbishop,” says D’Aubigné, “having thus divided beforehand the spoils of the

* Milner’s Ch. Hist., Vol. I., p. 207.

good souls of Germany, it was next a question who should be commissioned to realize the investment..

“It was at first offered to the Franciscans, and their superior was associated with Albert. But these monks wished to have no share in it, for it was already in bad odor among all good people. The Augustines, who were more enlightened than the other religious orders, cared still less about it. The Franciscans, however, feared to displease the pope, who had just sent a cardinal’s hat to their general, Forli—a hat that had cost this poor mendicant order thirty thousand florins.

“The superior judged it more prudent not to refuse openly, but he made all kinds of objections to Albert. They could never come to an understanding; and accordingly the archbishop joyfully accepted the proposition to take the whole matter to himself.

“The Dominicans, on their part, coveted a share in the general enterprise about to be set on foot. John Tetzel, who had already acquired great reputation in this trade, hastened to Mentz, and offered his services to the elector. They called to mind the ability he had shown in publishing the indulgences for the knights of the Teutonic order of Prussia and Livonia; his proposals were accepted, and thus the whole traffic passed into the hands of his order.”*

Tetzel, the Dominican inquisitor to whom the Archbishop of Mentz and Magdeburg had thus

* D’Aubigné’s Hist. of the Ref., Vol. I., pp. 259, 260.



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‘Well, all this is expiated the moment your money chinks in the pope’s chest.’ ”*

Myconius assures us that he himself heard Tetzel harangue with incredible effrontery concerning the unlimited power of the pope and of indulgences.†

* Michelét’s Life of Luth. p. 21.

† Myconius’ MS. Hist. of the Ref.

“The youthful Myconius was one of Tetzel’s hearers. He felt an ardent desire to take advantage of this offer. ‘I am a poor sinner,’ said he in Latin to the commissioners, ‘and I have need of a gratuitous pardon.’ ‘Those alone,’ replied the merchants, ‘can have Christ’s merits who lend a helping hand to the church; that is to say, who give money.’ ‘What is the meaning then,’ asked Myconius, ‘of those promises of a free gift posted on the gates and walls of the churches?’ ‘Give at least a groat,’ said Tetzel’s people, after having vainly interceded with their master in favor of the young man. ‘I cannot.’ ‘Only six deniers.’ ‘I am not worth so many.’ The Dominicans begin to fear that he came on purpose to entrap them.

“‘Listen,’ said they; ‘we will make you a present of the six deniers.’ The young man replied indignantly, ‘I will have no bought indulgences. If I desired to buy them, I should only have to sell one of my school-books. I desire a gratuitous pardon, and for the love of God alone. You will render an account to God for having allowed a soul to be lost for six deniers.’ ‘Who sent you to entrap us?’ exclaimed the venders. ‘Nothing but the desire to receive God’s pardon could have made me appear before such great gentlemen,’ replied the young man as he withdrew.

“‘I was Very sad at being thus sent away unpitied. But I felt a comforter within me, who said that there was a God in heaven who pardons repentant souls without money and without price, for the love of his Son Jesus Christ. As I took leave of these folks, the Holy Spirit touched my heart. I burst into tears and prayed to the Lord with anguish. ‘Oh God,’ cried I, ‘since these men have refused to remit my sins because I wanted money to pay them, do thou, Lord, have pity on me; and pardon of thy pure grace.’ I repaired to my chamber; I prayed to my crucifix, which was lying on my desk; I put it on the chair and fell down before it. I cannot describe to you what I experienced. I begged God to be a father to me, and to do with me whatever he

“This frontless monk,” says another distinguished ecclesiastical historian, “not only executed his iniquitous mission with matchless insolence, indecency, and fraud, but even carried his impiety so far as to derogate from the all-sufficient power and influence of the merits of Christ.*

Some readers may be curious to see the *ipsissima verba* of one of Tetzels indulgences. This was the formula :

“Our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on thee, N. N., and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy sufferings. And I, in virtue of the apostolic power committed to me, absolve thee from all ecclesiastical censures, judgments, and penalties that thou mayest have merited ; and further, from all excesses, sins, and crimes that thou mayest have committed, however great and enormous they may be, and of whatever kind, even though they should be reserved to our holy father the pope, and to the apostolic see.

“I efface all the stains of weakness, and all traces of the shame that thou mayest have drawn upon thyself by such actions. I remit the pains thou wouldst have to endure in purgatory. I receive thee again to the sacraments of the church. I pleased. I felt my nature changed, converted, transformed. What had delighted me before, now became an object of disgust. To live with God and to please him was now my earnest, my sole desire.’

“Thus did Tetzels himself prepare the Reformation.” D’Aubigné.

* Mosheim, Ch. Hist.

hereby reincorporate thee in the communion of the saints, and restore thee to the innocence and purity of thy baptism; so that, at the moment of death, the gate of the place of torment shall be shut against thee, and the gate of the paradise of joy shall be opened unto thee. And if thou shouldst live long, this grace continueth unchangeable till the time of thine end.

“In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

“The brother, John Tetzel, Commissary, hath signed this with his own hand.

(Signed.)

“JOHN TETZEL.”*

So ran this charlatan and blasphemous diploma.

Tetzel was accustomed to inculcate such frightful doctrines as these :

That he had such grace and power from the pope, that though one had defloured the virgin mother of God, he could forgive it, provided the person placed the requisite amount of money in the box.

That if St. Peter were now here, he would not have greater grace or power than he had.

That he would not in heaven exchange places with St. Peter, for he had saved more souls with his indulgences than St. Peter by his preaching.

That if any one cast money into the box for a soul in purgatory, the soul would fly up to heaven as soon as the coin tinkled at the bottom.

That it was not necessary to feel sorrow and

* Maimbourg.



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CHAPTER XI.

It is stated that Luther first heard of Tetzel, though he does not appear to have been fully informed regarding the nature of the atrocious doctrines he inculcated, at Grimma, in 1516, just before Staupitz left him for the Netherlands, and as he was commencing the vicar-general's duty of visitation.

Some one, Staupitz perhaps, having repeated one of his extravagant expressions, Luther then exclaimed, "If God permit, I will make a hole in his drum."*

In the following year, 1517, a great flourish of trumpets and a babel of tongues announced the approach of the infamous license-monger to the immediate neighborhood of Wittemberg.

Erecting his red indulgence cross at Juterbock, four miles distant from Luther's university, the scandalous priest enacted all the impious mummeries of his extensive *repertoire*.

"This great purse-thresher," said Luther afterwards, "began to thresh bravely, so that the money leaped and fell tinkling into the box."†

•Although Tetzel drew off crowds of his parishioners and students from Wittemberg to his indulgence market at Juterbock,‡ Luther at the commencement paid no attention to his harangues.

* Lingke, Reiseges. Luther's, 27.

† Luther's Opp. (W.), XVII.

‡ D'Aubigné's Hist. Ref., Vol. I., p. 261.

At a later period he made this record of himself: "I was at that time a monk and a furious Papist; so intoxicated, nay, so drowned in the Romish doctrines, that I would have willingly aided, if I could, in killing any one who should have had the audacity to refuse the slightest obedience to the pope: I was a very Saul, as there are many still."*

At the same time "his heart was ready to catch fire for every thing that he recognized as truth, and against every thing that he believed to be error."

It was in this memorable year of 1517 that a number of persons happened one day to present themselves at Luther's confessional, and after owning themselves to be guilty of the grossest crimes—adultery, licentiousness, usury—yet refused to perform the penances imposed upon them by the Augustinian, alleging that they were possessed of Tetzel's diplomas of indulgence, and reading to him these words: "I absolve thee from all ecclesiastical censures, judgments, and penalties which thou mayest have incurred; moreover from all excesses, sins, and crimes that thou mayest have committed, however great and enormous they may be, and from whatsoever cause, were they even reserved for our most holy father the pope, and for the apostolic see."†

Horried at such audacity, Luther still refused to absolve them. He had no knowledge of these

* L. Opp. (W.) XXII.

† See the full form of this diploma quoted in the preceding chapter, pp. 127, 128.

impious diplomas, he said; he only knew that the plain declaration of Christ himself was, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."*

"Have a care," he added, "how you listen to the clamors of these indulgence merchants; you have better things to do than buy licenses which they sell at so vile a price."†

Tetzel's frightened dupes hastened to him at Juterbock, where he still lingered, and informed him that the Augustinian of Wittenberg had refused to recognize the legitimacy of his operations, and would not absolve them on his papers.‡

Myconius informs us that the Dominican, upon hearing these complaints, bellowed with anger, and rushing to his pulpit, hurled from it an avalanche of insults and curses upon the Wittenberg professor.

For the purpose of striking greater terror into the gaping crowd which stood watching his movements, he had a fire built a number of times in the public market-place of Juterbock, pretending at the same time that he had received an order from Leo instantly to burn at the stake all blasphemous heretics who should presume to oppose his most holy indulgences.§

But Martin Luther, now ripe in years—he was at this time thirty-four—learned in the Scriptures, profoundly versed in the literature of the schools, and possessed of a vehement courage which had

* Luke 13 : 5.

† Meurer's Life of Luther.

† L. Opp. Lat. in Præf.

§ Myconius' Hist. Ref.



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“I cannot tell; God knows,” responded the elector.

“Do not be uneasy about it then,” said the duke; “let me hear it.”

“Having gone to bed last night,” commenced the elector, “tired and dispirited, I soon fell asleep after saying my prayers, and I slept calmly for about two hours and a half. I then awoke, and all kinds of thoughts occupied me till midnight.

“I reflected how I should keep the approaching festival of All Saints. I prayed for the wretched souls in purgatory, and begged that God would direct me, my councils, and my people, according to the truth.

“I then fell asleep again, and dreamed that the Almighty sent me a monk who was a true son of the apostle Paul. He was accompanied by all the saints, in obedience to God’s command, to bear him testimony, and to assure me that he did not come with any fraudulent design, but that all he should do was conformable to the will of God.

“They asked my gracious permission to let him write something on the doors of the palace chapel at Wittemberg, which I conceded through my chancellor.

“Upon this the monk repaired thither and began to write. So large were the characters, that I could read from Schweinitz what he was writing. The pen he used was so long that its extremity reached as far as Rome, where it pierced the ears

of a lion* which lay there, and shook the triple crown on the pope's head.

“All the cardinals and princes ran up hastily, and endeavored to support it. You and I both tendered our assistance: I stretched out my arm; that moment I awoke, with my arm extended, in great alarm, and very angry with this monk, who could not guide his pen better. I recovered myself a little; it was only a dream.

“I was still half asleep, and once more closed my eyes. The dream came again. The lion, still disturbed by the pen, began to roar with all his might, until the whole city of Rome, and all the states of the holy empire, ran up to know what was the matter.

“The pope called upon us to oppose this monk, and addressed himself particularly to me, because the friar was living in my dominions. I again awoke, repeated the Lord's prayer, entreated God to preserve his holiness, and fell asleep.

“I then dreamed that all the princes of the empire, and we along with them, hastened to Rome, and endeavored one after another to break this pen. It cracked as if it had been made of iron; we gave it up as hopeless.

“I then asked the monk—for I was now at Rome, now at Wittemberg—where he had got that pen, and how it came to be so strong.

“‘This pen,’ replied he, ‘belonged to a Bohemian goose a hundred years old.† I had it from

* Leo X.

† John Huss.

one of my old schoolmasters. It is so strong because no one can take the pith out of it, and I am myself quite astonished at it.'

"On a sudden I heard a loud cry; from the monk's long pen had issued a host of other pens. I awoke a third time; it was daylight."

"What is your opinion, Mr. Chancellor?" now asked Duke John. "Would that we had here a Joseph, or a Daniel, taught of God."

The chancellor thus called upon, then said, "Your highnesses know the vulgar proverb, that the dreams of young women, wise men, and great lords have generally some hidden meaning. But we shall not learn the significance of this for some time, until the events have come to pass to which it relates. For this reason, confide its accomplishment to God, and commit all things into his hands."

"My opinion is the same as yours, Mr. Chancellor," said the duke; "it is not proper for us to rack our brains to discover the interpretation of this dream; God will direct every thing to his own glory."

The elector then closed the conversation by saying, "May our faithful God do even so. Still I shall never forget this dream. I have thought of one interpretation, but I shall keep it to myself. Time will show perhaps, whether I have conjectured rightly."*

* The foregoing account of the elector's dream has been taken from D'Aubigné, who extracts it from a MS. among the Weimar State papers, taken down from Spalatin's own lips.



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CHAPTER XII.

THOSE propositions which Luther affixed to the door of the Wittemberg church at mid-day, on the 31st of October, 1517, opened thus :

“From a desire to elicit the truth, the following theses will be maintained at Wittemberg, under the presidency of the reverend father, Martin Luther, of the order of the Augustines, master of arts, master and lecturer in theology, who asks that such as are not able to dispute verbally with him, will do so in writing. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Then follow the ninety-five theses. From the series we quote the more essential ones :

1. “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says *repent*, he means that the whole life of his believers upon earth shall be a constant and perpetual repentance.

2. “This word cannot be understood of the sacrament of penance, (that is, of confession and satisfaction,) as it is administered by the priest.

3. “Yet the Lord does not intend to speak in this only of internal repentance ; internal repentance is null, if it does not produce externally all kinds of mortification of the flesh.

4. “Repentance and sorrow, that is to say, true penitence, last as long as man is displeased with

himself, that is to say, until he passes from this life into the life eternal.

5. “The pope is unable and does not desire to remit any other penalty than that which he has imposed of his own good pleasure, or conformably to the canons or papal ordinances.

6. “The pope cannot remit any condemnation; but only declare and confirm the remission of God, except in the cases that appertain to himself. If he does otherwise, the condemnation remains entirely the same.

8. “The laws of ecclesiastical penance ought to be imposed solely on the living, and in no respect concern the dead.

21. “The commissaries of indulgences are in error when they say, that by the papal indulgence a man is delivered from every punishment and is saved.

25. “The same power that the pope has over purgatory throughout the church, each bishop possesses individually in his own diocese, and each priest in his own parish.

27. “They preach mere human follies who maintain that, as soon as the money rattles in the strong box, the soul flies out of purgatory.

28. “This is certain, that as soon as the money tinkles, avarice and love of gain arrive, increase, and multiply. But the support and prayers of the church depend solely on God’s will and good pleasure.

32. “Those who fancy themselves sure of salva-

tion by indulgences, will go to perdition along with those who teach them so.

35. "They are teachers of antichristian doctrines who pretend that to deliver a soul from purgatory, or to buy an indulgence, there is no need of either sorrow or repentance.

36. "Every Christian who truly repents of his sins, enjoys an entire remission both of the penalties and of the guilt, without any need of indulgences.

37. "Every Christian, whether dead or alive, participates in all the blessings of Christ and of the church by God's gift, and without a letter of indulgence.

38. "Still we should not condemn the papal indulgence and pardon; for this pardon is a declaration of the pardon of God.

40. "True repentance and sorrow seek and love the punishment; but the mildness of indulgence absolves from the punishment, and begets hatred against it.

42. "We should teach Christians that the pope has no thought or desire of comparing in any respect the act of buying indulgences with any work of mercy.

43. "We should teach Christians that he who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does better than he who purchases an indulgence.

44. "For the work of charity increaseth charity, and renders a man more pious; whereas the indulgence does not make him better, but only renders



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sary of indulgences, nay, further, the pope himself, should pledge their souls to guarantee it.

53. “They are the enemies of the pope and of Jesus Christ who, by reason of the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the word of God.

55. “The pope can have no other thought than this : if the indulgence, which is a lesser matter, be celebrated with ringing of bells, with pomp and ceremony, much more should we honor and celebrate the gospel, which is a greater thing, with a hundred bells, and with a hundred pomps and ceremonies.

62. “The true and precious treasure of the church is the holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.

65. “The treasures of the gospel are nets in which, in former times, the rich and those in easy circumstances were caught.

66. “But the treasures of indulgences are nets with which they now catch the riches of the people.

67. “It is the duty of bishops and pastors to receive the commissaries of indulgences with every mark of respect.

68. “But it is still more their duty to ascertain with their eyes and ears that the said commissaries do not preach the dreams of their own imagination, instead of the orders of the pope.

71. “Cursed be he who speaks against the indulgences of the pope.

72. “But blessed be he who speaks against the

foolish and impudent language of the preachers of indulgences.

77. “The indulgence of the pope cannot take away the smallest daily sin, as far as regards the guilt of the offence.

79. “It is blasphemy to say that the cross adorned with the arms of the pope is as effectual as the cross of Christ.

80. “The bishops, pastors, and theologians who permit such things to be told the people, will have to render an account of them.

81. “This shameless preaching, these impudent commendations of indulgences, make it difficult for the learned to defend the dignity and honor of the pope against the calumnies of the preachers, and the subtle and crafty questions of the common people.

82. “As, for instance, why does not the pope, for the sake of most holy love, and because of the extreme need of the souls, which forms the most urgent reason, *at once deliver all souls from purgatory*; while yet, for the sake of pitiable money, in order to erect St. Peter’s church, which forms a most insignificant reason, he delivers innumerable souls?

83. “Again, what does the pope forgive, or what does he distribute to those who, through true repentance, are already entitled to forgiveness and indulgences?

86. “Why, say they, does not the pope, who is richer than the richest Croesus, build the mother

church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with that of poor Christians?

92. "Would that we were quit of those preachers who cry to the church, Peace, peace, and there is no peace.

94. "We should exhort Christians to diligence in following Christ their head, through crosses, death, and hell.

95. "For it is far better to enter into the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation, than to acquire a carnal security by the consolations of a false peace."

Such were the theses, negative and polemical, which have been well said to have contained the germs of the Reformation. They show how closely Luther was still tied in the swaddling bands of Rome. For if there is any one thing more prominent than another in them, it is the ever present tacit assumption that the pope must side with him, and discountenance those blasphemous doctrines to which Leo had already committed himself.

Had Luther at this time been informed of the length to which his theses would ultimately lead him, he would probably have been filled with horror. He had neither the wish nor the thought of introducing innovations, or of breaking with Rome. On the contrary, he imagined himself to be a much better Romanist than the scandalous priests whose iniquities he had undertaken to uncloak.

He was led gradually and reluctantly to assume his later position of hostility to the holy see. God



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CHAPTER XIII.

ON the evening of this same eventful 31st of October, Luther, returning from the thronged and excited market-place, where the eager burghers of the good old town of Wittemberg were still busy in discussing, and mostly in approving the theses of their idolized monk, and where the jubilant students of the university were congregated in numbers, entered his cell, bowed his head in prayer, after which he remained wrapped in pensive thought for some time; then taking up his pen, he wrote this letter to Albert, Archbishop of Mentz and Magdeburg, having in some manner learned that this prince, in whom the Wittemberg professor saw only a superior worthy of respect and obedience,* had both sanctioned and prescribed the quackery of indulgences.

“To the most reverend father in Christ, my most illustrious lord Prince Albert, Archbishop of Magdeburg and Mayence, Marquis of Brandenburg, etc., etc.:

“Luther to his lord and pastor in Christ, in all submission and reverence. -

“JESUS.

“The grace and mercy of God, and whatever can be and is.

* Domino suo et pastori in Christo venerabiliter metuendo.
Address on the letter. Epp. I. 68.

“Pardon me, most reverend father in Christ, illustrious prince, that I have the temerity, I who am the least of mankind, to raise my eyes to your sublimity, and address a letter to you.

“Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, is witness for me, that, long restrained by the consciousness of my own turpitude and weakness, I have long delayed commencing the work which I now undertake with open and upraised brow, impelled by the fidelity I owe to Jesus Christ ; deign then, your grace, to cast a look upon the grain of sand who now approaches you, and to receive my prayer with paternal clemency.

“Persons are now hawking about papal indulgences, under the name and august title of your lordship, for the construction of St. Peter’s at Rome.

“I say nothing about the vaporings of the preachers, which I have not myself heard ; but I complain bitterly of the fatal errors in which they are involving the common people, men of weak understanding, whom, foolish as they are, these men persuade that they will be sure of salvation if they only buy their letters of plenary indulgence.

“They believe that souls will fly out of purgatory the moment the money paid for their redemption is thrown into the preacher’s bag, and that such virtue belongs to these indulgences, that there is no sin, however great, even the violation, which is impossible, of the mother of God, which the indulgences will not absolutely and at once efface.

“Great God! And is it thus that men dare to teach unto death those who are intrusted to your care, Oh reverend father, and make more difficult the account which will be demanded of you in the great day!

“When I saw these things I could remain silent no longer. . . No, there is no episcopal power which can insure to man his salvation; even the infinite grace of our Lord cannot render him wholly secure: the apostle commands us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling. *The righteous scarcely shall be saved*, so narrow is the way which leads to life. Those who are saved are called in the Scripture, brands saved from the burning; everywhere the Lord reminds us of the difficulty of salvation.

“How then dare these men seek to render poor souls fatally confident of salvation, on the mere strength of purchased indulgences and futile promises? The chiefest work of bishops should be to take care that the people learn truly the gospel, and be full of Christian charity.

“Never did Christ preach indulgences, nor command them to be preached: what he preached and commanded to be preached was the gospel.

“I would implore you to silence these ill preachers ere some one shall arise and, utterly confuting them and their preachings, cast discredit upon your sublimity, a thing to be avoided, but which I fear must needs occur, unless you take measures for silencing these men.



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out knowledge or inclination;" and he adds, "I was taken quite unawares, and I call God, the searcher of hearts, to witness."*

Meantime the publication of these theses, and the sermon in German which Luther delivered in support of them,† struck upon the whole of Germany like a huge thunderbolt. This submission of man to God, of the finite to the infinite, was at once recognized by the German people as the true national religion, as the faith which Gottschalk proclaimed in the time of Charlemagne, from the very cradle of German Christianity.‡

The people accordingly threw themselves with the most hungry avidity upon this religious pasture, from which they had been shut out ever since the fourteenth century. The propositions were printed in thousands, devoured, spread abroad, diffused in every direction. Before two weeks had elapsed his words had penetrated to the remotest corners of Germany, and in four weeks throughout Christendom;§ this too in the infancy of printing, when Faust had but recently modelled his rough type, and long before the press flashed news across the globe upon its myriad and lightning wings.

* *Casu enim, non Voluntate nec studio, in has turbas incidi, Deum ipsum testor.* L. Opp. Lat. in Præf.

† One of the fathers came up to Luther after this sermon, and pulling him by the sleeve, and shaking his head, said, "Doctor, you are going too far, you will do us much harm. The Dominicans are laughing in their sleeves at us." "Father," replied Luther, "if it comes not from God it will fall; if it proceeds from his Holy Spirit, it will triumph." Audin.

‡ Michelét. § Meurer's Life of Luther. Michelét, p. 31.

From this wide-spread publicity, the modest and doubtful young doctor shrank. He had designed for his theses no such extensive circulation, writing them merely for local effect, and as a basis for academic disputation.

Luther's alarm at his success is exhibited by himself: "I am sorry," he said, "to see them so extensively printed and distributed: this is not a good way wherein to set about the instruction of the people; I myself feel some doubts upon certain points. There are things which I should more closely have investigated and ascertained, others which I should have altogether omitted, had I foreseen this result."

But even had he desired to do so, Luther could not have laid the perturbed spirit of reform which he had invoked. His theses, epigrammatic and terse in their form, had created so great a sensation because men's minds were already alive to the absurdities and blasphemies of the indulgence-mongers, and these propositions of the Wittemberg doctor gave adequate expression to a universal feeling, echoed the popular thought.

He could therefore no more have stilled the tumult he had conjured up, than he could have silenced the ceaseless throbbings of the ocean. The fires of debate once lighted, God meant should blaze on and on until all Europe was aglow, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Baltic sea.

Luther's timidity and qualms of conscience soon vanished before the lying and virulent assaults of the indulgence preachers and their backers. Despite

the lukewarmness of his friends, who left him to contend alone in the arena, the brave monk, girding up his loins, and buckling on his spiritual armor, determined, like David, to go forth single-handed to the combat with the Goliath of the indulgences.

“Some copies of my propositions,” he says, “having found their way to Frankfort-on-the-Oder, where Tetzels was then acting as inquisitor, and selling indulgences under the archbishop-elect of Mayence, he, foaming with rage and alarm at the theses I had set forth, published a set of counter-resolutions in reply, to the number of one hundred and six, in which he maintained the most insolent and blasphemous doctrines respecting the pretended power and infallibility of the pope ; and in a second series of resolutions, he assumes the office of general interpreter of the Scriptures, and railed against heretics and heresiarchs, by which names he designated myself and my friends ; and he concluded his insolence by burning my theses publicly in the city of Frankfort.

“When the news of the madman’s proceedings reached Wittemberg, a number of persons collected together, and having procured Tetzels productions, retaliated upon him by burning them in the public square, amid the cheers and derision of a large proportion of the inhabitants.

“I was not sorry that such a mass of absurdity and extravagance should meet with the fate it really merited ; but at the same time I regretted the manner in which it was done, and solemnly affirm that



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the man asserting that the authority of the pope was superior to the councils and canons of the church, and that even the sacred Scriptures depended for their interpretation on the mere *dictum* of that representative of antichrist, I thought it unnecessary to reply further than by simply declaring my conviction that the said Prierio's book, being a compound of blasphemies and lies, must certainly have been the work of the devil; and that if the pope and cardinals sanctioned such writings, which I did not believe, although I now know it well, Rome must be the seat of antichrist, the centre of abomination, and the synagogue of Satan.

“Who is antichrist, if the pope is not antichrist? Oh, Satan, Satan, how long wilt thou be suffered to abuse the patience of God by thy great wickedness? Unhappy, abandoned, blasphemous Rome, the wrath of God is upon thee; and thou richly deservest it, for thou art the habitation of all that is impure and disgusting—a very pantheon of impiety.

“In this way passed the year 1517, I maintaining the truth, and these apologists for impiety railing against me with their false accusations; for hitherto pope Leo had taken no notice of the matter, not wishing, as I afterwards understood, to interfere at all, thinking that the zeal of both parties would soon subside.

“Meantime I began to consider what measures to adopt, for I knew that no reasonings of mine would have any weight with such obstinate and in-

solent disputants as Tetzel, Eck, and Prierio, bigoted slaves of that system of iniquity and licentiousness which I myself had witnessed when at Rome.”*

The controversy thus succinctly sketched by Luther, grew daily in its proportions and in its radical differences of opinion.

It has been well said that the second series of theses put forth by Tetzel, and mentioned by Luther in the quotation just given, form an important epoch in the Reformation. They changed the ground of dispute; they transported it from the indulgence-markets to the halls of the Vatican, and diverted it from Tetzel to the pope. In the place of that despicable broker whom Luther had so firmly grasped, they substituted the sacred person of the head of the church.

Luther was filled with astonishment. It is probable that he would ere long have taken that step himself, but his enemies spared him the trouble. It was henceforth no question of a discredited traffic, but of Rome itself; and the blow by which a daring hand had tried to demolish Tetzel's shop, shook the very foundations of the pontifical throne.†

Meantime edition after edition of the theses of the “Wittemberg heretic”‡ was exhausted. “Men conversed about them in all the convents, and in all the universities.

“The pious monks who had entered the cloisters to save their souls, all upright and honorable men, were delighted at this simple and striking confes-

* L. Opp.

† D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 302.

‡ Cochläus.

sion of the truth, and heartily desired that Luther would continue the work he had begun.

“At length one man had found courage to undertake the perilous struggle. This was a reparation accorded to Christendom; the public conscience was satisfied. Piety saw in these theses a blow aimed at every superstition; the new theology hailed in them the defeat of the scholastic dogmas; princes and magistrates considered them as a barrier raised against the invasions of the ecclesiastical power; and the nation rejoiced at seeing so positive a *veto* opposed by this monk to the cupidity of the Roman chancery.”*

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 279.



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Hermonymos, and John Wessel, being at that time the great lights of the university.

Reuchlin's mind was early familiarized with the arguments of the Greek dissent from the Roman tenets, and he had frequently listened to arguments from Wessel intended to prove that "the power of plenary absolution belongs to God alone; that it is not necessary to confess our sins to a priest; and that there is no purgatory, unless it be God himself, who is a devouring fire, and who cleanseth from all impurity." Wessel was also accustomed to affirm that "the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope was absurd, and that all human satisfactions were blasphemy against Christ, who has reconciled and completely justified mankind."

Although Reuchlin appears not to have adopted these branded heresies of the Paris professor, the habitual repetition of them in his hearing, the earnestness with which Wessel held them, and his great learning, broadened the intellect of the German scholar, persuaded him that men might differ vitally from the Roman creed, and still be worthy of respect, and taught him that wisdom was not locked up in the Vatican, nor the exclusive property of the popes.

At the age of twenty Reuchlin taught philosophy, Greek, and Latin at Basle. We have seen how severely the Greek and Hebrew tongues were condemned by the Papal theologians; and when Reuchlin's Greek lectures were noised abroad, and the schoolmen began to sputter and complain, Reuchlin wrote, "The Romans make wry faces and cry

out, pretending that all these literary pursuits are contrary to the Roman piety, because the Greeks are schismatics. Oh what toil and suffering must be undergone to restore wisdom and learning to Germany.”

After a life of vicissitudes ; after filling a professorship at Tubingen ; after a journey into Italy in 1483—when he surprised the pontiff, by the pronunciation before the Roman court of a Latin oration, into the exclamation, “ This man certainly deserves to rank with the best orators of France and Italy ”—after a second visit to Rome in 1498, on an important mission, where he employed his time and money in acquiring the Hebrew tongue under the learned Israelite Abdias Sphoma, Reuchlin finally returned to Germany, and taking up his residence at Wurtemberg, accomplished those labors which were so useful to Luther and to the Reformation.*

It was about this time that he was drawn into his famous controversy with the monks.

It seems that a baptized Jew named Pfifferkorn, who dwelt at Cologne, and lived upon intimate terms with the inquisitor Hochstraaten, had, in connection with the Dominicans ever ready to swoop and batten upon any prey, solicited and obtained from the emperor Maximilian a decree authorizing the seizure and public burning of all the Hebrew books, the Bible excepted, upon which they could lay their hands, on the ground that these works teemed with abuse of the Saviour.

* D'Aubigné.

Afterwards the emperor was won to reconsider his decree, and he called upon Reuchlin for his opinion concerning the character of the Hebrew books.

The eminent scholar, grieved to see such a holocaust of valuable and rare books, went carefully over the list, and selecting those which seemed peculiarly full of blasphemies, told Maximilian that he thought those might safely be burned; but as for the rest, he advised that they be returned to their owners, and excluded from the sentence.

This advice the emperor adopted; whereupon “the inquisitor and his proselyte,” says D’Aubigné, “like hungry ravens who see their prey escaping them, raised a furious clamor.

“They picked out different passages from Reuchlin’s works, and perverted their meaning, declaring the author a heretic, and accusing him of a secret inclination to Judaism, and threatening him with the dungeons of the Inquisition.

“Reuchlin at first gave way to alarm; but as these men became more insolent, and prescribed disgraceful conditions, he published, in 1513, a ‘Defence against his Cologne slanderers,’ in which he described the whole party in the liveliest colors.

“The Dominicans swore to be avenged, and hoped by a stroke of authority to uphold their tottering power. Hochstraaten had a tribunal formed at Mentz against Reuchlin, and the writings of this learned man were committed to the flames.

“Then the innovators, the masters and disciples



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they will be compelled to let my old age end in peace.”*

Reuchlin acquires additional importance in the eyes of thoughtful students, when it is remembered that it was under his active supervision that Melancthon, the St. John of the Reformation, was trained.

The other of these men was Erasmus, the famous sage of Rotterdam.

The early history of this philosopher was singularly romantic.

His father, a celebrated village wit named Gerard, a native of Gouda, in the Netherlands, having, on account of the irregularities of his life, been persuaded by his relatives to enter a convent, deserted his wife before the birth of her son, and repairing to Rome, buried himself in the gloom of the cloister.

Of the birth of Erasmus† he therefore remained ignorant.

Returning afterwards to Holland, he was surprised to learn that his wife still lived, and that a son had been born to him. Repenting, but too late as he imagined, his hasty resolution to quit the world, he still determined to adhere to his sacerdotal vows.

Erasmus was tenderly reared by his parents, who, though forced by the monastic discipline to live

* *Maï Vita Reuchlin.* Berlin, 1830.

† His name was properly *Gerard*, of course. This, after a custom then in vogue, he translated into Greek, *Erasmus*, for the second name, and into Latin, *Desiderius*, for the first name.

apart, centred their love upon their child until his thirteenth year, when, worn out by suffering, his poor mother's spirit winged its way to that bourne where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

The father, beating his restless heart to pieces against the wall of his sullen cloister, did not long survive his Margaret, so that Erasmus was thus early orphaned, and forced to relinquish his school, at which his parents had kept him from his fourth year.

Forced to win his own way, the precocious wit of the future philosopher did not desert him. His guardians had intended to rear him up in a cloister, but an invincible dislike to a monastic life, caused doubtless by a remembrance of the misery his father's assumption of the monkish gown had created in his family, made it impossible to persuade him to embrace an ecclesiastical career.

Although he studied for a while in several monasteries, he at length worked his way to Paris, and entering the university there, pursued his studies in extreme indigence, but with the most indefatigable industry and the most brilliant success.

Although he engaged without intermission in the pursuit of knowledge, he is said to have assisted reluctantly in the scholastic disputes, and to have avoided the study of theology, lest he should discover any errors, and be in consequence denounced as a heretic.*

* Seckendorf, D'Aubigné, Mathesius.

In due time Erasmus was graduated with *éclat*; then commencing to teach, he speedily collected about him troops of pupils, and made, by the elegance of his style, and his remarkable familiarity with the lore of the ancients, many friends among the most eminent scholars of Christendom.

Having thus laid firm and broad the foundations of his fame, he continued to rear the magnificent temple of his literary reputation from year to year, until, at the commencement of the Reformation, he had “put on the top-stone with shoutings,” and was everywhere hailed as the foremost scholar and writer of his times.

This remarkable man, “knowing the public taste, had very early shaken off the ties of the schools and of the cloister, and devoting himself to literature, displayed in his writings those shrewd observations, that clear, lively, and enlightened wit, which at once amuse and instruct.”

It was not long ere Erasmus was eagerly courted by the different princes of Europe, who desired to add the brilliant light of his genius to the lustre of their courts.

But we are assured that he was inexhaustible in finding excuses to escape from their invitations. He preferred gaining his living with his printer Frobenius, by correcting books, and by the receipts which accrued to him from the immense sales of his own works, to living surrounded by luxury and purchased favors in the splendid courts of Charles V., Henry VIII. of England, or Francis I., or to



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those ignorant monks against whom he had declared war.

“Preceding authors had already popularized the idea of that element of folly which has crept into all the opinions and actions of human life.

“Erasmus seized upon it, and introduces Folly in her own person, *Moria*, daughter of Plutus, born in the Fortunate Isles, fed on drunkenness and impertinence, and queen of a powerful empire; she gives a description of it, depicting successively all the states in the world that belong to her; but she dwells particularly on the churchmen who will not acknowledge her benefits, though she loads them with her favors.

“She overwhelms with her gibes and sarcasms that labyrinth of dialectics in which the theologians had bewildered themselves, and those extravagant syllogisms, by which they pretended to support the church. She unveils the disorders, ignorance, filthy habits, and absurdities of the monks.

“‘They all belong to me,’ says she, ‘those folks whose greatest pleasure is in relating miracles, or listening to marvellous lies, and who make use of them in an especial manner to beguile the dulness of others, and to fill their own purses—I speak particularly of priests and preachers! In the same category are those who enjoy the foolish but sweet persuasion that if they chance to see a piece of wood or a picture representing Polyphemus or Christopher, they will not die that day.’

“‘Alas, what follies,’ continues *Moria*; ‘I am

almost ashamed of them myself. Do we not see every country claiming its peculiar *saint*? Each trouble has its saint, and every saint his candle. This cures toothache; that assists women in child-bed; a third restores what a thief has stolen; a fourth preserves you in shipwreck; and a fifth protects your flocks. There are some who have many virtues at once, and especially the virgin mother of God, in whom the people place more confidence than in her Son.

“‘If in the midst of all these mummeries, some wise man should rise and give utterance to these harsh truths: ‘You shall not perish miserably if you live like Christians—you shall redeem your sins, if to your alms you add repentance, tears, watchings, prayer, fasting, and a complete change in your way of life; this saint will protect you if you imitate his conduct!’—if, I say, some wise man should charitably utter these things in their ears, Oh, of what happiness would it not rob their souls, and into what trouble, what distress, would it not plunge them! The mind of man is so constituted that imposture has more hold upon it than truth. If there is one saint more apocryphal than another—a St. George, St. Christopher, or St. Barbara—you will see him worshipped with greater fervency than St. Peter, St. Paul, or even than Christ himself.*

“But Moria does not stop here: she attacks the bishops, ‘who run more after gold than after

* “Aut ipsum Christum.” *Encomium Moriae*, Opp. IV., 444.

souls, and who think they have done enough for Jesus Christ, when they take their seats with theatrical pomp, like holy fathers to whom adoration belongs, and utter blessings or anathemas.'

"The daughter of the Fortunate Isles even ventures to attack the court of Rome, and the pope himself, who, passing his time in amusements, leaves the duties of his ministry to St. Peter and St. Paul. 'Can there be any greater enemies to the church,' she queries, 'than those unholy pontiffs who by their silence allow Jesus Christ to be forgotten; who bind him by their mercenary regulations; who falsify his doctrines by forced interpretations, and crucify him a second time by their scandalous lives?'"*

"Holbein added the most grotesque illustrations to the *praise of folly*, in which the pope figured with his triple crown.

"It is impossible to describe the impression this little book produced throughout Christendom. Twenty-seven editions appeared in the lifetime of Erasmus: it was translated into every European language, and contributed more than any other to confirm the antisacerdotal tendency of the age.

"But to the popular attack of sarcasm, Erasmus added science and learning. The study of Greek and Latin literature had opened a new prospect to the modern genius that was beginning to awaken from its slumber in Europe. Erasmus eagerly embraced the idea of the Italians, that the sciences ought to be studied in the schools of the

* *Encomium Moriae*, Opp. IV., p. 450.



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work may bear as much fruit to Christianity as it has cost me toil and application.' ”*

The strength of Erasmus lay in the acuteness of his judgment; this rendered him equally great as a moralist and as a wit. His learning, though varied and extensive, was not more than he found the means of employing in his bold and sarcastic discussions; and he enjoys the reputation of having been the first to display, in clear, intelligible characters, the essential difference between an established religion and its established representatives.†

But here he paused. He had neither the courage nor the desire to play the reformer. Luther, who knew him well, wrote, “Erasmus is very capable of exposing error, but he knows not how to teach the truth.”

Erasmus was always ready to acknowledge his timidity. “If the corrupted morals of Rome call for a prompt and vigorous remedy,” he wrote, “that is no business of mine, nor of those who are like me. Let others aspire to martyrdom; I do not think myself worthy of such an honor. I fear that if any disturbance should arise, I should imitate Peter in his fall.”‡

When the dreaded disturbance did arise, the cowardly and sneering scholar did indeed “imitate Peter in his fall,” turned his back upon that glorious light which he had himself assisted to kindle,

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., chap. VIII., *passim*.

† Stebbing's History of the Reformation, Vol. I., p. 46.

‡ Ego me non arbitror hoc honore dignum, etc. Ev. Epp. I., 653.

and hastening to Rome, hid his candle under the pontifical bushel.

“I am reading Erasmus,” said Luther on one occasion, “but he daily loses credit with me. I like to see him rebuke with so much firmness and learning the grovelling ignorance of the priests and monks, but I fear that he does not render much service to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. What is of man is dearer to him than what is of God. We are living in dangerous times. A man is not a good and judicious Christian because he understands Greek and Hebrew. Jerome, who knew five languages, is inferior to Augustine, who knew but one, although Erasmus thinks the contrary.

“I very carefully conceal my opinions concerning Erasmus, through fear of giving advantage to his enemies. Perhaps the Lord will give him understanding in good time.”†

It is said that Erasmus, who was in the Netherlands when he first read the theses of the nascent chief of the Reformation, admired and applauded them. Indeed he well might approve these tenets of the Wittemberg doctor, for they scarcely exceeded many of his own writings in pith and directness of assault upon the Roman ecclesiasticism.

“I am not surprised,” said the sage of Rotterdam to the elector Frederick, when that prince once asked his opinion of his monk’s theses—“I am not at all surprised that they have made so much noise, for he has committed two unpardonable sins: he

* L. Epp. to Spalatin, I., 22.

has attacked the pope's tiara and the monks' bellies."*

But while Erasmus was spending his strength and wasting his rhetoric in petty skirmishes with the extreme outposts of the Roman hosts—while the timid scholar *played* at war with wooden swords and mimic guns, carefully restraining the martial ardor of his adherents when he detected any disposition on their part to merge their mock combat into a real one, by repeating his favorite maxim, "A disadvantageous peace is better than the most righteous war"†—the bold Saxon monk, careless of his reputation, putting safety and comfort behind his back, marched on step by step to his terrific conflict with the Roman see.

* Müller's Denkw., IV., 256.

† "Malo hunc qualisqualis est rerum humanarum statum, quam novas excitari tumultus," he said on another occasion. Eras. Epp., I., 953.



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ness to maintain all his propositions in public disputation.

After reading a number of extravagant theses in defence of his indulgences, the Dominican broker in the salvation of souls adroitly changed the whole ground of the controversy by taking shelter under the shadow of the pontifical throne, and assuming to be the special champion of the outraged dignity of the pope.

On this point he read these propositions, among others of a similar purport :

“ We should teach Christians that the pope, by the greatness of his power, is above the whole universal church and superior to the councils, and that we should obey implicitly all his decrees.

“ We should teach Christians that the pope alone has the right of deciding in all matters of Christian faith ; that he alone, and no one besides him, has power to interpret the meaning of Scripture according to his own views, and to approve or condemn all the words or writings of other men.

“ We should teach Christians that the judgment of the pope cannot err in matters concerning the Christian faith, or which are necessary to the salvation of the human race.

“ We should teach Christians that in matters of faith we should rely and repose more on the pope's sentiments as made known by his decisions, than on the opinions of all the learned which are derived merely from Scripture.

“ We should teach Christians that those who

injure the honor or dignity of the pope are guilty of high treason, and deserve to be accursed.

“We should teach Christians that there are many things which the church regards as indisputable articles of universal truth, although they are not to be found in the canon of the Bible or in the writings of the ancient doctors.”

After reading several other theses aimed at those who should protect the teachers of contrary doctrines, and at those who should circulate, read, and endorse the heretical writings, Tetzel paused, and glancing brazenly over his audience, seemed to challenge contradiction.

It came most unexpectedly, and from a surprising source.

A boy of twenty named John Knipstrow, who had read and admired Luther's theses, indignant at the wanton falsehood of the astonishing theses to which he had just listened, and surprised at the silence of the university theologians, stood forth and attacked Tetzel's dogmas with remarkable vigor and skill.

He speedily drove the great indulgence-monger from the arena, and also inflicted a sad defeat upon Wimpina himself, who had hastened to the defence of his imperilled propositions.*

Chagrined at this double rout, Wimpina declared the disputation over, and conferring a doctorate upon Tetzel for his share in this glorious verbal combat, hurried into the market-place, and placing

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 301.

those theses of the Saxon monk which he could not answer in a pile, had recourse to the *ultima ratio* of Rome and of the inquisition—to fire.*

In the meantime, Luther—who felt that he had done his duty in exposing the chicaneries of the indulgence traffickers, was exceedingly disposed to take no further steps in the matter, and had indeed gone so far as to write to the Bishop of Brandenburg, who had urged him not to disturb the peace of Christendom, “I will obey implicitly; I had rather so than perform miracles, even had I the gift of performing miracles”†—found his pacific resolutions shaken by the insults which Tetzel had thus publicly showered upon himself and his cause.

Shortly after hearing of the proceedings at Frankfort, he wrote his good friend Spalatin: “I have more difficulty to refrain from despising my adversaries, and in sinning in this way against Jesus Christ, than I should have in conquering them.

“They are so ignorant of human and divine things, that it is disgraceful to have to fight them; and yet it is their very ignorance which gives them their inconceivable arrogance and their brazen face.”‡

A little later he wrote again: “Be not surprised, Oh Spalatin, that I am so grossly insulted. I listen to their abuse with joy. If they did not curse me, I could not be so firmly assured that the cause I have undertaken is that of God himself.”§

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 302.

† Epp. Luth., I., 92.

‡ Michelét, p. 32.

§ L. Epp., I., 85.



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The most superficial acquaintance with history then was sufficient to convince Luther of the vast force of ideas, and bid him pause ere he uttered what might be stereotyped into false practice.

For with the Saxon reformer, belief and action went hand in hand. Erasmus wrote, but he contented himself with writing. He neither intended nor wished to inaugurate a better *régime* than the one whose vices he satirized. So Plato taught in the groves of the academy ; nobody cared what he taught. Socrates went out into the streets of Athens, struck the altars of the pagan gods, proved their hollowness, set the example of active opposition, and they forced him to drink the fatal hemlock.

But Luther ere long saw his duty clearly through the misty doubts which seem to have beset him after the publication of his theses ; and indeed his adversaries would not permit the storm to blow over.

Tetzel, after his *auto da fé* at Frankfort, had commissioned a monk from Halle to carry his propositions into Saxony with all haste, in his egotism believing that his extravagant ravings would prove a sufficient antidote to those of the Wittemberg doctor.

The lackey monk in due time arrived at Wittemberg, but his reception was not at all to his liking.

The exasperated students of the Wittemberg university, upon being informed of his arrival,

mobbed him, seized his copies of the theses, some eight hundred in number, and then, unknown to the authorities, ecclesiastical, civil, and academic, of the staid old town, posted up this notice: "Whoever wishes to attend the funeral of Tetzels theses should come to the market-place at six o'clock. Wail, ye mourners, wail."*

As the bell in the tower of the town-hall struck six, the students marched in solemn procession to the market-place, imitating the pompous parade of Tetzels recruits at Frankfort. They found upon their arrival dense masses of sympathizing burghers already congregated at the rendezvous, who prepared to help them hold high carnival.

All being ready, the Frankfort theses were placed in the flames amid the cheers and derisive laughter of the self-constituted inquisitors. After their destruction the crowd dispersed quietly, and the market-place resumed its customary sombre aspect.†

We have already seen that Luther was grieved at these proceedings,‡ the report of which spread rapidly throughout Germany.

His feelings concerning this academical execution are still further exhibited by two letters written shortly afterwards. The first was to his old preceptor at Erfurth, Jodocus: "I am surprised," he said, "that you should have believed that I allowed Tetzels

* Van Brandt's History of the Reformation.

† Van Brandt, D'Aubigné.

‡ See Chap. XIII. Luther's account of the indulgence troubles.

theses to be burned. Do you think I have so taken leave of my senses? But what could I do? Can I stop the mouths of the whole world? Well, let them say, hear, and believe whatever they like concerning me. I shall work so long as God gives me strength, and with his strength I shall fear nothing.”*

This is what he wrote to Lange: “What will come of it I know not, except that the peril in which I am involved becomes greater on this very account.”†

But the wrath which was to fall upon him was for the present held in abeyance, and allowed to accumulate.

In the meantime Sylvester Mazzolini of Prierias, whom Luther in his writings terms Sylvestro Prierio, an upstart pedant, made envious by the fame acquired by Wimpina and others of Luther’s opponents, determined to discharge his scholastic artillery against the intrenchments of the Saxon monk. The trophies of Miltiades would not let him sleep.

Accordingly a polemical pamphlet speedily appeared in the form of a dialogue, in which Luther and himself were the speakers, and in which the mushroom *savant*, after totally misrepresenting the opinions of the Wittemberg professor, wasted his strength in knocking down his man of straw.

This work of the Roman licenser teems with scurillity. Indeed it is a mosaic of vile epithets and ominous threats.

* L. Epp., I., 109.

† L. Epp., I., 98.



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was significant, and which smelt strongly of fire: "The Roman church, the apex of whose spiritual and temporal power is in the pope, may constrain by the secular arm those who, having once received the faith, afterwards go astray. It is not bound to employ reason to combat and vanquish rebels."*

Luther was inclined to treat this pamphlet with that silent contempt which intrinsically it deserved. But his friends, fearful that his silence might be construed into inability to answer this Roman censor, who was also prior-general of the Dominicans, at length persuaded him to respond to it.

Shutting himself up in his cell, he prepared his triumphant answer in the incredibly short space of two days.†

"This combat between the Augustinian of Wittemberg and the Dominican of Rome," says D'Aubigné, "was waged on the very question that is the principle of the Reformation, namely, 'What is the sole infallible authority for Christians?'"

"Here is a synopsis of the system of the Roman church, as set forth by Prierias:

"The letter of the written word is dead without the spirit of interpretation, which alone reveals its hidden meaning.

"Now this spirit is not given to every Christian, but to the church, that is, to the priests. It is great presumption to say, that He who promised the church to be with her always, even to the end of the world, could have abandoned her to the power

* Prierio's Dialogue.

† L. Works.

of error. It will be said perhaps, that the doctrine and constitution of the church are no longer such as we find them in the sacred oracles. Undoubtedly, but this change is only in appearance; it extends only to the form, and not to the substance.

“We may go further: this change is progression. The vivifying power of the divine Spirit has given a reality to what in Scripture was merely an idea; it has filled up the outline of the word; it has put a finishing touch to its rude sketches; it has completed the work of which the Bible only gave the first rough draft.

“We must therefore understand the sense of the holy Scriptures, as settled by the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“From this point the paths of the Roman doctors diverge. General councils were affirmed by some to be the representatives of the church, while others asserted that the pope alone was the depository of the spirit of interpretation, and no one has a right to understand the Scriptures otherwise than as decreed by the Roman pontiff. This was the assumption of Prierias, and of most of the papal theologians of that age.”*

Indeed Prierias laid down this proposition: “Whoever relies not on the teaching of the Roman church, and of the Roman pontiff, as the infallible rule of faith, from which the holy Scriptures themselves derive their strength and their authority, is a heretic.”

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., pp. 308, 309.

“The Bible,” observes D’Aubigné, “had moulded the reformer and begun the Reformation. Luther needed not the testimony of the church in order to believe. His faith had come from the Bible itself; from within, not from without. He was so intimately convinced that the evangelical doctrine was immovably founded on the word of God, that in his eyes all external authority was useless. Thus by a bold movement Luther changed the resting-place of the sublimest hopes of the human heart, and with a hand of power transported them from the walls of the Vatican to the rock of the word of God. And this was the work which he had in view in his reply to Prierias.”*

Luther passed lightly over the principles which his adversary had laid down in the commencement of his pamphlet. “But,” he said, “following your example, I will also lay down certain fundamental principles :

“The first is the expression of St. Paul: ‘*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*’

“The second is this passage from St. Augustine: ‘I have learned to render to the canonical books alone the honor of believing most firmly that none of them has erred; as for the others, I do not believe in what they teach, simply because it is they who teach them.’

“If you clearly understand these points,” con-

* D’Aubigné, Vol. I., pp. 310, 311.



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Lord, and the Lord of all, blessed for evermore.
Amen.”*

“Thus,” observes an able ecclesiastical historian, “Luther erected with a firm hand, against the infidel altar of the Papacy, the altar of the only infallible and holy word of God, before which he would have every knee to bow, and on which he declares himself ready to offer up his life.”

* L. Opp. Lat., p. 186

CHAPTER XVI.

THE preceding detail of facts and observations unavoidably leads the mind to this conclusion: Luther was far advanced in evangelical knowledge, and he appears to have been an experienced Christian some time ere he became known to the world, though of course the proofs of his rapid growth in independence of thought, and in a certain familiarity with the essential doctrines of the Bible, are clearly perceptible since the commencement of his healthful controversy with the Romish hierarchy.

But though Luther even thus early laid down the essential principle of the Reformation, the word of God, the whole word of God, and nothing but the word of God, he still remained strongly wedded to the outward badges of superstition; he as yet made no effort to abandon the established formulas of Rome, and he was slow to admit the conviction of the antichristian character of the hierarchy.*

He dreaded the sin of schism; and the impetuous fire of his temper was perpetually checked by the admonitions of his timid conscience.

In this singular character there was certainly united an assemblage of qualities rarely found in the same person—the greatest caution in conduct, with a temper of remarkable ardor, and even choler.

* Milner's Church History, Vol. II., p. 227.

Too often this last quality displayed itself by betraying him into a blamable asperity of language, though even that is extenuated by a remembrance of the vile epithets which were showered upon him by his intemperate and unscrupulous opponents, and by the further recollection that the polemical writings of that age were habitually couched in the language of invective; but to whatever rhetorical excesses his enthusiastic nature impelled him, it seldom influenced his measures or plans of action.*

The poet's simple, but sublime description of one of his dramatic heroes, "He feared God, and he feared none besides," is eminently true of the Saxon theologian.†

Although Luther's response to Prierias had, by the acknowledgment of later Roman historians,‡ annihilated his arguments—although Luther had made the hand of St. Paul choke the sophistries of Aquinas—the censor, after the custom of defeated champions, attempted to extricate himself from his embarrassments by the publication of a second, and then a third book, in which he indulged in more extravagant expressions than those of Tetzel himself, even announcing that "though the pope should make the world go with him to hell, he could neither be condemned nor deposed."§

* Milner's Church History, Vol. II., p. 227.

† Maimbourg, quoted in Seck. at p. 28.

‡ Varillas, Bossuét, etc.

§ De Juridica et Irrefragabili Veritate Romanæ Ecclesiæ. Liber tertius, cap. 12.



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for the fierce Dominican relapsed into unbroken silence.

The next attack upon Luther came from an unexpected quarter, and deeply grieved him.

Dr. Eck, of the Ingolstadt university, a recent and warm friend of the Wittemberg professor, but as enthusiastic an admirer and advocate of the scholastic theology as Luther was of the evangelical, feeling that those haughty tenets which had domineered over Europe unquestioned for so many centuries, were fatally assaulted by his friend's theses, threw the recollections of their intimacy to the winds, and published, without warning, a bitter personal invective which he intended should crush the man who had poured out upon his beloved schoolmen the floods of his contempt, and which went out into the world with the *imprimatur* of the schools.*

This was the most formidable assault which Luther had as yet sustained.

Eck was a man of genius and of erudition. His book, which with the pedantry peculiar to his class he styled the *Obelisks*, was written in an eloquent, learned, and dogmatic manner, and in subtlety far surpassed the writings of Tetzels, Prierias, and Hochstraaten.

“He assumed,” says D'Aubigné, “a tone of compassion towards his ‘feeble adversary,’ being well aware that pity inflicts more harm than anger.

“He insinuated that Luther's propositions cir-

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 315.

culated the Bohemian poison, that they savored of Bohemia; and by these malicious allusions he drew upon Luther the unpopularity and hatred attached in Germany to the name of Huss, and to the schismatics of his country.”

After reading a copy of this work, Luther wrote a letter to a friend in which he thus refers to it: “In the *Obelisks* I am styled a venomous person, a Bohemian, a heretic, a seditious, insolent, rash man. I pass by the milder insults, such as drowsy-headed, stupid, ignorant, contemner of the sovereign pontiff, and others.

“This book is brimful of the blackest outrages. Yet he who penned it is a distinguished man, with a spirit full of learning, and a learning full of spirit; and what causes me the deepest vexation, he is a man who was united to me by a great and recently contracted friendship: it is John Eck, doctor of divinity, chancellor of Ingolstadt, a man celebrated and illustrious by his writings.

“If I did not know Satan’s thoughts, I should be astonished at the fury which has led this man to break off so sweet and so new a friendship, and that too without warning me, without writing to me, without saying a word.”*

We append D’Aubigné’s account of what followed:

“Eck was sensible of how disgraceful his conduct had been, and endeavored to vindicate himself in a letter to Carlstadt. In it he styled Luther

* Letter to Egranus, pastor at Zwickau. L. Epp., I., 100.

their ‘common friend,’ and cast all the blame on the bishop of Eichstadt, at whose solicitation he pretended to have written his work. He said that it had not been his intention to publish the *Obelisks*; that he would have felt more regard to the bonds of friendship that united him to Luther; and demanded, in conclusion, that Luther, instead of disputing with him, should turn his weapons against the Frankfort divines.

“The professor of Ingolstadt, who had not feared to strike the first blow, began to be alarmed when he reflected on the strength of that adversary whom he had so imprudently attacked.

“Willingly would he have eluded the struggle; but it was too late.

“All these fine phrases did not persuade Luther, who was yet inclined to remain silent. ‘I will swallow patiently,’ said he, ‘this sop, worthy of Cerberus;’ but his friends differed from him: they solicited, they even constrained him to answer.

“He therefore replied to the *Obelisks* by his *Asterisks*; opposing, as he said, playing on the words, to the rust and livid hue of the Ingolstadt doctor’s *Obelisks*, the light and dazzling brightness of the stars of heaven.

“In this work he treated his adversary with less severity than he had shown his previous antagonists, but his indignation pierced through his words.

“He showed that in these chaotic *Obelisks*, there was nothing from the holy Scriptures, nothing from the fathers of the church, nothing from the ecclesi-



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they had as wide a circulation as the manuscript copies of Eck's pamphlet.

“This rupture between the two doctors of Ingolstadt and Wittemberg made a great sensation in Germany. They had many friends in common. A person named Scheurl especially, who appears to have been the man by whom the two doctors had been connected, was alarmed. He was one of those who desired to see a thorough reform in the German church by means of its most distinguished organs. But if, at the very outset, the most eminent theologians of the day should fall to blows—if, while Luther came forward with novelties, Eck became the representative of antiquity, what disruption might not be feared? Would not numerous partisans rally round each of these chiefs? and would not two hostile camps be formed in the bosom of the empire?

“Scheurl endeavored, therefore, to reconcile Eck and Luther. The latter declared his willingness to forget every thing; that he loved the genius, that he admired the learning of Dr. Eck; and that what his old friend had done had caused him more pain than anger. ‘I am ready,’ said he to Scheurl, ‘for peace and for war; but I prefer peace. Apply yourself to the task; grieve with us that the devil has thrown among us this beginning of discord, and afterwards rejoice that Christ in his mercy has crushed it.’

“About the same time he wrote Eck a letter full of affection; but Eck made no reply; he did not

even send him any message. It was no longer a season for reconciliation. The contest daily grew warmer, and Eck's pride and implacable spirit soon broke entirely the last ties of that friendship which every day grew weaker."*

In the meantime Luther, in addition to the severe labor necessitated by his controversial writings, attended conscientiously to the minutest duties of his professorship and of his parish, lecturing daily to the students, and preaching regularly on the Sabbath. Besides all this, he employed his pen in the production of a number of popular works for the instruction and edification of the people.

It is one of the highest glories of Martin Luther, that he, first since apostolic days, recognized the inestimable value of the humblest human soul. He saw instinctively that it was upon the *common people*, upon the average common-sense and conscience of the masses, that the Reformation must rely for its success. If he was not actively opposed by those haughty men who masqueraded in the garb of authority, civil and ecclesiastical, his tenets at best received but their cold acquiescence. It was the *people* who saluted his teachings with enthusiasm. He thus early learned to ally himself with them. Himself one of them, he knew their wants and their mainsprings of action. Convinced of the essential democracy of Christianity, and perceiving the tendency of the ecclesiasticism of his age to gravitate towards *caste* and privilege, he set him-

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., pp. 316-318.

self earnestly to work to wrest it from the usurping hands of a priestly oligarchy, and to *popularize* religion.

To this end, Luther bent his faculties to the education of the people. He did his utmost, personally and through his friends, to diffuse, by means of popular books level to the comprehension and adapted to the wants of the masses, a knowledge both of civil questions and religious subjects; discarding when engaged in this beneficent work the Latin tongue, the only medium of communication which the haughty scholars of his time would stoop to use, and addressing the people in that picturesque and glowing German which made him their ideal teacher, and which laid the foundations of one of the most complete of modern languages.*

It is a great mistake to suppose that popes, emperors, and kings rule the world. Justice and common-sense govern, in the end.

Leo X., Francis I., and the emperor Charles V. domineered over the Christendom of the sixteenth century; but the Christendom of the nineteenth century is governed by the type of Faust and by that Bible which Luther emancipated.

It was then for the instruction of the masses that, shortly after writing the *Asterisks*, he published his *Sermons on the Ten Commandments*, and his *Explanations of the Lord's Prayer, for simple and unlettered Laymen*.

* Grimm, himself the highest authority as to German, gives the palm of superiority for richness to the English language.



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About this time Luther preached at Wittemberg a sermon on the remission of sins, which afterwards became famous on account of its evangelical and antipapal character.

In this discourse he maintained that “the remission of sins is in the power neither of the pope nor of the priest, nor of any man; for Christ designed not to build our consolation, our salvation, on the word or on the work of man, but solely on himself, on his work and on his word. Thy repentance and thy works may deceive thee, but Christ thy God will not deceive thee. He will not falter, and the devil shall not overthrow his words.

“A pope or a bishop has no more power than the lowliest priest, as regards remission of sins. And even were there no priests, each Christian, even a woman or a child, can do the same things. For if a simple Christian says to you, ‘God pardons sin in the name of Jesus Christ,’ and you receive his word with a firm faith, and as if God himself were addressing you, you are absolved.

“If you do not believe you are forgiven, you make God a liar, and you put more confidence in your own vain thoughts than in God and his word.

“Repent, do all the works in thy power; but let the faith thou hast in pardon through Jesus Christ be in the foremost rank, and command alone on the field of battle.”*

“Thus spoke Luther to his astonished and enraptured hearers,” says an eminent historian. “All

* L. Opp., XVII., p. 162.

the scaffolding that impudent priests had raised to their profit between God and the soul of man was thrown down, and man was brought face to face with his God. The word of forgiveness descended pure from on high, without passing through a thousand corrupting channels. In order that the testimony of God should be efficacious, it was no longer necessary for men to set their delusive seal to it. The monopoly of the sacerdotal caste was abolished."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the spring of 1518, a general chapter of the order of the Augustines was held at Heidelberg, and to it Luther, as one of the foremost scholars and most influential members, was summoned.

His friends at the outset endeavored to dissuade him from undertaking the journey, fearful lest some ill-treatment should await him, or lest he fall a victim to the machinations of his monkish foes. And indeed the Dominicans, taking time by the forelock, and familiar with the route he would pursue, should he attend the gathering at Heidelberg, had been assiduously at work for some time endeavoring to make his name odious in those towns through which he was to pass.

But though he was apprized of this, when was Martin Luther known to be frightened from the performance of what he considered a duty?

He had several reasons for desiring to attend this meeting of the Augustines. He had been summoned by his superior to do so, and therefore monastic obedience impelled him to go; he had besides something to say, and he was eager to light on the heights of Heidelberg that reformatory torch which blazed so brightly on his Saxon plains.

He therefore quieted the fears of his friends by reminding them that in God's hand he was as safe



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This amiable bishop was one of the few really pious and evangelical prelates of the Roman church. He was held in high esteem by the emperor and by the German princes. He had read Luther's theses with pleasure and approval, and he wrote Frederick of Saxony, "Do not let the pious Doctor Martin go, for they do him wrong."

As might be expected, the bishop of Bibra did every thing possible to render the stay of the Wittenberg doctor pleasant and profitable.

Luther had also the happiness of meeting at Wurtzburg his old friend Staupitz, the vicar-general, and Lange, whom he had appointed prior at Erfurth, both of whom were journeying to the rendezvous at Heidelberg.

Luther was now received into the carriage of his friends, and they travelled on together towards Heidelberg, reaching that quaint old town on the evening of the 21st of April.

The three friends immediately repaired to the magnificent castle of the Count Palatine Wolfgang, Duke of Bavaria, to whom the Elector of Saxony had given them letters, and who received them heartily, showed them every attention, and who remarked to Luther especially, upon reading his letter of introduction, "In truth, you have here a valuable letter of credit."*

Luther wrote afterwards, "We were very happy, and amused each other with agreeable and pleasant conversation; eating and drinking, examining all

* L. Epp., I., 111.

the beauties of the palatine palace, admiring the ornaments, arms, cuirasses, in fine, every thing remarkable contained in this celebrated and truly regal castle.”*

But Luther did not long allow himself to be engrossed by the fascinations of the Heidelberg castle. While he remained domesticated with Wolfgang he employed his leisure hours in drawing up a number of theses, or “paradoxes,” as he called them, which he intended to present for the consideration of the Augustines before they adjourned the chapter.

In the outset he had solicited the use of the university hall for the disputation; but some objection having been made, it was finally settled that it should take place in the Augustinian monastery of the town.

Accordingly, on the 26th of April, an immense concourse of people crowded the spacious chapel of the Heidelberg Augustines, drawn together by the fame of Luther’s eloquence and innovating tenets.

In the paradoxes which he now presented, he opposed the prevailing notions concerning justification, faith, and works; his object being to demonstrate the doctrine of justification before God by faith, and not by works and deserts.

His theses were very ably but temperately controverted by five learned doctors; to whose objections, however, the Saxon monk so pointedly replied, and whom he so luminously outreasoned,

that his auditory was melted into admiration both of his genius and his tenets.* “He is in many respects like Erasmus,” said some, “but surpasses him in one thing : he openly professes what Erasmus is content merely to insinuate.”†

Luther acknowledges having himself learned something in this debate. With the humility of greatness he said, “I belong to those who improve by writing, and teaching others, and not to those who, from being nothing, become on a sudden great and learned doctors.”

“Never had an assembly listened with so much attention to a theological discussion. The first words of the reformer had aroused their minds. Questions which shortly before would have been treated with indifference, were now full of interest. On the countenances of many of the hearers, a looker-on might have seen reflected the new ideas which the bold assertions of the Saxon doctor had awakened in their minds.

“Three young men in particular were deeply moved. One of them, Martin Bucer by name, was a Dominican, twenty-seven years of age, who, notwithstanding the prejudices of his order, appeared unwilling to lose one of the doctor’s words. He was born in a small town of Alsace, and had entered a convent at sixteen. He soon displayed such capacity that the most enlightened monks entertained

* Seckendorf, p. 29, from a MS. history of the Palatine churches, by Altingius.

† Bucer, in Scultet’s *Annal. Evang. Renovat.*, p. 22.



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son of a magistrate in a city of Suabia, and at thirteen had been entered as student at Heidelberg. None manifested greater application. He rose at midnight and began to study. This habit became so confirmed, that during his whole life he could not sleep after that hour. In later years he consecrated these tranquil moments to meditation on the Scriptures.

“Brentz was one of the first to perceive the new light then dawning on Germany. He welcomed it with a heart abounding in love. He eagerly perused Luther’s works ; but what was his delight when he could hear the writer himself at Heidelberg. One of the doctor’s propositions more especially startled the youthful scholar ; it was this : ‘ That man is not justified before God who performs many works ; but he who, without works, has much faith in Jesus Christ.’

“A pious woman of Heilbrunn, on the Neckar, wife of a senator of that town named Snepf, had imitated Hannah’s example, and consecrated her first-born son to the Lord, with a fervent desire to see him devote himself to the study of theology.

“This young man, who was born in 1495, made rapid progress in learning ; but either from taste or from ambition, or in compliance with his father’s wishes, he applied himself to the study of jurisprudence. The mother was grieved to behold her child, her Ehrhard, pursuing another career than that to which she had consecrated him ; she admonished him, entreated him, prayed him continually to

remember the vow that she had made on the day of his birth:

“Overcome at last by his mother’s perseverance, Ehrhard Snepf gave way. Ere long he felt such a taste for his new studies, that nothing in the world could have diverted him from them.

“He was very intimate with Bucer and Brentz, and they were friends until death; ‘for,’ says one of their biographers, ‘friendships based on the love of letters and of virtue never fail.’

“He was present with his two friends at the Heidelberg discussion. The paradoxes and courage of the Wittemberg doctor gave him a new impulse. Rejecting the vain opinion of human merits, he embraced the doctrines of the free justification of the sinner.

“The next day Bucer went to Luther. ‘I had a familiar and private conversation with him,’ said Bucer, ‘a most exquisite repast, not of dainties, but of truths that were set before me. To whatever objections I made, the doctor had a reply, and explained every thing with the greatest clearness. Oh, would to God that I had time to write more.’

“Luther’s heart was touched. ‘He is the only brother of his order,’ wrote he to Spalatin, ‘who is sincere; he is a young man of great promise. He received me with simplicity, and conversed with me very earnestly. He is worthy of our confidence and love.’ ”

Brentz, Snepf, and many others, excited by the new truths that began to dawn upon their minds,

also visited Luther ; they talked and conferred with him ; they begged for explanations on what they did not understand. The reformer replied, strengthening his arguments by the word of God. Each sentence imparted fresh light to their minds. A new world was opening before them.

“ After Luther’s departure, these noble-minded men began to teach at Heidelberg. They felt it their duty to continue what the man of God had begun, and not allow the flame to expire which he had lighted up. The scholars will speak when the teachers are silent. Brentz, although still so young, explained the gospel of St. Matthew, at first in his own room, and afterwards, when the chamber became too small, in the theatre of philosophy.

“ The theologians, envious at the crowd of hearers this young man drew around him, became irritated. Brentz then took orders, and transferred his lectures to the ‘ college of the canons of the Holy Ghost.’ Thus the fire already kindled in Saxony glowed in Heidelberg. The centres of light increased in number. This period has been denominated ‘ the seed time of the palatinate.’

“ But it was not the palatinate alone that reaped the fruits of the Heidelberg disputation. These courageous friends of the truth soon became shining lights in the church. They all attained to exalted stations, and took part in many of the debates which the Reformation occasioned.

“ Strasburg and England, a little later, were indebted to Bucer for a purer knowledge of the truth.



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CHAPTER XVIII.

ALTHOUGH the report of Luther's controversy had speedily spread beyond the confines of Germany, overleaping the Rhine and in due time reaching Rome—although the Saxon reformer had already met and vanquished the indulgence-mongers in Tetzel, a representative of the Vatican in Prierias, the fanaticism of the monks in Hochstraaten, and the schoolmen in Eck, the pontiff himself had not yet formally spoken.

There are several different versions of his opinion of Luther's theses.

Luther himself says, "When my first positions concerning indulgences were brought before the pope, he said, 'A drunken Dutchman wrote them; when he hath slept out his fumes and is sober again, he will then be of another mind.'"*

Milner gives this account: "With how much indifference and contempt Leo X. at first beheld the ecclesiastical disputes in Germany, how indolent was the disposition of this pontiff, and how impróvident he showed himself in defending the papal jurisdiction—all this appears in the strongest light from the absurd and careless answer which he is said to have given to Sylvester Prierias, when that zealous and learned Dominican showed him

* Table Talk.

some of Luther's heretical writings concerning indulgences. 'Brother Martin,' said he, 'is a man of very fine genius, and these squabbles are the mere effusions of monastic envy.'''*

Michelét also asserts that "Leo, in the first instance, believed that the affair was merely a professional squabble between the rival orders of the Augustines and the Dominicans, observing, 'Monkish jealousies ; nothing more,' and eulogizing Luther's scholarship and acumen."†

Whatever the pope's real sentiments may have been, it is certain that the Wittemberg doctor at the outset thought highly of Leo's virtue and ability. In defending those very theses which had caused the whole disturbance, he had mentioned him in this honorable manner :

"The times in which we live are so evil, that even the most exalted individuals have no power to help the church. We have at present a very good pope in Leo X. His sincerity, his learning, inspire us with joy. But what can be done by this one man, amiable and gracious as he is? He is worthy of being pope in better days. In our age we deserve none but such men as Julius II. and Alexander VI."‡

Eventually he had occasion to modify this estimate of the integrity of the Florentine Medici.

Luther, as we have seen,§ had been dissatisfied

* Milner's Ch. Hist., Vol. II., p. 229.

† Michelét's Life of Luther, p. 33.

‡ L. Opp. XVI.

§ Chap. XIII., p. 151.

with some portions of his theses, and at the best he esteemed them but fragmentary.

Therefore, shortly after his return from Heidelberg, he determined to supply their deficiencies and to explain their meaning more clearly by a supplementary writing.

With this object he now published his pamphlet entitled, "Resolutions and Answers." "You will see," he wrote to a friend, "my *Resolutiones et Responsiones*. Perhaps, in certain passages, you will find them more free than was absolutely necessary; if they seem so to you, they will, *à fortiori*, appear perfectly intolerable to the flatterers of Rome. Still, upon the whole, I esteem them moderate and reasonable."*

In this work, as always before, he grounds himself upon the rock of Christ.

"I care nothing," he says, "for what pleases or displeases the pope. He is a man, like other men. There have been many popes who loved not only errors and vices, but still more extraordinary things. I listen to the pope as pope, that is to say, when he speaks in the canons, according to the canons, or when he decrees some article in conjunction with a council; but not when he speaks after his own ideas. Were I to do otherwise, ought I not to say with those who know not Christ, that the horrible massacres of Christians by which Julius II. was stained, were the good deeds of a gentle shepherd towards Christ's flock?"†

* *Resolutiones et Responsiones*. Remarks on Thesis 26.

† *Ibid*.



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Luther was not only an obstinate heretic, but the enemy of all religion whatever, was assiduously taught.

On the eve of Pentecost, May 22, 1518, Luther wrote this letter to Jerome, Bishop of Brandenburg, his ordinary:

“MOST WORTHY FATHER IN GOD—It is now some time since a new and unheard-of doctrine, touching the apostolic indulgences, began to make a noise in this country; the learned and the ignorant were troubled by it; and many persons, some known, some personally unknown to me, begged me to declare, by sermon or by writing, what I thought of the novelty, I will not say the impudence, of this doctrine. At first I was silent, and kept in the background. But at last things came to such a pass, that the pope’s holiness was compromised.

“What could I do? I thought it my duty neither to approve nor condemn these doctrines, but to originate a discussion on this important subject, until the holy church should decide.

“As no one accepted the challenge I had given to the whole world, and since my theses have been considered, not as a matter for discussion, but as positive assertions, I find myself compelled to publish an explanation of them.

“Condescend therefore to receive these trifles which I present to you, most merciful bishop. And that all the world may see that I do not act presumptuously, I entreat your reverence to take pen and ink and blot out, or even throw into the fire and burn, any thing that may offend you.

“I know that Jesus Christ needs neither my services nor my labors, and that he will know how to proclaim his glad tidings to the church without my aid.

“Not that the bulls and threats of my enemies alarm me; quite the contrary. If they were not so impudent, so shameless, none should hear me; I would hide myself in a corner, and there study alone for my own good.

“If this affair is not God’s, it shall certainly no longer be mine, nor any man’s, but a thing of naught. Let the honor and the glory be his, to whom alone they belong.”*

This letter brought the new pamphlet to the attention of the bishop of the Wittemberg diocese. It had already been published to the world.

But while Luther presented his explanations to his bishop and to the impartial readers of Christendom with one hand, he hastened with the other to lay them at the foot of the pontifical throne.

He appealed from Festus to Cæsar. And here, for the first time in this history, Leo X. makes his personal appearance.

Luther’s missive to the pope, dated May 30th, 1518, was couched in this submissive and reverential, but earnest language:

“TO THE MOST HOLY FATHER LEO X., MARTIN LUTHER, OF THE AUGUSTINE ORDER OF MONKS AT WITTEMBERG, WISHES ETERNAL SALVATION:

“I am informed, most holy father, that malicious

*L. Epp., I., 114.

reports are in circulation which seek, and are especially designed to bring my name into bad odor with your holiness. I am called a heretic, apostate, traitor, and a thousand other insulting names. What I see fills me with surprise; what I hear fills me with alarm.

“One testimony to my uprightness of intention is with me, however, a good and quiet conscience. Deign to listen to me, father—to me, who am but a child and unlearned.

“At the time that the jubilee of the apostolic indulgences was announced, certain persons, under sanction of your authority, imagining that they might say and do what they pleased, publicly taught the most blasphemous heresies, to the serious scandal and contempt of the church, as if the decretals contained nothing in them condemning the impositions of these extortioners.

“Not content with the unwarrantable language which they used in propagating their poison, they moreover published little pamphlets—proving that I say nothing unjust of the insatiable and monstrous imposition of their conduct—in which they maintained these same blasphemous and heretical doctrines; and so determinedly, that they bound themselves by oath to inculcate them fixedly on the people.

“If these men deny the facts of which I speak, their pamphlets are in existence to prove their conduct to have been what I say. They carried on this traffic prosperously, and the poor people were



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“At last, finding humble remonstrance of no avail, I resolved to challenge these impious traffickers to prove their dogmas in disputation with me. I published a list of propositions, inviting only the doctors, if they were so disposed, to discuss; and this is shown by the preamble to my theses.

“This is why they rage so, being furious that I, only a master in theology, should throw myself across the path of their extortions. They deny my right to discuss their proceedings, though such discussion is after the custom of all the universities, and of the whole church, not only concerning indulgences, but also touching other important matters.

“Now, though certainly I resent the impudence of this denial of my right to discuss, a privilege conceded by your holy license, ’tis with reluctance that I took up the controversy with them; but when I did, I was forced to declare that they mix up the heathen dreams of Aristotle with the sober truth of Christian theology, and that they set forth silly human conceits, the babble of deluded schoolmen, concerning the divine majesty, instead of founding their doctrines on the word of God and the canons of the church.

“Behold then, most holy father, how heretical a matter it is which has produced this wide-spread conflagration which wraps the world in fire.

“Now what shall I do? I cannot retract; I am powerless, even had I the wish, to annul the fixed past; yet I perceive a determined hatred bursting forth against me. I am publicly discussed, accord-

ing to the various views entertained of my actions. Some persons esteem me an ignorant, stupid, and paltry imitator; and these geese I am obliged to answer in their own gabble. Others again overrate my strength and talents.

“I have no wish to appear before the world, for I have no learning, no genius, and am far too little for such great matters; above all, in this illustrious age, which in science and the arts eclipses that of Cicero.

“But that I may mitigate the anger of honest enemies, and satisfy all doubts, I hereby, most holy father, send my published writings to you, that I may repose in safety under the shelter of your wings. All who wish to do so will thus understand with what simplicity of heart I have called upon ecclesiastical authority to instruct me, and what respect I have shown to the power of the keys.

“Were I what they call me, it is not probable that the illustrious prince Frederick, duke of Saxony, elector of the empire, a prince firmly attached to the Catholic and apostolic truth, would tolerate such a pest in his own university; nor should I have the ardent support of our own learned and virtuous body.

“I put forward these things in my own favor, because I know that they will be carefully suppressed by those who seek to embitter you against me.

“Wherefore, holy father, I prostrate myself at the feet of your clemency, with all I have and am.

Bid me live, or slay me; destroy my cause, or espouse it; I shall acknowledge your voice as the voice of Jesus Christ, who presides in and speaks through you.

“If I am worthy of death, I shall not refuse to die; for ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof,’ who is blessed for evermore. Amen. May he preserve you to all eternity. •

“MARTIN LUTHER, Augustine Friar.

“Trinity Sunday, 1518.”

So ran Luther’s famous letter to the pope. Accompanying it were the original theses, occupying seventy-two folio pages,* his recent work in elucidation of them, and the following protest:

“PROTEST OF THE REVEREND FATHER, MARTIN LUTHER, OF THE AUGUSTINE ORDER, AT WITTEMBERG.

“Because this is a theological discussion, touching which some individuals inclined to peace may peradventure take offence by reason of the recondite nature of the subject, I protest:

“First, that I never held or taught any thing which is not contained in the holy Scriptures, in the writings of the fathers of the church, and which has not received the acknowledgment of the Roman see, in its canons and pontifical decretals. Yet if any opinion of mine cannot be refuted or proved by these authorities, I shall hold it for the sake of discussion only, for the exercise of reason, and for the promotion of knowledge and inquiry, al-

* Michelét, p. 37.



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burdensome advices on the manner of confession; and we hailed the sentiment as truly in accordance with divine authority, that that is true penitence which results exclusively from a sense of the love and justice of God—its *origin*, rather than its end or accomplishment.

“Your observation made a deep impression on my mind, as though I had been pierced by the sharp arrow of the hunter, and I began to consult the Scripture as to the real nature of repentance. The declaration rendered this occupation in many respects most pleasant and delightful to me, and I became satisfactorily convinced that whereas formerly there was no term in the Scriptures at which I felt more uneasiness than that of penitence, even when I would have attempted diligently to please God, and to exhibit a fixed and determined love to him, now there was none which yielded me greater pleasure and delight. Thus the commandments of God became enticing, not only as they are made known to us in his holy word, but as we see them exemplified in the obedient sufferings of our blessed Saviour.

“While thus meditating, certain individuals began to tune their pipes, and to give us some strange music, and with much parade they sounded their new instruments respecting their indulgences, which drew me into the field of controversy. In short, by neglecting, or preventing the true doctrine of penitence, they had the presumption to enhance, not repentance, not even its most worthless part, which

is called *satisfaction*, but the *remission* of that to me most worthless part, as it never had been previously held and estimated.

“And now they teach these impious, false, and heretical tenets with such boldness—I had almost said insolence—that he who presumes to express an opinion to the contrary, however diffidently, is forthwith branded as a heretic, as one who should be consigned to the flames of hell to be eternally punished.

“Unable to restrain the ravings of these men, I resolved in the gentlest possible manner to dissent from them, to call in question mildly their headstrong and impious assertions, trusting to the authority of all learned men and of the church, and to maintain that it is better to render satisfaction for sin by repentance, than that the satisfaction should be remitted for money, namely, by the purchase of indulgences; nor has any doctor ever taught otherwise.

“I therefore disputed with and differed from them, and because I did so I provoked their utmost resentment against me, my sole offence being in my interference with these zealots in their schemes for obtaining money from the people. And these men, so practised in their profitable knavery, when they could not refute me, pretended that I was injuring the authority of the pope.

“This is the reason, reverend father, why I am now talked of malignantly in public, who have always been a lover of retirement, choosing rather

to attend to the improvement and cultivation of the mind, than to make myself at all an object of public observation. But it behooves me to take these things patiently, and so far I would rather be the subject of their slander than of their praise.

“I request therefore, that you will accept these my brief explanations, and transmit them as soon as possible to the holy father Leo X., because the representation of these malignant men may be injurious to me, and I have no advocate in that quarter. I do not wish *you*, however, to be brought into trouble on my account; I desire to answer for myself, and to bear the whole responsibility. Our Saviour Jesus Christ knows whether what I have advanced be of myself, or agreeable to his will, without whose approbation the sanction of the pope is of little avail, or that of any prince whom he guides and commands.

“But nevertheless I expect a decision to be pronounced at Rome. To the threatenings with which I am assailed I have little to say, except with Reuchlin, that he who is poor has nothing to fear, because he has nothing to lose. He who is deprived of fame and rewards, loses what I neither possess nor desire. One unworthy thing remains, my humble body, fatigued by cares and anxieties; so that whatsoever, with God’s permission, they may do by force or stratagem, they can only deprive me of a few hours of life. ’Tis sufficient for me to know my blessed Lord and Saviour, to whom I shall sing praises as long as I live. If any one will



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“You will find therefore, in my earlier writings, with how much humility, on many occasions, I gave up very considerable points to the pope, which I now detest as blasphemous and abominable in the highest degree. This *error* my slanderers call *inconsistency* ; but you, pious reader, will have the kindness to make some allowance on account of the times and my inexperience. I stood absolutely alone at first ; and certainly I was very unlearned and unfit to undertake matters of such vast importance.”

CHAPTER XIX.

WHILE Luther quietly and hopefully awaited at Wittemberg the result of his conciliatory letters to Jerome of Brandenburg and Leo X., the perfidious Roman see was already busily at work in forging that thunderbolt with which it meant to smite the infant Reformation.

The imprudence of the pope at this critical moment seems almost the consequence of judicial infatuation. At once he passed from the carelessness of indifferent neglect, to the extreme of tyrannical violence and blind temerity.

Leo had written Staupitz some months previous to the date of Luther's missive to him, urging the vicar-general to use his utmost efforts to conciliate the Saxon Augustine, and exhorting him to reclaim his erring friend if he himself hoped for salvation.

But the treacherous Medici did not await Staupitz's report, but so early as the 3d of April, Cardinal Raphael of Rovera had written the elector of Saxony, in Leo's name, intimating that his own orthodoxy was tainted by his protection of Luther's heresies.

"The cardinal," said Luther, "would have great pleasure in seeing me burned by Frederick."*

In the meantime the Samson of Rome apparently

* L. Opp. (W.) XV., 339.

overthrew the main pillar of the heretical temple, and men looked to see the whole edifice come crashing to the ground. The elector became disaffected and alarmed.

April 14-15 1555

An imperial diet was at this time being held at Augsburg. Six of the electors of the empire were in attendance upon Maximilian, and the princes of half the European states were represented by ambassadors; the proxy of the people being Cajetan.

The then raging Turkish war was the ostensible object of this imperial convention; but back of the Moslems lay other matters of far greater importance both to the legate of the pope and to Maximilian.

The emperor, grown old, and anxiously planning for the aggrandizement of his house, desired to use the diet for the furtherance of these views. He had already gained over to his side most of the electors, when he met from Frederick a determined opposition. Charles, already king of Spain and Naples, was naturally Maximilian's choice for the imperial succession; he wished now to have him proclaimed king of the Romans. Leo just as naturally wished to balk this plan, not desiring to see a prince whose power in Italy might be dangerous to his own authority, and whose area of domain was already so vast, seated on the imperial throne, and swaying the almost irresistible sceptre of the German Cæsars.

Since the interests of Frederick of Saxony and pope Leo were in this identical, it was natural that



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tian judges, in order to defend his doctrine, and to submit, in case he should be convicted of error by the Scriptures themselves.”*

The pontiff, with this declaration of sentiments from Luther's sovereign before him, and urged thereto by the clamors of the frantic theologians of the Vatican, now nominated an ecclesiastical commission at Rome, of which Sylvester Prierias was a prominent member, and cited the Augustinian to appear before it in person within sixty days.

This citation was received by Luther at Wittenberg on the 7th of August, and greatly astonished him. “At the moment,” said he, “when I was expecting a blessing, I felt the thunderbolt fall upon me. I was the lamb that troubled the water the wolf was drinking. Tetzel escaped, and I was to permit myself to be devoured.”

This summons to Rome created a great excitement among the devoted adherents of the reformer. Although he seemed to be deserted by the magnates of Christendom, an enthusiastic army of believers already surrounded the resolute chieftain of the new *régime*, and these imperatively vetoed his personal appearance before this mushroom *ex parte* tribunal at Rome.

Accordingly, on the day following his reception of the summons, the 8th of August, Luther wrote Spalatin, exhorting him to use his influence with the elector to have his cause tried in Germany. Spalatin consequently immediately wrote Renner,

* Luther's L. Opp., XVII., 169.

the emperor's secretary : "Doctor Martin Luther willingly consents to be judged by all the universities in the empire, except Leipsic, Erfurth, and Frankfort-on-the-Oder, which have shown themselves partial ; it is impossible for him to appear at Rome in person."*

To this note Spalatin secured the elector's signature, thus demonstrating at once his friendship for Luther, and his influence with Frederick.

At the same time the university of Wittemberg wrote the pope a letter of intercession.

"The weakness of his frame," so runs the epistle, "and the dangers of the journey, render it difficult and even impossible for the doctor to obey your august summons.

"His distress and his prayers incline us to sympathize with him. We therefore entreat you, most holy father, as obedient children, to look upon him as a man who has never been tainted with heretical tenets."

On the same day, the university still further exhibited its zeal and solicitude by writing the pope's chamberlain, Charles Miltitz, a Saxon gentleman who was held in high esteem by Leo X. :†

"The reverend father, Martin Luther, is the noblest and most distinguished member of our university. For many years we have known his talents, his learning, his profound acquaintance with the arts and literature, his irreproachable morals, and his truly Christian behavior ; we therefore implore

* L. Opp., (L.), XVII., 173.

† D'Aubigné.

you to use your best influence with the sovereign pontiff on his behalf.”*

The emperor Maximilian was already inclined to be friendly to Luther, provided his good offices did not interfere with his plans of statescraft. He had said to Pfeffinger, the elector’s counsellor, on the first outbreak of this theological tempest, “What your monk is doing is not to be despised; take care of him; it may be that we shall have need of him.”†

Personally Maximilian entertained no very exalted opinion of the pontiff: “This pope,” said he, speaking of Leo X., “has acted towards me like a rogue. I can fairly say that I have never found in any pope I have met with, sincerity or good faith; but please God, I hope this will be the last of them.”‡

Entertaining these sentiments, Renner, upon the presentation of the elector’s letter suggesting that Luther be heard in Germany instead of Rome, found the emperor very ready to do his utmost to secure a compliance with this request on the part of the Roman see.

But Leo, who had been informed of the emperor’s menacing expressions, was in no mood to be cajoled by Maximilian’s rhetoric.

“While men were anxiously looking for the result of this affair, it was terminated more easily than might have been expected. The legate Caje-

* L. Opp. Lat. I., 183, 184.

† Michelét, p. 40.

‡ Michelét, p. 41.



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or secular. And if you get possession of his person, keep him in safe custody, that he may be brought before us.

“If he return to his duty, and beg forgiveness for so great a misdeed, of his own accord, and without solicitation, we give you power to receive him into the unity of our holy mother the church.

“If he persist in his obstinacy, and you cannot secure his person, we authorize you to proscribe him in every part of Germany; to banish, curse, and excommunicate all those who are attached to him, and to order all Christians to flee from their presence.

“And in order that this contagious disease may be the more effectually eradicated, you will excommunicate all prelates, religious orders, universities, communities, counts, dukes, and potentates—the emperor Maximilian always excepted—who shall not aid in seizing the aforesaid Martin Luther and his adherents, and send them to you under good and safe guard. And if, which God forbid, the said princes, communities, universities, and potentates, or any belonging to them, shall in any manner offer an asylum to the said Martin and his adherents, or give him, privately or publicly, by themselves or by others, succor and counsel, we lay under interdict all these princes, communities, universities, and potentates, with their cities, towns, countries, and villages, as well as the cities, towns, countries, and villages in which the said Martin may take refuge, so long as he shall remain there, and three days after he shall have quitted them.

“As for the laymen, if they do not immediately obey your orders, without delay or opposition, we declare them infamous—the most worthy emperor always excepted—incapable of performing any lawful act, deprived of Christian burial, and stripped of all the fiefs they may hold, either from the apostolic see or from any lord whatsoever.”*

Upon becoming acquainted with the nature of this *amiable* brief, Luther's indignation blazed fiercely. “The pleasantest thing of all,” he wrote, “is this: the pope's brief is dated August 23d; I was cited, and admonished on the 2d of August to appear at Rome within sixty days. Thus it is very plain that, either before the citation was delivered to me, or at most within sixteen days after, the bishop of Ascoli proceeded against me, judged me, and pronounced me an incorrigible heretic. What if I should ask, what are become of the sixty days mentioned in the citation delivered to me, which are to be reckoned from the 7th of August, and would end about the 7th of October? Is it the usage of the pope's court to cite, admonish, accuse, judge, condemn, and pronounce sentence all on the same day, when the supposed culprit is far from Rome, and knows nothing of these things?

“Again, how can they charge me with having abused the pope's kindness, and with persevering obstinately in heresy? Would they be able to give any other answer to these questions than that, when they fabricated the falsehoods respecting me, they

* Van Brunt, Hist. Ref.

had lost their memory, and stood in need of a few doses of hellebore?"*

Yet notwithstanding his disgust at the trickery of the Roman see, Luther determined that if he received Cajetan's citation he would personally answer it, if the legate would meet him anywhere within the limits of the empire.

* Luther's Opp. (L.,) XVII., 176.



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his side, and taking his hand, said, “My boy, I foresee that terrible tempests are about to shake the world. I have witnessed great things, but greater ones are preparing. May God direct and guide thee.”*

He was not at home when his father died, his friends having sent him to Spire, as they dreaded the effect upon his weak frame and imaginative mind.

“Returning to Bretten shortly after his father’s death,” says D’Aubigné, whose profoundly interesting account of Melancthon we now quote, “the lad’s grandfather, the worthy bailiff Reuter, who himself had a son, performed a father’s duty to Philip, and took him and his brother George to his own house. Shortly after this, he engaged John Hungarus to teach the three boys. The tutor was an excellent man, and in after years proclaimed the gospel with great energy even to an advanced age. He overlooked nothing in the young man. He punished him for every fault, but with discretion. ‘It is thus,’ said Melancthon in 1554, ‘that he made a scholar of me. He loved me as a son, and I loved him as a father; and we shall meet, I hope, in heaven.’

“Philip was remarkable for the excellence of his understanding and his facility in learning and explaining what he had learned; he could not remain idle, and was always looking for some one to discuss with him the things he had heard.

“It frequently happened that well-educated foreigners passed through Bretten and visited Reuter. Immediately the bailiff’s grandson would go up to them, enter into conversation, and press them so hard in the discussion that the hearers were filled with admiration. With strength of genius he united great gentleness, and thus won the favor of all. He stammered, but like the illustrious Grecian orator, he so diligently set about correcting this defect, that in after life no trace of it could be perceived.

“On the death of his grandfather, the youthful Philip, with his brother and his uncle John, was sent to the school at Pforzheim. These lads resided with one of their relations—sister to the famous Reuchlin. Eager in the pursuit of knowledge, Philip, under the tuition of George Simmler, made rapid progress in learning, and particularly in Greek, of which he was passionately fond.

“Reuchlin frequently came to Pforzheim. At his sister’s house he became acquainted with her young boarders, and was soon struck with Philip’s replies. He presented him with a Greek grammar and a Bible. These two books were to be the study of his whole life.

“When Reuchlin returned from his second journey to Italy, his young relative, then twelve years old, celebrated the day of his arrival by representing before him, with the aid of some friends, a Latin comedy which he had himself composed. Reuchlin, charmed with the young man’s talents,

tenderly embraced him, called him his dear son, and placed sportively upon his head the red hat he had received when he had been made doctor. It was at this time that Reuchlin changed the name of Schwartzerd into that of Melancthon; both words, the one in German, the other in Greek, signify *black earth*.

“Melancthon at twelve years of age went to the university of Heidelberg, and here he began to slake his ardent thirst for knowledge. He took his bachelor's degree. In 1512, Reuchlin invited him to Tübingen, where many learned men were assembled. He attended by turns the lectures of the theologians, doctors, and lawyers. There was no branch of knowledge which he deemed unworthy of his study. Praise was not his object, but the possession and the fruits of learning. The holy Scriptures especially engaged his attention. Those who frequented the church of Tübingen had remarked that he often held a book in his hand which he occupied himself in reading between the services. This unknown volume appeared larger than the prayer-book, and a report was circulated that Philip used to read profane authors during those intervals. But the suspected book proved to be a copy of the Holy Scriptures, printed shortly before at Basle, by John Frobenius. All his life he continued this study with the most unceasing application.

“ ‘I entertain the most distinguished and splendid expectations of Melancthon,’ wrote Erasmus to Æcolampadius about this time. ‘God grant that



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that it will be so with thee, my dear Philip, my consolation.'

"At his departure the university was filled with sorrow ; yet it contained individuals who were jealous and envious of him. He left his native place, exclaiming, 'The Lord's will be done.' He was then twenty-one years of age.

"Melancthon travelled on horseback in company with several Saxon merchants, as a traveller joins a caravan in the deserts ; for, says Reuchlin, he was unacquainted both with the roads and the country. He presented his respects to the elector, whom he found at Augsburg. At Nuremberg he saw the excellent Pirckheimer, whom he had known before ; at Leipsic he formed an acquaintance with the learned Hellenist, Masellanus. The university of the last city gave a banquet in his honor. The repast was academical. The dishes succeeded one another in great variety, and at each new dish one of the professors rose and addressed Melancthon in a Latin speech prepared beforehand. The latter immediately replied extemporaneously.

"At last, wearied with so much eloquence, he said, 'Most illustrious men, permit me to reply to your compliments once for all ; for, being unprepared, I cannot put such variety into my answers as you have put in your addresses.' After this, the dishes were brought in without the accompaniment of a speech.

"Reuchlin's youthful relative arrived in Wittenberg on the 25th of August, 1518, two days after Leo X. had signed the brief to Cajetan.

“The Wittemberg professors did not receive Melancthon so favorably as those of Leipsic had done. The first impression he made on them did not correspond with their expectations. They saw a young man, who appeared younger than he really was, of small stature, and with a feeble and almost timid air. Was this the illustrious doctor whom Erasmus and Reuchlin, the greatest men of the day, exalted so highly? Neither Luther, with whom he first became acquainted, nor his colleagues entertained any great hopes of him when they saw his youth, his shyness, and his diffident manner. On the 29th inst., four days after his arrival, he delivered his inaugural discourse. All the university was assembled. This lad, as Luther calls him, spoke in such elegant latinity, and showed so much learning, an understanding so cultivated, and a judgment so sound, that all his hearers were struck with admiration. When the speech was finished all crowded around him with congratulations, but no one felt more joy than Luther.

“He hastened to impart to his friends the sentiments that filled his heart. ‘Melancthon,’ wrote he to Spalatin, on the 31st of August, ‘delivered, four days after his arrival, so learned and so beautiful a discourse, that every one listened with astonishment and admiration. We soon recovered from the prejudices excited by his stature and appearance; we now praise and admire his eloquence; we return our thanks to you and to the prince for the service you have done us. I ask for no other Greek

master. But I fear that his delicate frame will be unable to support our mode of living, and that we shall be unable to keep him long on account of the smallness of his salary. I hear that the Leipsic people are already boasting of their power to take him from us. Oh, my dear Spalatin, beware of despising his age and his personal appearance. He is a man worthy of every honor.'

"Melancthon began immediately to lecture on Homer, and the epistle of St. Paul to Titus. He was full of ardor. 'I will make every effort,' wrote he to Spalatin, 'to conciliate the favor of all those in Wittemberg who love learning and virtue.'

"Four days after his inauguration, Luther wrote again to Spalatin: 'I most particularly recommend to you the very learned, very amiable Grecian, Philip. His lecture-room is always full. All the theologians in particular go to hear him. He is making every class, upper, lower, and middle, begin to read Greek.'

"Melancthon was able to respond to Luther's affection. He soon found in him a kindness of disposition, a strength of mind, a courage, a discretion that he had never found till then in any man. He venerated, he loved him. 'If there is any one,' said he, 'whom I dearly love, and whom I embrace with my whole heart, it is Martin Luther.'

"Thus did Luther and Melancthon meet; they were friends until death. We cannot too much admire the goodness and wisdom of God in bringing



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him,' says an illustrious German historian, 'Wittenberg became the school of the nation.'

"It was indeed highly important that a man who knew Attic Greek and Hebrew, should teach in that university where the new developments of theology called upon masters and pupils to study, in their original language, the earliest documents of the Christian faith. From this time Luther labored zealously at his task. The meaning of a Greek word, of which he had been ignorant till then, suddenly cleared up his theological ideas. What consolation and what joy did he not feel, when he saw, for instance, that the Greek word *μετάνοια*, which, according to the Latin church, signifies a *penance*, a satisfaction required by the church, a human expiation, really meant in Greek a *transformation* or *conversion* of the heart. A thick mist was suddenly rolled away from his eyes. The two significations given to this word by the two churches suffice of themselves to characterize the difference between them.

"The impulse Melancthon gave to Luther in the translation of the Bible into German, is one of the most remarkable circumstances of the friendship between these two great men. As early as 1517 Luther had made some attempts at such a translation. He had procured as many Greek and Latin books as were within his reach. And now, with the aid of his dear Philip, he applied himself to this task with fresh energy. Luther compelled Melancthon to share in his researches; consulted him on

the difficult passages; and the work, which was destined to be one of the great labors of the reformer, advanced more safely and more speedily.

“Melancthon, on his side, became acquainted with the new theology. The beautiful and profound doctrine of justification by faith filled him with astonishment and joy, but he received with independence the system taught by Luther, and moulded it to the peculiar form of his own mind; for although he was only twenty-one years old, he was one of those precocious geniuses who attain early to a full possession of all their powers, and who think for themselves from the very outset.”*

Such was Philip Melancthon, as drawn by the pencil of a great literary artist.

Meantime this illustrious faculty raised the reputation of the Wittemberg university to so high a degree, that it now confessedly stood at the head of the German schools. An immense concourse of students was attracted thither. Luther himself tells us that “it was a complete hive.”†

An author nearly contemporary says, “I have heard from our preceptors, that students from all nations crowded to Wittemberg to hear Luther and Melancthon. As soon as they got within sight of the town, they returned thanks to God with clasped hands; for from Wittemberg, as heretofore from Jerusalem, proceeded the light of evangelical truth, to spread thence to the uttermost parts of the earth.”‡

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., Chap. III. of Book IV., pp. 356-363.

† L. Epp., XV., 36.

‡ Scultetus, annalia, anno 1517.

CHAPTER XXI.

BUT Luther did not suffer the inexpressible delights of his friendship with the congenial Melancthon to divert him from the completion of his preparations for the proposed meeting with pope Leo's legate.

Luther's great fear now was, that he might compromise the elector. This is shown by a letter written to Spalatin a few days after the advent of Melancthon: "I do not require that our sovereign should do the least thing in defence of my theses; I am even willing to be given up, and thrown into the hands of my adversaries. Let him permit all the storm to burst upon me. What I have undertaken to defend, I hope to be able to maintain, with the help of Christ. As for violence, we must needs yield to that, but without abandoning the truth."*

Luther's courage was so infectious, that even the timid and pacific vicar-general was momentarily lifted by it into heroism. Staupitz wrote Spalatin, on the 7th of September,

"Do you cease to exhort the prince, your master and mine, not to allow himself to be frightened by the roaring of the lions. Let him defend the truth without anxiety, either about Luther, Staupitz, or the order. Let there be one place at least where men may speak freely and without fear. I know

* L. Epp. I., 139.



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of September, only eight days after his letter to Spalatin, he said,

“It appears to me, dear brother Martin, that the whole world is enraged and combined against the truth. The crucified Jesus was hated in like manner. I do not see that you have any thing else to expect but persecution. Ere long no one will be able, without the pope’s permission, to search the Scriptures, and therein look for Jesus Christ, which Jesus Christ however commands. You have but few friends; I would to God that fear of your adversaries did not prevent those few from declaring themselves in your favor.

“The wisest course is for you to abandon Wittenberg for a season, and come to me. Then we shall live and die together. This is also the prince’s opinion.”*

Luther, undaunted by the forebodings of his friends, unmoved by the prayers of Staupitz, determined to face the legate at Augsburg.

This Bayard, this Sidney of the gospel, recollecting that his prince had announced, in his letter from the imperial diet to the pope, that his Augustine professor was ready and anxious to defend his tenets before a competent tribunal, thought it but just now to redeem the elector’s pledge.

Luther was still more confirmed in this determination by the reception of a note from his court friend Spalatin, in which that excellent man informed him that the prince thought he had best appear at

Augsburg, but that he would not suffer him to be dragged to Rome.

He had received word from Count Albert of Mansfeldt, that several powerful lords had bound themselves by solemn oath to waylay and seize him, should he venture to set out for Augsburg, with the intention either of strangling him or carrying him to Rome in chains.*

This information led the Saxon monk to request his prince to provide him with a safe-conduct to and from the rendezvous of the legate.

Frederick's excessive caution prevented his compliance with this demand, but he provided for his safety by giving him letters of recommendation to a number of dignitaries on his route, and also to the senate and to the most influential citizens of Augsburg.†

Thus doubly armed by the kindness of the prudent elector and by that lofty heroism, that enthusiastic TRUST IN GOD which never wavered, Luther quitted Wittemberg in the latter part of September, 1518, and reaching Weimar, where the elector was holding his court, lodged in the Cordelier's monastery, the cowardly monks of his own order fearing to open their doors to the Saxon heresiarch.‡

On the following day the elector invited Luther to preach before the court, it being the festival of St. Michael.

* L. Epp. I., 129.

† Milner, Seckendorf, Melancthon, and others.

‡ Myconius, Hist. Ref.

There is no question but that Frederick was ashamed of his course in writing so obsequiously to Leo from the diet. He had written in a heat, and when under the frown of the emperor. But the court protection he gave, the kind words he uttered, and the undisguised admiration which he felt for his professor's genius—these are now facts of history, and may not be controverted.

Leo had written Frederick at the same time that he forwarded the brief to Cajetan, seeking by a cunning mixture of flattery and menace to detach the prince from all connection with Luther. But the penetrating elector easily detected the motive of the pontiff; and besides, he never acted hastily, but always with caution and due reserve. "His sense of justice," says Melancthon, "was nobly strong, and when he had made up his mind to a course of action, no earthly power could move him or make him budge an inch."*

Frederick had just come from Augsburg, where he had seen the legate in person, and pledged him to use Luther with kindness, and to return him unharmed.† He now, after liberally praising the eloquent doctor's court discourse, and after supplying him with funds and additional letters of recommendation, dismissed him to the momentous meeting with the legate.‡

Luther trudged on afoot to Nuremberg, where an old friend, Wenceslas Link, the preacher, resided.

* Melancthon's "Vita Lutheri." † Archives of Saxe Gotha.

‡ Seckendorf.



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ceed. The Lord's will be done. Even in Augsburg, even in the midst of his enemies, Christ reigns.

“Let Christ live ; let Luther die. May the God of my salvation be exalted. Farewell. Persevere ; stand fast ; for it is necessary to be rejected either by God or by man ; but God is true, and man is a liar.”*

* Weismanni, Hist. Sacr. Nov. Test., p. 1465.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE morning after his arrival at Augsburg, Link, by Luther's request, waited upon the legate and respectfully informed him of the Saxon monk's arrival and readiness to appear before him; at the same time, having learned that Staupitz was in town, Luther sent a missive by the Augustine Leonard, in which he begged the vicar-general to come and see him.

This done, the Wittemberg doctor went in person to deliver the elector's letters of recommendation to those influential citizens of Augsburg to whom they were respectively directed.

These honest burghers received him with the utmost cordiality, and being cognizant of Cajetan's crafty projects, they unanimously exhorted the Augustinian not to wait upon the cardinal until he had obtained a safe-conduct from the emperor; who, notwithstanding the dissolution of the recent diet, still lingered near the city, detained by the hunting attractions of the neighboring forests.

Luther was at length persuaded to act upon this judicious advice. Three days afterwards, either these same citizens, or the influence of Frederick, exerted *sub rosa*, or his own already existing predisposition to befriend the courageous monk, prevailed upon Maximilian to announce to the outwitted cardinal that the public faith was pledged to Luther,

and that therefore the empire stood between him and all violence.*

Luther doubtless breathed more freely on gaining this important point, though he could not but remember that John Huss' pyre at Constance was kindled despite a similar imperial guarantee, and that the audacious hand of Rome pushed away the cobweb protection of the public faith without a scruple.

Moreover his opinion of the value of the emperor's parchment was not increased when he was informed of the legate's ominous reply, upon being told that Maximilian and his council had granted the safe-conduct: "It is very well," said the subtle cardinal; "nevertheless I shall do my duty." †

Yet Cajetan was chagrined at Luther's reception of the imperial passport, and he had done his utmost not only to prevent the emperor from granting it, but to persuade the contumacious Saxon monk from demanding it.

This was the manner in which Luther spent the three days which intervened between his arrival at Augsburg, and his reception of the safe-conduct.

On the first morning, Saturday, October 8th, when he had but just arisen, he was waited on by an emissary of the legate, who came, however, in the guise of a friend and well-wisher, carefully avoiding all appearance of any connection with the cardinal, and affirming that he was actuated solely

* Melch. Adam. Vita Myconius.

† Varillas, Bossuét, Seckendorf, Milner.



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point will be to know whether the legate relies on the authority of St. Thomas more than the faith will sanction. If he does, I will not yield."

"Oh ho," cried Urban, "you do intend to break a lance then?" The blasphemous Italian then went on to argue that the holy see might perform any act, however horrible, and that no one was competent to criticize; that all discussion in the universities concerning the pope's authority was insolent, and that Leo could, by a single nod, either radically change or totally suppress the articles of faith.*

These atrocious sentiments instantly convinced Luther of this go-between's true character; in consequence he became less communicative, simply remarking, "I am disposed to give all proof of obedience, and to retract those things in which I have erred."†

Urban, mistaking these ambiguous words for an expression of willingness to recant, joyfully placed his hat upon his head, and starting for the door, paused only to say, "I hasten to the legate; you will prepare to follow me presently. All will soon be settled."‡

"Ah, ah," thought Luther, when this "bungling mediator" departed, "this crafty Sinon has been badly taught and trained by his Greeks."§

Urban of Serra Longa had not been long gone,

* L. Epp., I., 144.

† Ibid.

‡ L. Opp., (L.) XVII., 179.

§ L. Epp., I., 144. Æneid, book II.

when the Wittemberg doctor was visited by more friendly and welcome guests.

Peutinger, the imperial councillor Langemantel, an eminent patrician of the city, Dr. Auerbach of Leipsic, the brothers Adelmann, both canons, and several other illustrious men, spent some hours with this monk whose fame had already spread through Christendom.

They united in urging him to adhere to their advice, and to take no steps towards seeing Cajetan until the arrival of the emperor's safe-conduct; Dr. Auerbach frankly informing him that "one could not trust these Italians."*

But while Luther was thus closeted with these eminent citizens, Urban returned, and was somewhat surprised to find the German heresiarch so respectably attended. Drawing Luther aside, he whispered, "Come, the cardinal awaits you; I will conduct you to him.

"But you must first learn how to conduct yourself in his presence: when you enter his room you must prostrate yourself before him, with your face to the ground. When he tells you to rise, kneel before him, and thus await his further orders before venturing to stand up."†

It was with these grand *salaams*, with these ceremonies of Eastern despotism, that this lackey of a lackey instructed Martin Luther, doctor of divinity, professor in a famous university, a man already remarkable for his learning and his genius, to meet

* L. Epp., I., 143.

† L. Opp., (L.) 179.

this upstart cardinal, in whose right hand Leo X. had secreted the thunders of his see!

Luther informed Serra Longa that he should be happy to meet the legate, but that on the advice of his Augsburg friends he had concluded to procure from the emperor a safe-conduct, which he expected would reach him within a day or two, after which he was at the service of the cardinal.*

Urban was alarmed: "Beware," he replied, "of asking for any thing of the kind. The legate is kindly disposed towards you, and ready to end all in a friendly manner. Trust him. If you demand a safe-conduct you ruin all."†

"My friend," was the calm, firm response, "my gracious sovereign, the Elector of Saxony, recommended me to several very honorable men in this city. They advise me to undertake nothing without a safe-conduct; I ought to follow their advice. For if I did not, and any thing should happen, they would write to my prince that I was rash and obstinate, and repudiated their counsel."

The baffled courtier, after several attempts to break this resolution of the Saxon monk, was at length compelled to return to Cajetan and report his failure on the eve of apparent success.

So ended the first day.

On the morning of the next, which was Sunday, Frosch, prior of the Augsburg Carmelites, an old friend of the Wittemberg professor, who had studied theology at the elector's university, and defended

* Seckendorf.

† L. Opp., (L.) 179.



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On Monday Serra Longa was commissioned to make one last effort to break the iron determination of the Saxon theologian. On this occasion he made use of his whole rhetorical arsenal. He wheedled, he menaced, he insinuated. "Why do you not come?" he queried in Latin. "The cardinal expects you, and will treat you indulgently. The whole matter lies in six little letters: REVOCA, retract. Come, you have nothing to fear."

"I will appear as soon as I receive the safe-conduct," was the imperturbable reply.

At this Urban completely lost his temper. He turned to congenial insults: "You imagine, no doubt, that the elector will take up arms in your defence, and for your sake run the risk of losing those territories which his ancestors have bequeathed to him."

"God forbid," fervently ejaculated Luther.

"When all forsake you, where will you take refuge?" was the taunting demand.

Luther surpassed himself in his reply to this speech. Infusing the poetry of Isaiah and the spirit of the martyrs into his words, he said slowly and simply, "UNDER HEAVEN!"

Even the insolence of Serra Longa was struck dumb by the grandeur of this unexpected eloquence.

But soon recovering himself, he rejoined, "What would you do if you held the legate, the pope, and the cardinals in your hands, as they have you now in theirs?"

"I would treat them with the utmost respect

and honor," said the truthful Augustine ; "but with me, the word of God is before every thing."

"So," said Serra Longa incredulously, and waving his hand in the Italian manner ; he then abruptly departed, to return no more.*

And this brought Luther to the evening of the third day, and was the petty skirmish which ushered in the battle with the cardinal himself.

In the evening he wrote Melancthon a minute account of all that had occurred, adding these words : "Show yourself a man, as you do at all times. Teach our beloved youth what is upright and acceptable to God. As for me, I am perhaps soon to be sacrificed for you and for them. I bow to God's will. I would rather die, and even—which would be my greatest earthly misfortune—be for ever deprived of your sweet society, than retract what I felt it to be my duty to teach ; and thus ruin perhaps, by my own fault, the excellent studies to which we are now devoting ourselves.

"Italy, like Egypt in times of old, is plunged in darkness so thick that it may be felt. No one in that country knows any thing of Christ, or of what belongs to him ; and yet they are our lords and masters in faith and morals. Thus the wrath of God is fulfilled among us, as the prophet says : *I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.* Do your duty to God, my dear Philip, and avert his anger by pure and fervent prayer."†

* Luther's Præf.

† L. Epp. I., 146.

On Tuesday, the eleventh of October, the safe-conduct arrived. Luther instantly repaired to the legate's palace, accompanied by Link, his Augustine friend Leonard, and by Frosch his host, and the prior of the Carmelites.

They found the legate surrounded by his Italian and German satellites, and occupied in settling the mode of procedure in his case.

This formidable churchman, who now seemed to hold Luther's fate in his hands, was ill-fitted both by nature and education to arbitrate in this nice and perilous controversy.

Cajetan, whose original name of Thomas De Vio seems to have been merged in his prelatical title, derived from Cajeta, his native village, was excessively superstitious, entertained the most lofty ideas of the papal supremacy, and was an enthusiastic disciple of Aquinas and the schoolmen.

He had recently written a work on the power of the Roman pontiff, which is said to have procured for him the arch-episcopal see of Palermo, and a cardinal's hat.* Added to all this he was a Dominican, and in consequence the declared enemy of the Wittemberg theology.

Leo's choice of this legate to reconcile these serious troubles, certainly cannot be quoted as evidence of his wisdom or discretion.

Upon coming into the cardinal legate's presence, Luther, taking his cue from Serra Longa, prostrated himself, and when bidden to arise, he knelt; and

* Milner, Ch. Hist., vol. II.. p, 232.



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tures, and that you have many followers. For this reason, if you desire to be a member of the church, and to find a gracious father in the pope, listen to me.

“Here are three articles,” continued Cajetan, placing his hand upon a bundle of manuscripts, “which, by the command of our holy father pope Leo X., I have to set before you. First, you must bethink yourself, own your faults, and retract your errors, propositions, and sermons. Second, you must promise to abstain in future from propagating similar opinions. Third, you are to bind yourself to behave with greater moderation, and to avoid every thing that may grieve or disturb the church.”

Luther then said, “Most holy father, I beg that you will show me the pope’s brief by virtue of which you have received full powers to treat of this matter.”

This request astonished the courtiers of the legate’s train. To their minds it was a mark of impudence that a man who was about to be tried upon the gravest of charges, and where, to all appearances, an adverse verdict would be so crushingly ruinous, should request to see the credentials of his judge. “But those who habitually act in an arbitrary manner,” remarks an eminent writer, “are usually surprised when they are called upon to proceed according to the customary rules, formalities, and laws.”

But Cajetan, who preserved his placid demeanor, replied,

“This request, my dear son, cannot be granted.* You must confess your errors, keep a strict watch upon your words for the future, and not return like a dog to his vomit, so that we may sleep without anxiety or disturbance;† then, in accordance with the order and authorization of our most holy father the pope, I will arrange the whole business.”

“Condescend then,” rejoined Luther, “to inform me in what I have erred.”

Cajetan condescended to comply with this request, and he even entered into discussion with the Augustine.

“Most dear son,” he said, “here are two propositions which have been, as I am informed, frequently advanced by you, and which you must retract before all. First, the treasure of indulgences does not consist of the sufferings and merits

* “This important circumstance is not taken notice of by the ecclesiastical historians, though I find Luther himself, in his celebrated letter to the elector of Saxony, written after the conference with Cajetan, uses the words, ‘nam exemplar BREVIS petenti denegabat.’ It is easy enough to understand why the legate, who was affecting to treat Luther with the greatest kindness, should not choose to show him a brief in which it appeared that, at that very moment, he stood condemned as a heretic at Rome, though he had never been heard. On a view of all the circumstances, it seems by no means improbable that the cardinal, pursuant to his instructions, was intending to make the poor heretic a prisoner, notwithstanding the emperor’s safe-conduct. But a sight of the brief could not have failed to alarm and put on his guard any man in so critical a situation.” Milner, Ch. Hist., Vol. II., p. 232, *note*.

† The ability “to sleep without anxiety or disturbance” seems to have been, with this inflated prelate, as with the whole Roman church, the great *desideratum*.

of Jesus Christ. Second, the man who receives the holy sacrament must have *faith* in the grace that is presented to him.”

“Each of these propositions,” remarks a celebrated historian in treating of this very discussion, “in truth struck a mortal blow at the Romish commerce. If the pope had not the power of dispensing at his pleasure the merits of the Saviour ; if, in receiving the drafts which the brokers of the church negotiated, men did not receive a portion of this infinite righteousness, this paper money would lose its value, and become as worthless as a heap of rags.

“It was the same with the sacraments. Indulgences were more or less an extraordinary branch of Roman commerce ; the sacraments were a staple commodity. The revenue they produced was of no small amount. To assert that *faith* was necessary before they could confer a real benefit on the soul of a Christian, took away all their charms in the eyes of the people ; for it is not the pope who gives faith ; it is beyond his province ; it proceeds from God alone. To declare its necessity was therefore depriving Rome both of the speculation and the profit. By attacking these two doctrines, Luther had imitated Jesus Christ, who at the very beginning of his ministry had overthrown the tables of the money-changers, and driven the dealers out of the temple. ‘Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise,’ he said.”*

* D’Aubigné, Vol. I., pp. 381, 382.



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They pervert the holy Scriptures, and never quote them to the purpose."

"My son," said the cardinal, "the pope has power and authority over all things."

"Except the Scriptures," interrupted Luther.

"Except the Scriptures!" sneered the legate. "Do you not know that the pope is above the councils, the canons, and the parchment of the Scriptures? He has recently condemned and punished the Council of Basle."

"But I understand that the university of Paris has appealed from this sentence," remarked Luther.

Cajetan now for the first time lost his temper. He declared that the Parisian *savans* would be duly punished, and that the celebrated chancellor Gerson, who had previously maintained at Constance the doctrine that the authority of a general council was superior to that of the pontiff, and whose writings Luther had quoted, was DAMNED, together with all his adherents.*

So extravagantly high, says Milner, were the ideas of the papal power conceived by this cardinal, that even the very moderate contradiction given in France to the pontiff appeared in his eyes to be an unpardonable sin. Little did he then imagine how much more openly his magnificent master was to be opposed within the short space of a few months.

Luther defended with the most unbending zeal the article of justification by faith, citing the Scrip-

tures with marvellous aptness to sustain his position. "As for indulgences," he said, "if it can be shown that I am mistaken, I am very ready to receive instruction. We may pass that over, and still be good Christians. But as to the article of faith, if I made the slightest concession I should renounce Jesus Christ. THAT I cannot, I will not yield; but I will maintain it with my dying breath."

Cajetan, foiled in this verbal fence, once more lost his temper, and throwing himself back upon his dignity, he replied severely, "Whether you will or no, you MUST retract that article this very day, or upon that article alone I shall reject and condemn your whole doctrine."

"Do as you wish," returned the monk, "I have no will but God's. Let him do with me as seemeth good to him. But if I had four hundred heads, I would rather lose them all than retract the testimony which I have borne to the holy Christian faith."

"Well," said the curt legate, "I did not come here to dispute with you. Retract, or prepare to hear your sentence."

Luther at this stage desirous to consult with his friends, and also finding that not the slightest progress was made by this random conversation, and that the legate's promises of kind treatment and conciliation amounted to this, "Recant, or be punished," now wisely determined to retire for the day, and to commit his replies to writing. "In so doing," he said, "the oppressed find double gain: first, what

is written may be submitted to the judgment of others; and second, one has a better chance of working on the fears, if not on the conscience of an arrogant and babbling despot, who would otherwise overpower by his imperious language.”*

Another interview was appointed for the next day, and Luther was suffered to depart.

Cajetan, who was accounted the most learned, ingenious, and able of the Dominicans, lost caste terribly in Luther’s estimation by this day’s tussle. Next after him ranked Prierias. “We may conclude from this,” wrote the Saxon monk’s satirical pen, “what they must be who are in the tenth or the hundredth rank.”†

Upon reaching the Carmelite monastery, Luther was very agreeably surprised to find Dr. Staupitz awaiting his return. The vicar-general anxiously inquired how the affair then stood, and upon being apprized by his *protegé* of the legate’s arrogance in insisting upon a recantation without essaying to convict him of error, Staupitz remarked, “You must positively answer him in writing.”

Satisfied that no accommodation would be arrived at, and anxious that Luther should go into the combat as unshackled as possible, Staupitz urged his friend to permit him to release him from the monastic obligations of his order.

The vicar-general’s object in giving this counsel was double: if the Saxon monk should be con-

* Luther’s letter to the elector of Saxony.

† Epp. I., 173.



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CHAPTER XXIII.

ON the following morning, Wednesday, October 12th, Luther, on descending to the reception-room of the monastery, was surprised and strengthened by finding a number of influential friends already assembled, and waiting to accompany him to the second interview with the legate.

After exchanging affectionate greetings with these friends in need, Peutingger, and the dean of Trent, of the imperial council, Dr. Staupitz, and two of the elector's councillors, Dr. Ruhel and Philip of Feilitzsch, who had come to Augsburg by their prince's order to attend the conferences, and to protect Luther's liberty, started in a body for the legate's audience-room.

Upon their arrival, and after going through the usual ceremonious routine, Luther stepped forward and read this declaration :

“I declare that I honor the holy Roman church, and that I shall continue to honor her. I have sought after truth in my public disputations, and every thing that I have said I still regard as right, true, and Christian. Yet I am but a man. and may be deceived. I am therefore willing to receive instruction and correction in those things wherein I may have erred.

“I declare myself ready to reply orally or in

writing to all the objections and charges that the lord legate may bring against me. I declare myself ready to submit my theses to the four universities of Basle, Fribourg in Brisgau, Louvain, and Paris, and to retract whatever they shall declare erroneous. In a word, I am ready to do all that can be required of a Christian. But I SOLEMNLY PROTEST against the method pursued in this affair, and against the strange pretension of compelling me to retract without having refuted me.”*

“This protest,” returned Cajetan, “is unnecessary. I have no desire to dispute with you either publicly or privately, but I propose arranging this difficulty with parental kindness. In order to that, my dear friend, abandon, I beseech you, so useless an undertaking; bethink yourself, acknowledge your error, and I am prepared to reconcile you with the church, and with the sovereign bishop. Retract, such is the pope’s wish. Whether you will, or whether you will not, is of little consequence. It would be a hard matter for you to kick against the pricks.”

To this special plea of the prelate Luther replied, “I cannot retract; but I offer to reply, and that too in writing. We had battling enough yesterday.”

Cajetan was irritated at this expression, and he rejoined somewhat heatedly, “*Debated!* I have not debated. I have no wish to debate; but to please the most serene Elector Frederick, I am ready to

* Löscher, II., 463; L. Opp. (L.,) XVII., 181-209.

listen to you, and to exhort you in a friendly and paternal manner.”

The cardinal now, says D'Aubigné, felt that in the presence of respectable witnesses he must appear anxious to convince Luther; he therefore reverted to the two propositions which he had pointed out previously, and being firmly resolved to permit the reformer to argue as little as possible, availed himself of his Italian volubility, and overwhelmed the doctor with objections without waiting for any reply. At one time he jeered, at another he scolded; he declaimed with passionate warmth; mingled together the most heterogeneous matters; quoted St. Thomas and Aristotle; clamored, stormed against all who thought differently from himself, and apostrophized Luther. Ten times did the latter undertake to speak, but the legate immediately interrupted him, and overwhelmed him with threats. Retract, retract; this was all that was required of him. He raved, he domineered, he alone was permitted to speak.

Staupitz took upon himself to check the legate. “Pray allow brother Martin time to reply to you,” said he. But De Vio began again; he requoted the *extravaganzas* and the opinions of Aquinas; he had resolved to have all the talk to himself during this interview. If he could not convince, and if he dared not strike, he would do his best to stun by his violence.*

Seeing the futility of this method of argument,

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 389.



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It declares that the merits of the saints are a treasure, while the whole of Scripture bears witness that God rewards us far more richly than we deserve. The prophet exclaims, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.** ‘Woe be to men, however honorable, and however praiseworthy their lives may have been,’ says Augustine, ‘if a judgment from which mercy was excluded should be pronounced upon them.’†

“Thus the saints themselves are not saved by their merits, but solely by God’s mercy, as I have declared. I maintain this, and in it I stand fast. The words of holy Scripture, which declare that the saints have not merit enough, must be set above the words of men, which affirm that they have an excess. For the pope is not above the word of God, but below it.

“In the second place, I affirm that no man can be justified before God if he has not faith, so that it is necessary for a man to believe with a perfect assurance that he has obtained grace. To doubt of this grace is to reject it. *The faith of the righteous is his righteousness and his life.*”‡

And this proposition Luther fortified impreguably by multitudinous citations of Scripture.

But the haughty churchman, on being handed this remarkably able and succinct argumentative protest, tossed it aside contemptuously, merely ob-

* Psalm CXLIII.

† Confess. IX.

‡ *Justitia justi et vita ejus, est fides ejus.* L. Opp. Lat. I., 211.

serving, "You have indulged in useless verbiage; you have penned many idle words; you have replied in a very foolish manner to the two articles, and have blackened your paper with a great number of irrelevant passages of Scripture;" and so he ran on, mistaking epithets for argument, and when he could not answer, satisfying himself with abusing.

But Luther checked that volubility which had kept him silent at the previous interview, and raising his own sonorous voice and imitating the rapid utterance of the Italian, he poured in upon the astonished cardinal such a terrific broadside of fact, citation, satire, and logic as soon sufficed to drive him from his controversial guns.

The legate now had recourse alone to threats. "Retract," he kept repeating, "retract, or if you do not I shall send you to Rome to appear before judges commissioned to take cognizance of your affair. I shall excommunicate you with all your partisans, with all who are, or who may be favorable to you, and eject them from the church.

"Think you that your protectors will restrain me? Think you that the pope cares any thing for Germany? The pope's little finger is stronger than all the German princes put together."* Thus sputtered the infuriated cardinal.

Luther, on his part, calmly said, "Deign to forward to pope Leo X., with my humble prayers, the answer which I have transmitted to you in writing."

* L. Opp. (L.,) XVII., 197.

This Cajetan said he would do; he then added, "Instantly retract, or return no more."*

Luther bowed, and with his train swept out of the council chamber.

"Thus," says D'Aubigné, "the Dominican system, covered with the brilliancy of the Roman purple, had haughtily dismissed its humble adversary. But Luther was conscious that he was a power—the Christian doctrine, the truth—that no secular or spiritual authority could ever subdue. Of the two combatants, he who withdrew remained master of the field of battle."†

Luther had not been long gone when Cajetan, regretting his violence, and fearful of utter failure in this mission as in the preceding one to the imperial diet, sent for Staupitz; and when the vicar-general appeared, accompanied by Dr. Link of Nuremberg, dismissing all his courtiers save only Serra Longa, the solicitous churchman approached and said mildly, "My dear Staupitz, prevail upon your monk, and induce him to recant. Really in other respects I am well pleased with him, and wish him well."

To this exhortation Staupitz replied, "I have already done my utmost, and I will again endeavor to persuade him to submit."

"You must answer his arguments," said the legate.

"That, my lord," quickly returned the vicar-gen-

* "Revoca, aut non rivertere." L. Opp. (L.,) XVII., 197.

† D'Aubigné, Vol. I., p. 395.



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Roman expressions, which signify in good German that it would be my eternal shame and ruin. What else can he expect who, through fear of men and against the voice of his conscience, denies the truth?"*

Staupitz did not press the matter, but contenting himself with begging Luther to treat the cardinal with all deference, and to preserve the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*, took his departure; informing his friend, however, that he would see him again ere quitting Augsburg.

Luther now determined to write to his court friend Spalatin a minute account of the conference with Cajetan, and to request him to lay the most important portion of his letter before their gracious prince the elector, for his approval or condemnation. "This," wrote he at the conclusion of his succinct report—"this is the present posture of affairs, but I have neither hope nor confidence in the legate. I will not, unconvinced, retract a syllable; but I shall publish the reply I gave him; in order that, if he should now resort to violence, Christendom may hoot him."†

Luther's thoughts next turned to his dear Wittenberg; his heart yearned towards his associates there, and he again, wearied as he was from the composition of his missive to Spalatin, took up his pen and indited this noble letter to Dr. Carlstadt:

"Accept, dear doctor, these few words as if they

* L. Opp. (L.) XVII., 210.

† L. Epp. I., 149.

were a long letter, for time and events are pressing. At a better opportunity I will write to you and others more fully. Three days my business has been in hand, and matters are now at such a point that I have no longer any hope of returning to you, and I have nothing to look for but excommunication. The legate positively will not permit me to dispute either publicly or privately. He desires not to be a judge, he says, but a father to me; and yet he will hear no other words from me than these: 'I retract, and acknowledge my error.' These I will not utter.

"The dangers of my cause are much the greater, that its judges are not only implacable enemies, but, still further, men incapable of understanding it. Yet the Lord God lives and reigns: to his protection I commit myself, and I doubt not that, in answer to the prayers of a few pious souls, he will send me deliverance; I imagine I feel them praying for me.

"Either I shall return to you without having suffered any harm; or else, struck with excommunication, I shall have to seek a refuge elsewhere.

"However that may be, conduct yourself valiantly, stand fast, and glorify Christ boldly and joyfully.

"The cardinal always styles me *his dear son*. I know how much I must believe of that. I am, nevertheless, persuaded that I should be the most acceptable and dearest man to him in the world, if I would pronounce the single word *revoco*, I recant.

But I will not become indeed a heretic by renouncing the faith by which I became a Christian; I would rather be exiled, accursed, and burnt to death.

“Farewell, my dear doctor; show this letter to our theologians, to Amsdorff, to Philip, to Otten, and the rest, in order that you may pray for me, and also for yourselves; for it is your cause that I am pleading here: it is that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the grace of God.”*

Nobly spoken, servant of the living God. Your words ring yet through the centuries, kindling anew the smouldering faith of millions who worship in that church based on your protest. Your words were not *vox, et præterea nihil*; they came from the heart, and a man stood behind them. Your actions at this memorable conference were even more sublime than your language.

In the evening Staupitz returned, accompanied by Ruhel and the knight of Frelitzsch, the elector's envoys.

After some desultory conversation, Luther proposed that they celebrate the Lord's supper together, which all acceded to. This finished, the envoys departed, and Staupitz also announced his determination to seek safety in flight, since the legate had already threatened him with excommunication.

Luther said that he should remain for several days at least, and await further orders from the cardinal; perhaps he might even reopen negotiations with him.

* L. Epp. I., 159.



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With this object in view, he wrote the following epistle to the cardinal-legate :

“MOST WORTHY FATHER IN GOD—Once more I approach you, not in person, but by letter, entreating your paternal goodness to listen to me graciously. The reverend Dr. Staupitz, my very dear father in Christ, has called upon me to humble myself, to renounce my own sentiments, and to submit my opinions to the judgment of pious and impartial men. He has also praised your fatherly kindness, and has convinced me of your favorable disposition towards me. This news has filled me with joy.

“Now therefore, most worthy father, I confess—as I have already done before—that I have not shown, as has been reported, sufficient modesty, meekness, or respect for the name of the sovereign pontiff; and although I have been greatly provoked, I see that it would have been better for me to have conducted my cause with greater humility, mildness, and reverence, and not to have ‘answered a fool according to his folly, lest I should be like unto him.’

“This grieves me very much, and I ask forgiveness. I will publicly confess it to the people from the pulpit, as indeed I have already often done. I will endeavor, by God’s grace, to speak differently. Nay, more, I am ready to promise, freely and of my own accord, not to utter another word on the subject of indulgences, if this business is arranged. But also let those who made me speak be com-

pelled, on their part, to be more moderate henceforth in their sermons, or to be silent.

“As for the *truth* of my doctrine, the authority of St. Thomas and other doctors cannot satisfy me. I must hear, if I am worthy to do so, the voice of the bride, which is the church. For it is certain that she hears the voice of the Bridegroom, which is Christ.

“In all humility and submission, I therefore entreat your paternal love to refer all this business—so unsettled up to this day—to our most holy lord Leo X., in order that the church may decide, pronounce, and ordain, and that I may retract with a good conscience, or believe with sincerity.”*

Luther wrote and dispatched this conciliatory letter on Sunday, the 16th of October.

In the meantime it was currently reported on the streets, that the ominous silence which had suddenly settled upon the cardinal and his garrulous satellites, covered a treacherous plot for the audacious monk's speedy arrest and fatal imprisonment.

Luther's Augsburg friends hastened to him, advised him to draw up an appeal to the pope, and afterwards quit that dangerous vicinage.

Luther, whose presence in this city had been useless during the last four days, and who had sufficiently proved, by his remaining after the departure of the Saxon councillors sent by the Elector to watch over his safety, that he feared nothing, and that he was ready to answer any charge, yielded at length to his friends' solicitations.

* L. Opp. (L.) p. 198.

He therefore sat down and wrote this last letter to the legate :

“MOST WORTHY FATHER IN GOD—Your paternal kindness has witnessed—I repeat it—witnessed and sufficiently acknowledged my obedience. I have undertaken a long journey, through great dangers, in great weakness of body, and despite of my extreme poverty, at the command of our most holy father Leo X.; I have appeared in person before your eminence; lastly, I have thrown myself at the feet of his holiness, and I now wait his good pleasure, ready to submit to his judgment whether he should condemn or acquit me. I therefore feel that I have omitted nothing that it becomes an obedient child of the church to do.

“I think, consequently, that I ought not uselessly to prolong my sojourn in this town.’ Besides, it would be impossible. My resources are failing me, and your paternal goodness has loudly forbidden me to appear before you again unless I will retract.

“I therefore depart in the name of the Lord, desiring, if possible, to find some spot where I may dwell in peace. Many persons of greater importance than myself have requested me to appeal from your paternal kindness, and even from our most holy lord Leo X. *ill-informed*, to the pope when *better* informed. Although I know that such an appeal will be far more acceptable to our most serene highness the Elector than a retractation, nevertheless, if I had consulted my own feelings



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compelled him to tarry for a little at his castle for needed repose, and dismissed him better mounted and accoutred.*

Such was the result of Martin Luther's famous conference with the cardinal-legate Cajetan, at Augsburg; such were the deadly perils which his genius and resolute daring enabled him for the moment safely to surmount.

* Myconius.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BUT while Luther had thus escaped from the immediate toils of the Roman church, the enraged and outwitted cardinal, upon receiving the daring monk's last letter appealing to the pope and announcing his departure, showered his imprecations upon the patricians of Augsburg, upon the imperial council, upon his own remiss courtiers, and upon Germany at large.

Nor was his rage placated when, on taking his daily ride, he saw staring him in the face from the cathedral gates, a formal protest to the pope, drawn up by Luther just before his departure, and posted by his friend the prior of Pomesau, in the presence of a notary and two witnesses, on the following day.*

Cajetan instantly rode home, and calling for pen and paper indited an indignant letter to the elector, whom he regarded as the open or secret protector of this German theologian, who had braved and thwarted his cherished plans for reaping renown and fortune at the papal court.

After reciting his own biassed account of the conference, he closed with these words :

“Since brother Martin cannot be induced by paternal measures to acknowledge his errors, and

* L. Opp. Lat. I., 219.

remain faithful to the Roman church, I beg your highness either to send him to Rome or else to expel him from your states. Be assured that this difficult, mischievous, and envenomed business cannot be protracted much longer; for so soon as I have informed our most holy lord of all this artifice and wickedness, it will be brought to an end.”

In a postscript Cajetan specially and earnestly conjured Frederick not to embroil all Germany, alienate the Roman see, and tarnish his own honor and the fair fame of his illustrious house by covering with the mantle of his protection the shivering form of this miserable mendicant friar.

Frederick read this insolent and dictatorial epistle with ill-dissembled anger,* but still his prudent and pacific temper led him to avoid, if possible, all vexatious entanglements; he therefore determined to adopt the Fabian policy, to withhold for a little his decision, and to let affairs drift. But he sent the haughty cardinal's missive to Luther at Wittemberg by a special courier.†

Luther's fiery soul heaved with indignation as he perused the crafty and malicious sentences of his late adversary and judge. He determined on *his* part also to address the elector. With Luther to determine was to act. Therefore on that very day he wrote the elector in person one of the grandest letters ever penned, brimful of sublime sentiment, glowing logic, and heartfelt piety.

After recounting at length the incidents of the

* Seckendorf.

† Myconius.



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“The words that I utter are not dictated by vain presumption, but by an unshaken conviction. I am willing that the Lord God should withdraw his grace from me, and that every one of God’s creatures should refuse me his countenance, if, when a better doctrine has been shown me, I do not embrace it.

“If they despise me on account of my low estate, me a poor little mendicant friar, and if they refuse to instruct me in the way of truth, then let your highness entreat the legate to inform you in writing wherein I have erred ; and if they refuse even your highness this favor, let them write their views to his imperial majesty, or to some archbishop of Germany. What can I, what ought I to say more ?

“Let your highness listen to the voice of your conscience and of your honor, and not send me to Rome. No man can require you to do so, for it is impossible that I could be safe in that abandoned city. The pope himself is not safe there.* It would be commanding you to betray Christian blood. They have paper, pens, and ink ; they have also notaries without number. It is easy for them to write wherein and wherefore I have erred. It will cost them less to instruct me when absent by writing, than to put me to death by stratagem when among them.

“I resign myself to banishment. My adver-

* In allusion probably to a tumult which had recently occurred at Rome, in which the lazzaroni, hungry and desperate, had stoned their magnificent pontiff as he walked through the streets in solemn procession.

saries are laying their snares on every side, so that I can nowhere live in security. In order that no evil may happen to you on my account, I leave your territories in God's name. I will go wherever the eternal and merciful God will have me. Let him do with me according to his pleasure.

“Thus then, most serene elector, I reverently bid you farewell. I commend you to the everlasting God, and give you eternal thanks for all your kindness towards me. Whatever be the people among whom I shall dwell in future, I shall ever remember you, and pray continually and gratefully for the happiness of yourself and of your family.

“I am still, thanks be to God, full of joy, and praise him because Christ the Son of God esteems me worthy to suffer in his cause. May he ever protect your illustrious highness. Amen.”

This noble and touching letter completely gained the heart of the elector.* He instantly directed his councillor Pfeffinger, then at Maximilian's court, to inform the emperor of the real state of the cause, and to persuade him to write to Rome and arrange that Luther should be tried by impartial judges in Germany.†

Frederick next replied to Cajetan. He wrote, “Since Doctor Martin has appeared before you at Augsburg, you should be satisfied. We did not expect that you would endeavor to make him retract without having convinced him of his errors. None of the learned men in our principality have

* Maimbourg.

† L. Epp. I., 187.

informed us that Martin's doctrine is impious, anti-christian, or heretical. We must refuse therefore, either to send Luther to Rome, or to expel him from our states."*

The elector then instructed Spalatin to inform Luther of what he had done, and to instruct him to remain in Wittemberg, and to continue his connection with the university until he was directed to discontinue it.

Luther's joy and gratitude on the reception of this most reassuring note cannot be adequately described.

In the exuberance of his feelings he wrote Spalatin: "Gracious God, with what inexpressible delight have I read your letter, read, and reread it. I know what confidence may be put in these words of our gracious prince, at once so forcible and so moderate. I fear that the Romans may not understand their full bearing; but they will at least understand that what they think already finished is as yet hardly begun. Pray return my thanks to the prince. It is strange that De Vio, who, a short time back, was, like myself, a mendicant monk, should not fear to address the mightiest princes disrespectfully; to call them to account, to threaten, to command them, and to treat them with such inconceivable haughtiness. Let him learn that the temporal power is of God, and that its glory may not be trampled under foot."†

Having thus, through the kind firmness of the

* L. Opp. I., 187.

† L. Epp. I. 198.



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early copy of his *Report*; writing him, "It is keener, no doubt, than the legate expects; but my pen is ready to produce much greater things. I do not know myself whence these thoughts arise. In my opinion the work is not yet begun; so far are the great ones at Rome mistaken in looking for the end. I send you what I have written, in order that you may judge whether I have guessed rightly that the antichrist of whom St. Paul speaks now reigns in the court of Rome. I think that I shall be able to show that he is worse nowadays than the Turks themselves."

Early in 1519 Luther was summoned to meet Frederick at Lichtenberg. There a lengthy consultation was held. Luther declared that if Leo sent his threatened bull of excommunication he should quit Saxony, and repair to Paris. This Spalatin opposed, bidding him beware of precipitation in going to France. The elector again had resort to his Fabian politics. He told Luther to await quietly the action of events, and meantime to remain in Wittenberg.*

At Rome the utmost displeasure was felt. Leo vented his irritation on poor Cajetan. That haughty churchman fell into sad disgrace; and, indeed, his bungling management did not deserve the plaudits of the apostolic see.

The honor of the Roman court was now engaged. Leo, for the first time, began to appreciate the magnitude of the disaffection; he determined to

* L. Epp. I., 195.

use his utmost exertions to purify the theological atmosphere of Germany from the audacious heresy which now tainted it.

Leo caused De Vio to publish at Lintz, in Austria, a papal bull confirming the doctrine of indulgences in those very points which had been assailed ; but the new decree made no mention of Luther, or the new theology. The pontiff hoped by this move to reap a double gain. Luther had declared that he would submit to the decision of the church. Here then was that invoked decision formally promulgated. Now, if the Saxon monk ventured to dissent, he must eat his own words, and appear in the unpopular character of a renewed disturber of the peace of Christendom. It was a cunning scheme, well worthy of the craft of Rome.

Nevertheless it was a blunder. It reaffirmed the exploded folly of the indulgence doctrine. By legalizing crying abuses, it drove all wise and Christian men into the dissenting ranks. "It was thought," says Maimbourg, the famous Jesuit historian, "that this bull had been issued solely for the benefit of the pope and the begging friars, who began to find that no one would purchase their indulgences."*

It did not even place Luther in the imagined dilemma ; for the keen monk had already, on the 28th of November, 1518, in the chapel of *Corpus Christi*, at Wittemberg, appealed from the pope to a general council of the church.†

* Maimbourg, p. 38.

† Roscoe's Life of Leo X.

Doubly irritated by being thus for a second time outwitted by his despised antagonist, Leo nevertheless managed to swallow his anger for a time, and he had recourse once more to mediation.

He was persuaded to adopt this temporizing course through fear of offending the elector. He knew Frederick's power in the empire. Maximilian's end was rapidly approaching. Leo desired the elector's aid in securing the imperial crown for some one of those competitors whose interests were allied to his own. The present emperor desired that his successor might be Charles of Spain and Naples. Frederick had already, at the recent diet at Augsburg, opposed this policy, and sided with the Roman see. Nothing therefore must be done to alienate this prince, who seemed to hold the decisive vote in his hand. But if this dangerous period could be tided over until Maximilian's death and the election of his successor, then Leo meant that Christendom should see brave things.

So tangled was the skein of Roman policy at this momentous juncture. And this was why Leo resorted to congenial *finesse*, rather than to open war.

He looked about him then for some new ambassador whom he might dispatch into Germany with better prospects of success.

Charles of Miltitz, a Saxon nobleman, to whom Luther's friends had appealed early in the controversy, who was the pope's chamberlain, and in whom Leo reposed all confidence, was finally selected for this important mission.



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Luther was besieged by his friends, and conjured to be upon his guard against Roman subtlety and stratagem.* To all forebodings Luther responded firmly, "I await God's will." †

Miltitz was armed with seventy papal briefs. To these, however, he was only to have recourse as a *dernier* resort, after exhausting every other artifice.

These briefs thundered the pontifical excommunication against all who should venture to oppose any obstacle to the action of the legate. It was believed at Rome that if the legate posted one of these briefs in each city on his return, provided he saw fit to arrest and bring with him to the Eternal City the formidable heresiarch, universal awe would dampen the ardor of those who otherwise might resist his passage, and that the mailed hands of the adherents of the Reformation would drop paralyzed to their sides before the awful maledictions of the Roman see.

This was doubtless one reason why Miltitz was so assiduous in sounding the sentiments of the German populace on his outward route. If so, he hardly gained much consolation. The deep and wide-spread popularity of Luther might well give him pause, if he contemplated any violence, and teach him the vastness of the task he had assumed.

The puny strength of the Saxon chamberlain was scarcely adequate to the Titanic task of uprooting the deep-planted tenets of the Reformation.

* L. Epp. I., 191.

† Ibid.

CHAPTER XXV.

MILTITZ arrived at the electoral court early in January, 1519. He was an old acquaintance of Spalatin; accordingly he tarried at Weimar only sufficiently long to arrange his lodgings, before he repaired to the residence of the elector's chaplain at Altenburg.

Spalatin received him courteously; but when the legate ventured to complain of Luther's conduct, and to chide the court chaplain gently on account of the countenance awarded the new heresy by Frederick and his retainers, Spalatin carried the war into Africa by vigorously assaulting the course of the Roman see in making the agitation necessary by endorsing the blasphemies and insolence of the great indulgence-hawker Tetzel.

The good chaplain then recited some of those impious propositions with which the mountebank Dominican had been accustomed to regale his gaping auditors.

Miltitz heard this with real or pretended surprise and horror. Clothed with full power to investigate the whole subject, he wrote Tetzel—who, alarmed at the clamor raised against his iniquitous traffic, had sneaked for safety into the college of St. Paul, at Leipsic—a summons to appear before him at Altenburg to answer the popular indictment.

But the braggart monk dared not appear. In

the letter which he wrote excusing his non-compliance with the nuncio's order, he complained that the Wittemberg Augustinian had raised a hue and cry against him not only in Germany, but in Poland and Hungary; that there was no spot where he could be safe; that even when he ventured to preach in Leipsic, he was met with menaces and reproaches; and that as for journeying to Altenburg, his life would not be worth a groat.*

So wrote this incarnation of fraud, this pompous Dominican, who feared to face the nuncio of that very see for whose benefit he had made himself a swindler.

When we recall Luther's perilous march into the very jaws of the Roman lion at Augsburg, and contrast his frank courage with the ignominious cowardice of his recently swollen antagonist, the picture is significant.

The legate, filled with contempt for Tetzels, determined to take no steps at present towards his punishment, but to let the matter rest until he himself repaired to Leipsic. Meantime he strained every nerve to effect his object at the elector's court.

Frederick had some years before earnestly solicited from the pope the honor of the golden rose. This rose was consecrated every year by the Roman pontiffs, and transmitted to some one of the European princes as a mark of the pope's peculiar favor and esteem.†

* Stebbing's Hist. Ref. ; Seckendorf; Van Brunt.

† Milner, Ch. Hist., Vol. II., p. 241.



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me alive and in chains to that murderous Rome; but the Lord has thrown him to the ground by the way.”*

Miltitz indeed overacted his part; if Cajetan had been too imperious, he was by far too soft; his smiles and caresses were ominous.

The legate feigned surprise on meeting Luther. “My dear Martin,” he said, “I imagined you to be some crusty old theologian who, seated quietly at his hearthstone, had become the victim of an heretical theological crotchet; but it seems that you are a young man, not yet in the prime of life.”†

“But,” he continued, “you are old enough to have drawn everybody away from the pope and attached them to yourself. If I had an army of twenty-five thousand men, I do not think that I should be able to convey you to Rome against your will.”

“No,” returned the imperturbable monk; “God stays the waves of the sea upon the shore, and he stays them with—sand.”‡

With a cunning diplomacy worthy of Machiavelli, the nuncio then proceeded to descant in glowing words upon the terrible wound which the writings of the Saxon monk had unwittingly inflicted upon the sensitive body of the Christian church; and he concluded a long, kind, and moving harangue by personally appealing to Luther to medicine this hurt, and by informing him that no other leech could effect a cure.

* L. Epp. I., 206.

† L. Opp. Latin Præf.

‡ L. Opp. (W.) XXII.

Luther listened to him calmly and attentively; nay, he even acknowledged that if the archbishop of Mentz had so spoken in the outset, the affair would never have caused so great disturbance.* He then on his part pointed out the abuses into which the church had lapsed, affirmed the necessity of some reformation, complained of his treatment by the Roman see, he no enemy, but a simple seeker after truth, and ended by saying:

“I am so desirous to settle this matter amicably, that I will go to the very verge of my conscience. I offer to be silent in the future on this doctrine of indulgences, provided my opponents on their part also are silent; but if they continue to assault me, a serious struggle will soon arise out of a trifling dispute. Not only will I do this, but I will go still further: I will write to his holiness, acknowledging that I have been a little too violent, and I will declare that it is as a faithful son of the church that I opposed discourses that drew upon it the mockeries and insults of the people. Yes, I am willing to do and to bear every thing; but as for a retractation, never expect to wring one from me.”†

This was far from being so much as the papal envoy had hoped to gain; but he thought that half a loaf was better than no bread. He accordingly began to rail against Tetzels, on whose head he declared that he would pour the papal maledictions; and he brought the first conference to a close by asserting that he accepted Luther's offer, and would

* L. Opp. Lat. in Præf.

† L. Epp. I., 207.

speedily communicate it to the pope with his own earnest endorsement.

“On the following day the agreement was formally drawn up. There were two articles:

“Both parties are forbidden to preach, write, or do any thing further in the discussion that has been raised.

“Miltitz will immediately inform the holy father of the state of affairs. His holiness will empower an enlightened bishop to investigate the matter, and to point out the erroneous articles which I should retract. If they prove me to be in error, I shall willingly retract; and I will do nothing derogatory to the honor or authority of the holy Roman church.”*

With this arrangement Luther hastened to acquaint the elector; while Miltitz on his part was in ecstasies. I, thought he, am the David who has slain the Goliath of this heresy. With what honor shall I now return to Rome. To Luther he exclaimed, “These hundred years past, no question has occasioned more anxiety to the cardinals and Roman courtiers than this. They would rather have given ten thousand ducats than consent to its being prolonged.”†

In the evening Miltitz gave the reformer a grand supper. At this feast “all went merry as a marriage bell.” As Luther was about to depart, the nuncio, in the exuberance of his joy, actually kissed his guest.

* L. Epp. I., 209.

† Pallavicini, I., 52.



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Miltitz at length escaped from the dangerous hospitality of the elector's subjects, and repaired to Leipsic, where, summoning Tetzel before him, he rebuked him with the utmost severity in the presence of his provincial; proved that he had appropriated considerable amounts of money to his own vile uses, and dismissed him broken and despairing to the gloom of his monastic dungeon.

Here this poor tool of the papal iniquity lingered out a few months of ignominious existence, deserted by the very churchmen who had set him on, and a mark for scorn to point her finger at.

Luther's heart was touched when he learned of Tetzel's state. "I am sorry for him," he wrote to Spalatin, and shortly afterwards he gave formal utterance to his pity by addressing his old opponent a very kind and earnest letter. Thus Luther, upon whom Tetzel had poured the vile torrent of his wrath so often, was the only one who was found in this hour of need to assuage his misery; but the broken monk did not long survive his disgrace, dying shortly after the receipt of Luther's letter, very miserably.*

It will be remembered that in his conference with Miltitz, Luther had expressed a willingness to write Leo, apologizing for his hasty expressions regarding the sovereign pontiff.† Accordingly on the 3d of March he indited this very humble letter to the pope:

* Seckendorf, Milner, D'Aubigné, Michelét, and others.

† See p. 307.

“BLESSED FATHER—May your holiness condescend to incline your paternal ear, which is that of Christ himself, towards your poor sheep, and listen kindly to his bleating. What shall I do, most holy father? I cannot bear the lightnings of your anger, and I know not how to escape them. I am called on to retract. I would most readily do so, could that lead to the desired result. But the persecutions of my adversaries have circulated my writings far and wide, and they are too deeply graven on the hearts of men to be by any possibility erased. A recantation would only still more dishonor the church of Rome, and draw from the lips of all a cry of accusation against her.

“Most holy father, I declare in the presence of God, and of all his creatures, that I have never desired, and that I shall never desire, to infringe, either by force or by stratagem, the power of the Roman church or of your holiness. I confess that nothing in heaven or in earth should be preferred above that church, except Jesus Christ alone, the Lord of all.”*

The comments of historians upon this singular letter have been various. Upon a fair survey of all the facts, we are inclined to accept Milner's *résumé*:

“In proposing a compromise of silence on both sides, and in what he wrote to Leo X., Luther may have been thought to have acted inconsistently with his former declarations, and to have conceded too much to the hierarchy; but the answer is, that he

* L. Epp. I., 234.

has already manfully resisted the Roman see ; now he began to hesitate how far it was HIS proper business to proceed further in a matter of that sort ; in a word, his conscience was at present puzzled respecting the EXTENT of the obedience which he owed to the rulers whose authority he then allowed.

“ Harassed with doubts, and perfectly aware of the danger that threatened him, he would have given the world for a sound and discreet counsellor : of the danger he sought no partner ; but, alas, his best and wisest friends, when pressed closely concerning the most critical and perilous part of the contest, stood absolutely aloof. After he had conferred with Miltitz, he wrote to his friend Spalatin ; he also particularly entreated the elector Frederick, that, for the sake of Almighty God, he would use so much clemency towards him as freely to say what he wished him to do in the present circumstances.”*

“ After long and diligent reflection on the best authenticated facts, and in the peculiar situation of Luther, the very doubts which arose in his mind appear to me, I confess, to imply both extraordinary integrity of principle and great vigor of intellect.”†

D'Aubigné, in commenting on this letter to pope Leo, remarks,

“ These words might appear strange and even reprehensible in Luther's mouth, did we not remember that he reached the light not suddenly, but by a slow and progressive course. They are a very important evidence that the Reformation was not

* Seckendorf, p. 63. † Milner's Ch. Hist., Vol. II., p. 243.



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CHAPTER XXVI.

ON the 12th of January, 1519, the presaged death of the emperor Maximilian occurred. Pending the election of the new emperor, Frederick of Saxony was selected to administer the empire.

Instantly the sky which lowered over Wittemberg brightened.

On its part the court of Rome became more cautious, subtle, conciliatory, and intriguing. It set in motion the whole prodigious machinery of the apostolic see to secure the election of one of its favorites to the vacant throne of the German Cæsars. To secure his ends, Leo stooped with easy grace to dissemble and to procrastinate. Since the Roman vulture could not now safely seize its prey, it looked meek and harmless, covered its bloody talons with scrupulous care, and croaked, "Do not fear; I mean you no evil."

Thus it happened that Luther's letter refusing to retract was suffered to pass unnoticed. Leo bent his energies with renewed zeal to the accomplishment of his purposes in the German Confederation, knowing full well that success there meant Rome universally triumphant.

There was therefore at this moment a brief hush; the ecclesiastical tumult was stilled, but only to be reinaugurated ere long with redoubled fierceness.

To Luther the interval brought no decrease of

labor, though his controversial writings were suppressed for a little.

He immersed himself, with that ardor which was peculiar to his temperament, in the duties of the university and of his parish, occupying busily every leisure moment in diligent study, and especially in increasing his ecclesiastical knowledge. He was surprised by some of the discoveries which he made on these voyages of theological exploration. "I am reading," he wrote Spalatin, "the *decretals* of the pope's, and, let me whisper it in your ear, I know not whether the pope is antichrist himself, or only his apostle, so misrepresented and even crucified does Christ appear in them."*

Still Luther was not yet prepared for separation from the Roman communion. His object was *reformation*, not *abolition*. "Although every thing is now in a very wretched state in the church, this is no reason for separating from it. We must not desert God on account of the devil, or abandon the children of God who are still in the Roman communion, because of the multitude of the ungodly. Charity can do all things, and to unity nothing is difficult."†

Thus it appears that even so late as the year 1519 Luther still regarded the Roman church as the shechinah of the living God. Indeed the strict historical truth should seem to be, that Luther never did abandon Rome. Rome in its haughty paganism—for the apostolic see had paganized Christianity—departed from the primitive tenets of its faith,

* L. Epp., I., 234.

† L. Opp. (L.,) XVII., 224.

and thus itself formally rejected and abandoned the pure Christianity which Martin Luther only inaugurated.

But while Luther was slowly growing into a more robust knowledge of the Roman shibboleths, while he was toilfully acquainting himself with the intricacies of the pontifical labyrinth, his reputation was constantly spreading wider and wider.

The thunders of the Reformation were no longer confined within the limits of the German empire, but they shook the robber castles of the Rhine, and reverberated through Christendom.

We have already spoken of the flourishing condition of the Wittemberg university. Its fame continued to advance hand in hand with that of its most illustrious professor. Among the students were numbered the most distinguished youth of Germany. "Our city," wrote Luther, "can scarcely hold the numbers which are arriving, and they increase upon us like an overflowing tide."*

It will be remembered that in the articles of agreement drawn up between himself and Miltitz, Luther had not only consented to remain silent while his adversaries respected the truce, but he had also consented to accept the arbitration of any impartial bishop whom Leo might be pleased to designate.

Miltitz, who saw that a resort to violence in accomplishing the object of his mission could only result fatally to himself, since the temporary as-

* L. Epp. I., 278, 279.



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broken by Dr. Eck, who published at Ingolstadt thirteen theses aimed at Luther's tenets, and expressly intended to draw him into the controversial arena.

This scholastic was vain-glorious, boastful, proud of his pompous learning, and he was still more puffed up by having won prizes on the field of disputation in eight different universities. He was indeed complete master of the weapons of offence and defence in use by the schoolmen. His logical acuteness and prowess in argument had hitherto enabled him to conquer all opponents. "But this *little monk*," says Pallavicini, "this Luther, who had suddenly grown into a giant, whom thus far no one had been able to vanquish, galled his pride, and excited his jealousy."*

Carlstadt, who was at this time on friendly terms with Luther, had published some theses in reply to Eck's *Obelisks*. To these Eck had responded, and Carlstadt had rejoined. The result of this skirmish was that Eck challenged Carlstadt to a verbal combat at Leipsic, hoping in this way to ensnare Luther into the controversy. He was more successful than was best for his fame as a disputant.

The last of his Ingolstadt theses read thus: "We deny that the Roman church was not raised above the other churches before the time of pope Sylvester; and we acknowledge in every age, as the successor of St. Peter, and the vicar of Christ, him who has filled the chair and held the faith of St. Peter."

* Pallavicini, tom. I., p. 55.

It will be seen that this proposition brought into the discussion the whole question of the *supremacy of the pope*, one of the main questions of the Reformation.

“Luther, while in the Roman church, held, in common with many other papal theologians, that the authority of the councils was superior to that of the pope. He had recently appealed from pope Leo to a general council. If the pontiff was *supreme*, of what use would his appeal be? He therefore read this thesis with indignation. “Men imagine vain things when they counsel peace,” he wrote: “God does not leave me to my own will; he pushes me forward, and carries me away. I am not master of myself. I desire to live in repose, but I am thrown into the midst of tumults and revolutions.”*

Luther now stepped forward, accepted the combat which Rome had invoked, and picked up the gauntlet of her haughty champion.

“God knows,” he wrote Frederick, “that I was firmly resolved to keep silence, and that I was glad to see this struggle terminated at last. I have so strictly adhered to the treaty concluded with the papal commissary, that I have not replied to Sylvester Priöras, notwithstanding the insults of adversaries, and the advice of my friends. But now Dr. Eck attacks me, and not only me, but the university of Wittemberg also. I cannot suffer the truth to be thus cowed into silence, and covered with opprobrium.”†

* L. Opp. Lat. in Praef.

† L. Epp., I., 237.

After writing this letter to Frederick, Luther published a number of theses in reply to Eck; the last of these was couched in these words:

“It is by the contemptible decretals of Roman pontiffs, composed within the last four centuries, that they would prove the primacy of the Roman church; but arrayed against this claim are eleven centuries of credible history, the express declarations of Scripture, and the conclusions of the Council of Nice, the most venerable of all the councils.”*

Luther at once forwarded these theses to Eck at Ingolstadt, remarking in his disdainful and biting style, “Now, my dear Eck, be brave, and gird thy sword upon thy thigh, thou mighty man. If I could not please thee as mediator, perhaps I shall please thee better as antagonist. Not that I imagine I can vanquish thee, but because, after all the triumphs thou hast gained in Hungary, Lombardy, and Bavaria—if at least we are to believe thee—I shall give thee opportunity of gaining the title of conqueror of Saxony and Misnia, so that thou shalt for ever be hailed with the glorious title of August.”†

Leipsic, which had been selected as the city wherein the disputation was to take place, was situated in the territory of duke George, the elector’s cousin. Luther wrote this prince, who was inimical to his cause, requesting permission to participate in this intellectual tournament.

The duke, offended at Luther’s boldness, and alarmed by his open assaults upon the Roman see,

* L. Opp. (L.,) XVII., 245.

† L. Epp. I., 251.



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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE agitation at Wittemberg was now intense. Nothing was thought or spoken of but the approaching dispute at Leipsic, and the most lavish preparations were made by the honest burghers and the heated students of the good old city to turn out *en masse* in honor of their university.

Luther, whose poverty was now, as it continued to be through life, extreme, and who was absolutely dependent upon the elector in pecuniary matters, since there appears to have been no settled salary attached to his professorship, was obliged to have recourse to Frederick on this occasion for an outfit in which to appear at the discussion. His letter to the elector is sufficiently curious : “ I beseech your electoral grace to have the kindness to purchase for me a white surplice and a black one. The white one I humbly pray for. As for the black one, your highness owes it to me, for you promised it to me two or three years ago ; and Pfeffinger has such difficulty in loosening his purse-strings, that I have been obliged to procure one for myself. I humbly beseech your highness, who thought that the *psalmster* merited a black surplice, not to deem *Saint Paul* unworthy of a white one.”*

It is scarcely necessary to add that the surplices made their speedy appearance.

* Michelét.

On the 24th of June, 1519, the Wittembergers set out for Leipsic. "First," says Seckendorf, "came Carlstadt, alone in a chariot; on the way one of his wheels broke, near St. Paul's church, and he was thrown out, which was considered a bad omen. Next came the chariot of Barnim, prince of Pomerania, who was at that time a student at Wittemberg with the title of honorary rector. Beside him were Luther and Melancthon, and around and following the chariot was a large body of armed students."*

Eck had already arrived. He felt at home in Leipsic. Duke George and the vast majority of the patricians of the city as well as the university were his acknowledged partisans. He was feasted daily by his adherents, and every attention was bestowed upon him. Certainly no disputant could have entered the argumentative field under happier auspices.

The reception awarded the Wittembergers by the hostile city was cold and sullen. It was with difficulty that they could obtain lodgings, and the streets were constantly the scene of fierce encounter between the rival parties.†

Luther had scarcely arranged himself in his apartments ere he was waited upon by Eck. The champion of scholasticism demanded Luther's reason for refusing to dispute with him. He was informed of the duke's refusal to grant the requisite permission. This Eck undertook to obtain. Carl-

* Seckendorf, p. 182.

† Cochlæus.

stadt he despised ; he had come to Leipsic to overthrow Luther, a task which his vanity led him to imagine he could perform. After some reluctance, the duke was persuaded to remove his interdict ; Eck having informed him that he could easily and certainly master Luther, and that if he fell his heresy would topple over with him. But it was decided that the controversy already arranged between himself and Carlstadt should go on, and precede the grand tilt with Luther.

A hall had been prepared for the occasion in the palace of the Pleissenburg ; two pulpits had been erected, one opposite the other, and from these the combatants were to fire their logical broadsides at each other.

There was some difficulty in the appointment of judges. Eck wished them to be nominated from among the ranks of the Roman partisans. Luther naturally objected ; he favored an appeal to public opinion—democratic in this as in many other respects. “He required,” says Pallavicini, “all men for his judges ; that is, such a tribunal that no urn could have been vast enough to contain the votes.”*

“Finally,” says Eck, “certain doctors of Erfurth and Paris were selected to act as judges.” Luther, who was bitterly opposed to this appointment, and who only consented to it when accused of wishing by his objections to manœuvre himself out of the dispute, reserved the right of appeal, and it was

* Pallavicini, I., 55.



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After the solemn chant of the ancient hymn of invocation to the Holy Spirit, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, during which the churchmen of the middle ages, and the innovators who sought the restoration of the primitive forms, humbly bent their heads in common to the earth in these last moments of outward, of dead unity,* Eck and Carlstadt ascended their respective pulpits.

Carlstadt started with the proposition, that *every good work is altogether from God*; to which Eck objected, that *every good work is indeed from God, but not wholly*.

In the conduct of the dispute, Eck, it is generally allowed, manifested great readiness of language, and much ingenuity in discovering those nice distinctions in which the logic of the schools so much delighted.

Carlstadt, on the other hand, failed in that power of expression, that fertility of resource, that quickness of retort, that magnetism of manner, and that easy reference to his source of knowledge, so essential in eloquence, and which rendered Luther's oratory so irresistible.

The consequence was, that Eck had greatly the advantage in his vehement appeals to that portion of his audience who preferred ingenuity of speech to soundness of learning and to truth.

But Carlstadt enjoyed the high satisfaction of convincing the more candid of his listeners that he was defending a proposition whose truth must be-

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., p. 41.

come more perceptible, the more genuine learning, and sound, unsophisticated reasoning were employed in its illustration.*

Melancthon, who sat beside Carlstadt, was of vast assistance to the ponderous and unwieldy professor—by his quickness detecting the flaws in Eck's argument, and by his readiness and profound learning extricating his friend from many perilous rhetorical ambuscades. On one occasion Eck, having slightly confused his opponent, detected Melancthon in the act of passing to Carlstadt a slip of paper on which he had written an answer. "Philip, hold your tongue," thundered the angry rhetorician; "mind your studies, and do not interfere with us." The imperturbable Melancthon was not to be frightened, and he continued to supply Carlstadt with ideas as serenely as before.†

The dispute between Eck and Carlstadt continued through six days,‡ and was carried on amid much clamor and confusion. Melancthon, in his calm, sweet *résumé* of the controversy, wrote, "We cannot help feeling surprise when we think of the violence with which these august subjects were treated. How could any one expect to derive any profit from it? The Spirit of God loves retirement and silence; it is then that it penetrates deep into our hearts. The bride of Christ does not dwell in

* Stebbing's Hist. Ref., Vol. I., p. 55.

† Seckendorf, Corpus Ref., I., 149.

‡ From June 27th to July 4th, 1519.

the streets and market-places, but leads her spouse into the house of her mother.”*

In his account of this preliminary debate, Luther protests in the most solemn manner that, notwithstanding Eck's prodigious animation of manner, and energetic exertions of voice and action, as long as an appeal to books and written documents was admitted, his friend Carlstadt defended himself with rich variety of apt and excellent quotations. “But,” continues he, “Eck perceiving this, and aware of his superior eloquence and readiness, soon made a proposal that all books be laid aside, and that the dispute go on without them; and then I freely own that Eck, who had the better memory and the happiest flow of words, supported his side in a more plausible manner than his opponent.”†

Eck, flushed with this *quasi* success, and anxious to achieve fresh glory, next summoned Luther himself into the arena.

The Wittemberg doctor had preserved a silence thus far which had only been broken by the delivery of one sermon before the student duke of Pomerania, on the festival of St. Peter and St. Paul. But he had familiarized himself with Eck's rhetorical tactics, and he determined to meet the pompous scholastic with his own weapons.

On the 4th of July the new antagonists began their debate. Among the articles of controversy were the doctrines of *purgatory* and *indulgences*, the *nature of repentance* and the *remission of sins*, and

* Melancthon, Opp., p. 134.

† Seckendorf, p. 73.



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missaries who conducted the sale of them would have died of hunger.”

Luther's triumph on this point was decisive, and his acuteness as a theological disputant, ready to avail himself of the slightest indiscretion of his antagonist, appears very manifest from this instance.*

When he came to touch on the nature of REPENTANCE and the REMISSION OF SINS, his marvellous learning, his perfect acquaintance with the Bible doctrines, his familiarity with the sophisms of the schools, and his luminous eloquence bore down all opposition. The admiring plaudits of his auditors crowned him as the undisputed victor in this branch of the discussion.† This Hercules of the Reformation broke poor Eek's chain of sophisms as easily as Samson snapped the green withes of the Philistines.

But the emphasis of the debate was upon the pontifical supremacy. Eck contended that the biblical expressions, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church,” “and I will give unto thee the keys,” evinced the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors; that this was the judgment of the fathers, and that the contrary opinion was the heresy of Wickliffe and of Huss.

Luther, in his reply, was still too good a Romanist to deny this doctrine *in toto*; he conceded the supremacy of the pope on human and historical grounds, but denied the DIVINE RIGHT of the Roman pontiff

* Milner, Ch. Hist., Vol. II.; p. 257.

† Melancthon, Opp. ; Maimbourg.

in that sense which makes him the successor of St. Peter and the vicar of Christ. It was here that his argument was weak and faltering. No middle ground on this point was tenable, and only what Maimbourg terms “the knowledge and subtlety of his fine genius” enabled him to keep his ground against Eek’s impetuous onset. Still, his argument on that point, so far as it went, was very strong. “I can produce,” he said, “more authorities from the fathers in support of my interpretation of those scriptural passages, than my opponent can possibly cite; but that aside: if I could not, I have no hesitation in affirming that I can refute this error on the authority of St. Paul, yes, and of St. Peter himself; these apostles both say that Jesus Christ is the only foundation and corner-stone of his church. As for the expression, ‘Thou art Peter,’ if construed strictly, it must be confined to the person of Peter alone; it was not delegated, and it ceased, if it ever existed, when that apostle died.”*

Eck is said to have been much struck by the luminous reasonings of Luther, and especially with the neat and admirably digested order in which his materials were arranged. He openly acknowledged the splendid qualifications and attainments of his reverend antagonist, and even besought his audience to pardon his manifest inferiority. He said that he was so much engrossed in other matters—he who spent his life in the discussion of scholastic subtleties—that if he should not succeed in producing

* Revelat. Lutheri.

such a mass of accurate testimonies as the learned doctor of Wittemberg had laid before them, he must be pardoned, for he came to Leipsic not to write books, but to dispute.*

The fact is, that Eck was greatly overmatched. In acquaintance with the Scriptures, in familiarity with ecclesiastical history, in eloquence, in wit, in fertility of resource, and even in mastery of the subtleties of the schools, Eck's strongest point, Luther was to his opponent as "Hyperion to a satyr."

Luther's only weakness was, that he still remained wedded to many popish errors. Like Milton's lion, his head was free, but he still pawed to clear his hinder parts. He halted between the errors of his monastic cell and the radical tenets of the perfected Reformation. He said himself, years afterwards,

"My case is a notable example of the difficulty with which a man emerges from erroneous notions of long standing. How true is the proverb, Custom is a second nature. How true is that saying of Augustine, Habit, if not resisted, becomes necessity. I who, both publicly and privately, had taught divinity with the greatest diligence for seven years, insomuch that I retained in my memory almost every word of my lectures, was in fact at that time only just initiated into the knowledge of faith in Christ; I had only just learned that man must be justified and saved, not by works, but by faith in

* Milner, Vol. II., p. 248.



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Eck was loud in his protestations of triumph, but his real opinion may be unerringly detected by his after course. From this time his bitterness and enmity towards Luther increased tenfold. It will be seen, as this narrative progresses, with what incessant personal malice and resentment he labored for the destruction of that foeman whose defeat at Leipsic he so brazenly proclaimed. It will, we apprehend, be found difficult to reconcile this splenetic and furious conduct of the papal champion with the supposition of his consciousness of superiority and victory. Rather, should we not accept Mosheim's query? "Was not his course the result of a revengeful sense of the humiliation and defeat which he suffered in that memorable contest?"*

Musellanus, who had designed to attend this discussion only to scoff, became intensely interested in the proceedings as they progressed, and at the close he wrote this impartial judgment: "Eck is conqueror in the eyes of those who do not understand the matter, and who have grown grey under the old schoolmen; but Luther and Carlstadt are victorious in the opinion of all those who possess any learning, understanding, and modesty."†

Musellanus has also sketched for us the personal appearance of the three debaters of the Leipsic tournament:

"Martin Luther is of middle stature, and so thin, in consequence of his studies, that his bones

* Mosheim, Vol. II., Chap. II., Sect. 10.

† Seckendorf, p. 207.

may almost be counted. He is in the prime of life, and has a clear, sonorous, and finely modulated voice. As an oratorical debater he cannot be surpassed. His knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures is unparalleled; he has the word of God at his fingers' ends. Besides this, he possesses a great store of arguments and ideas. In conversation he is pleasing and affable, there is nothing harsh or severe about him; he can accommodate himself to every one; his manner in speaking is very agreeable and unembarrassed. He displays great firmness, and has always a cheerful air, whatever may be his adversaries' threats; so that it is difficult to believe that he could undertake such great things without the divine protection. He is blamed, however, for being more caustic when reproving others than becomes a theologian, particularly when putting forward novelties in religion.

“Carlstadt is of shorter stature; his complexion is dark and sunburnt, his voice is unpleasant, his memory less quick and trustworthy than Luther's, and he is more inclined to be angry. He possesses however, though in a smaller degree, the qualities that distinguish his friend.

“Eck is tall, broad-shouldered, and has a strong and thorough German voice. He has good lungs, so that he would be heard well in a theatre, and would even make an excellent town-crier. His accent is rather vulgar than elegant. He has not that gracefulness so much extolled by Fabius and Cicero. His mouth, his eyes, and his whole coun-

tenance give you the idea of a soldier or a butcher, rather than of a divine. He has an excellent memory, and if he had only as much understanding, he would be really a perfect man. But he is slow of comprehension, and is wanting in judgment, without which all other qualities are useless. Hence, in disputing, he heaps together without selection or discernment a mass of passages from the Bible, quotations from the fathers, and proofs of all kinds. He has besides an impudence almost beyond conception. If he is embarrassed, he breaks off from the subject he is treating of, and plunges into another; he sometimes even takes up his adversary's opinion, clothing it in other words, and with extraordinary skill attributes to his opponents the absurdity he has been himself defending."*

Such, according to the elegant, witty, and satirical Greek professor of the Leipsic university, were the three heroes of this celebrated ecclesiastical dispute.

At the conclusion of the controversy, Luther first quitted Leipsic; Carlstadt followed him, while Eck remained to blow his trumpet. When these self-congratulations reached Luther's ears, he wrote Spalatin, "Eck is trumpeting everywhere; but in the camp of Rome each man disputes his laurels, and claims the crown for himself. 'If *we* had not come to Eek's support,' so say the doctors of Leipsic, 'the illustrious doctor would have been overthrown.' 'The Leipsic divines are very good sort of

* Masellanus, quoted in Seckendorf, p. 206.



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enlightened and fired by Luther's eloquence. This debate first turned his attention to theology, and determined him to devote his elegant attainments and his fine talents to ecclesiastical pursuits. Luther's sound reasonings, supported by constant appeals to the Scripture, instantly convinced him of the majesty of the new tenets, and won him to their life-long and enthusiastic advocacy. The gain to Luther in the complete acquisition of Melancthon to his cause, richly repaid him for all the vexation and turmoil of the debate.

In one of his letters, Melancthon thus refers to the actors in the conference :

“Eck was much admired for his many and striking ingenuities. You know Carlstadt; he is certainly a man of worth, and of extraordinary erudition. As to Luther, whom I have long known most intimately, his lively genius, his learning and eloquence, are the objects of my admiration. And it is impossible not to be in love with his truly sincere and Christian spirit.”*

We are confident that this recital will not seem tedious, for the ecclesiastical contest at Leipsic was the entering wedge which split the boasted unity of the Roman see in twain; it was a rent in the seamless garment of the papacy, which God meant should never again be reunited.

* Melancthon, Opp., Letter to Ecolampadius.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE Leipsic disputation, counting the numberless polemical writings to which it gave birth—letters from Eck and his friends, replies by Luther and his associates—occupied the remaining portion of the year 1519.

Eck had been especially angered by Melancthon's presumption in assuming to meddle with topics of divinity. The brave assistance which the "boyish grammarian," as the inflated schoolman contemptuously styled the St. John of the Reformation, had lent Carlstadt in his straits, prevailed upon him to pen an acrimonious attack upon "this feeble mutterer of trite Greek maxims."

Melancthon's reply, though it occupied but five folio pages, was temperate, elegant, acute, and crushing. It displayed the consummate scholar, and the charitable Christian; and although it was the first time that Reuchlin's pupil had fleshed his sword in this contest, it gave convincing proof of his tremendous power as a controversialist, "able to discern truth in its most intricate connections and combinations," and able to uncloak error even when it masqueraded in the subtlest garb of sanctity.

In the meantime Eck had written to the elector, and endeavored to persuade that sagacious prince to burn Luther's writings, as infamous Bohemian heresies, and to thrust him forth from his domains

as a contumacious scholastic. Frederick contented himself with placing this letter in the hands of Luther and Carlstadt, and with forwarding to the furious Ingolstadt doctor a cold, formal expression of his desire, as a sovereign, to establish peace and religion by suppressing fierceness, malignity, and dogmatism.*

Luther responded to these assaults by the publication of a work in which he unfolded the reasons, scriptural and other, upon which his Leipsic theses were based, and to which he appended a terse and keen account of the recent dispute, and appealed from the senseless ravings of his adversaries to the candor and common-sense of mankind.†

About this time the war broke out between Luther and Emser, who had now grown from a confidential chancellor to a professor at Leipsic. The Wittemberg doctor's former host of Dresden wrote Dr. Zack, a zealous Romanist of Prague, a letter, in which his design appeared to be to deprive the Hussites of their notion that the new heresiarch belonged to their party. Luther saw that the cunning Leipsicer, by appearing to clear him from the suspicion of adhering to the unpopular tenets of John Huss, meant to ally him with the yet more unpopular dogmas of Bohemia; and he accordingly tore aside the veil under which Emser concealed his hostility. With this view he wrote a letter to the new-fledged professor, which he con-

* Stebbing, Hist. Ref.; Seckendorf, Melch. Ad., etc.

† Ibid. Epist. Lutheri, liber I., p. 122



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through his legate that Charles was certain to be elected, than, by one of those adroit and politic turns which have always distinguished the tortuous statesmanship of the Vatican, he sped with volunteer haste to congratulate this new-crowned Cæsar who had refused to succumb to his arts.

Charles was in Spain at the time of the electoral convention. Quitting Madrid in May, 1520, he was crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle on the 22d of the following October.*

The reformers were greatly depressed by the selection of the young Spanish king. They thought rightly, as the sequel proved, that it boded no good to the new theology. They could not understand why the friendly elector had so resolutely put aside the thrice-proffered crown of the empire. But what was hid from human vision, was clear to God. "He selected," if we may borrow the elegant language of D'Aubigné, "a prince in the freshness and vigor of youth, and to whom every thing seemed to announce a long reign—a prince whose sceptre extended over a considerable part of the old world, and the new world which Christopher Columbus had recently added to Christendom, so that, according to a celebrated saying, the sun never went down upon his vast dominions; and to this imperial colossus he opposed that lowly Reformation begun in the secluded cell of a convent at Erfurth by the anguish and the sighs of a poor monk.

* Pallavicini, I., 79. See the various historians of the empire under Charles V.

“The history of this monarch was destined, it should seem, to teach the world a new lesson. It was to show the nothingness of human strength when opposed to the veriest weakness of God. If a prince friendly to Luther had been called to the imperial throne, the success of the Reformation might have been ascribed to that protection. If even an emperor opposed to the new doctrines, but yet a weak ruler, had worn the diadem, the triumph might have been attributed to the imperial imbecility. But it was the haughty conqueror at Pavia who was destined to veil his pride and lower his crest before the omnipotence of the sacred oracles ; and Christendom beheld with awe the man who found it an easy task to drag Francis I. a prisoner to Madrid, obliged to lower his sword before the son of a poor miner.”*

Luther early foresaw that his cause must appear before Charles for final adjudication ; he determined therefore to reach the ear, and, if possible, to enlist the heart of this monarch in the Reformation before the clamors of his enemies imbittered him with prejudice. His letter to Charles was modest and submissive, but earnest and eloquent.

“Nothing,” he said, “is nearer my heart than that I may be permitted to discharge my duty quietly in my own little sphere. The violent and deceitful practices of others have compelled me to appear in public ; but the very best men living, as well as my own conscience, would witness that my

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 80, 81.

sole object is the propagation of evangelical truth, in opposition to the superstitions of human tradition. For this cause during almost three years I have been persecuted in every way that my enemies could invent. In vain have I proposed terms of peace, in vain have I offered to be silent, in vain have I begged for information and correction of my errors. After having tried all methods without success, I have judged it advisable to follow the example of St. Athanasius in applying to your imperial majesty, if so be it may please God in that way to protect his own cause. •

“I humbly therefore beseech your most serene majesty that, as you bear the sword for the praise of the good and the punishment of the bad, you would deign to take under the shadow of your wings the cause of truth; and as to myself, I crave your support not one moment longer than I shall appear to have reason on my side. Abandon me the moment I am found impious or heretical. All I beg is, that my doctrines, whether true or false, may not be condemned unheard and without examination. If your most sacred majesty, by your interposition, should prevent the exercise of tyrannical power, such a conduct would be worthy of your royal and imperial throne, would adorn your government, and consecrate to posterity the age in which you live.”*

Charles received and laid aside this singular letter, but he did not deign to reply to it.

But while Luther was thus endeavoring to secure

* Epistol. Lutheri ad Carolum. V.



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nest of every heresy. The moderation I have hitherto shown has been unavailing; I now renounce it.”*

These bold words startled the empire, and made Wittenberg heave in an earthquake of excitement. Many of the daring monk's best friends trembled for him, and esteemed him lost both in this world and the next. “We are,” wrote Melancthon, “in a state of extraordinary expectation. I would rather die than be separated from Luther; but if God does not help us, we shall all perish.”† A little later he wrote again: “Our dear Luther is still alive, but the Roman sycophants are making every exertion to put him to death. Let us pray that this sole avenger of sacred theology may long survive.”‡

But if the parasites of Rome howled like hungry jackals for the blood of the reformer, God sent him some consolation in this threatening hour. A number of new friends wrote him sympathizing and hopeful letters, in which they unhesitatingly espoused his cause.

The sword intended to slay him was forging in the Vatican, but heroes were springing up in Germany to shield him with their bodies. At the moment when the bishops were chafing with rage, when princes kept silence, when the people were in expectation, and when the first murmurs of the thunder were beginning to be heard from the seven hills,

* L. Epp. I., 462. July 10, 1520.

† Corpus Refor. I., 160, 163.

‡ Ibid.

God aroused the German nobles to make a rampart for his servant.

Sylvester of Schaumburg, one of the most powerful knights of Franconia, sent his son to Wittemberg at this time with a letter for the reformer. "Your life is in danger," wrote he. "If the support of the elector, the princes, or the magistrates fail you, I entreat you to beware of going to Bohemia, where in former times learned men have had much to undergo; rather come to me. God willing, I shall soon have collected more than a hundred gentlemen, and with their help I shall be able to protect you from every danger."

"Francis of Sickingen, the hero of his age, whom Melancthon pronounced a 'peerless ornament of German knighthood,' and to whose intrepid courage the romancists and minne-singers have borne abundant witness, loved Luther because he found him worthy of being loved, and also because he was hated by the monks. 'My services, my goods, my body, all that I possess,' wrote he to Luther, 'are at your disposal. You desire to maintain the Christian truth; I am ready to aid you in that work.' Harmurth of Cronberg, another influential noble, held a similar purpose.

"Ulric Van Hütten also, the poet, orator, and valiant knight of the sixteenth century, never ceased speaking in Luther's favor. Hütten wrote the reformer, 'Let us have done with words; it is with swords and bows, with javelins and bombs, that we must crush the fury of the devil.' Luther, on re-

ceiving this letter, exclaimed, 'I will not have recourse to arms and bloodshed in defence of the gospel. By the word the earth has been subdued, by the word the church has been saved, and by the word also it shall be reëstablished.' 'I do not despise his offer,' he said again, when Schaumberg's letter reached him, 'but I will rely upon nothing but Jesus Christ.'

"It was not thus that the Roman pontiffs spoke when they waded in the blood of the Albigenses and the Waldenses. Hütten recognized the difference between Luther's method and his own. He accordingly wrote him, with noble-mindedness, 'As for me, I am busied with the affairs of men; but you soar far higher, and are occupied with those of God.' He then set out to win, if possible, Charles and Ferdinand to the cause of truth."*

At this same time two distinguished priests, afterwards powerful auxiliaries, rallied to Luther's side. The first of these, Doctor Botzhemus Abstemius, canon of Constance, wrote him, "Now that you have become the friend of the universe, or at least of the better part of it, that is, of good and true Christians, you must also become mine, whether you will or not. I am so delighted with your writings, that nothing gives me greater pleasure than to be living at a time when not only profane, but also sacred literature is resuming its pristine splendor."†

The other was Gaspard Hedio, a preacher at

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 89-90.

† Botzheim and his Friends, by Wachner, p. 107.



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In this pamphlet, one of the most eloquent and magnificent of his writings, Luther portrayed the prevailing abuses with a pen of fire; his glittering rhetoric absolutely stung the Roman see to death. The vigor, life, perspicuity, and generous boldness that breathed through it, made the appeal singularly popular; four thousand copies were sold within a week;* an unprecedented sale for that age, and ere long it had reached the most distant castles of those lords to whom it was addressed.

In his exordium to this remarkable pamphlet, Luther says:

“It is not through presumption that I, a man of the people, venture to speak to your lordships. The misery and oppression which at this hour weigh down all the states of Christendom, and particularly Germany, extort from me a cry of distress. I must call for help; I must see if God will not give his Spirit to some man in our country, and thus stretch forth his hand to save our wretched nation.

“But the first requisite is, not to put confidence in our own strength, or in our lofty wisdom. If we begin a good work with confidence in ourselves, God overthrows it. Frederick I., Frederick II., and many other emperors besides, before whom the world has trembled, have been trodden under foot by the popes, because they trusted more in their own strength than in God.”

Luther then proceeded to a description of the Roman citadel:

* Corpus Refor.

“The Romans have raised around themselves three walls to protect them against every kind of reformation. Have they been attacked by the temporal power? they have asserted that it had no authority over them, and that the spiritual power was superior to it. Have they been rebuked by Holy Scripture? they have replied, that no one is able to interpret it except the pope. Have they been threatened with a council? the answer was ready: no one but the sovereign pontiff has authority to convoke one.

“They have thus deprived us of the three rods destined to correct them, and have given themselves up to every wickedness. But now, may God be our helper, and give us one of those trumpets that overthrew the walls of Jericho. With our breath let us throw down these barriers of paper which the Romans have built around them, and upraise the rods which punish the wicked by exposing the wiles of the devil.”

Luther then assails the sacerdotal caste, and asserts the *democracy* of Christianity :

“It has been said that the pope, the bishops, the priests, and all those who people the convents, form the ecclesiastical or spiritual state; and that the princes, the nobility, the citizens, and the peasants form the secular or lay estate. This is a fine story. Let no one, however, be grieved. All *Christians* belong to the spiritual state, and there is no other difference between them than that which arises from the functions which they discharge. We have

all one baptism, one faith, and it is this which constitutes the spiritual man. The unction, the tonsure, the cowl, ordination, consecration, by a bishop or the pope, may make a hypocrite—they cannot of themselves make a Christian. We are all consecrated priests by baptism, as St. Peter says, *Ye are priests and kings*; although it does not belong to all to exercise such offices, for no one can take what is common to all without the consent of the community. But if we possess not the divine consecration, the pope's anointing can never make a priest.

“If ten brothers, sons of a king, having equal claims to the inheritance, select one of themselves to administer it for the whole, they would all be kings, yet only one of them would be the administrator of the common power. So it is with the church. If a few pious laymen were banished to a desert place, and if, not having among them a priest consecrated by a bishop, they should agree to choose one of their number, married or not, this man would be as truly a priest as if all the bishops in the world had consecrated him. Thus Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian were elected.

“Hence it follows that laymen and priests, princes and bishops, or, as they say, the clergy and the laity, have nothing to distinguish from each other but their functions.”

Luther in like manner overthrew the two other Roman assumptions, that the pope alone was competent to interpret the Scriptures, and that no council could be convoked but through the pontiff.



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neither penny nor farthing left. Antichrist must possess the treasures of the earth. Thirty or forty cardinals will be created in one day. Bamberg will be given to one, the bishopric of Wirtzberg to another; rich cures will be attached to them, until the cities and churches are desolate. Then the pope will say, 'I am Christ's vicar, and the shepherd of his flock. Let the Germans be submissive.'

"What, shall we Germans endure such robberies and extortions from the pope? If the kingdom of France has been able to defend itself, why should we permit ourselves to be thus ridiculed and laughed at? Oh, if they contented themselves with despoiling us of our goods. But they lay waste the churches, fleece the sheep of Christ, abolish religious worship, and annihilate the word of God.

"Hear this, Oh denizens of the empire. Let us check this desolation and wickedness. If we desire to march against the Turks, let us first march against these, the worst of Turks. If we hang thieves, and decapitate highway robbers, let us not permit Romish avarice to escape, which is the greatest of thieves and robbers, and that too in the name of St. Peter and of Jesus Christ. Who can suffer this? Who can be silent? All that the pope possesses, has he not gained it by plunder? for he has neither bought it nor inherited it from St. Peter, nor gained it by the sweat of his brow. Whence then has he all this?

"And now I come to that sluggish troop the

monks, who promise much, but do little. Do not be angry, my dear sirs, my intentions are good; what I say is a truth, at once sweet and bitter—this: no more cloisters, and no more monasteries for mendicant friars. We have indeed too many already, and would to God they were all pulled down. Strolling through a country like beggars never has done, and never can do good.”

Luther next advocated a startling innovation—nothing less than the marriage of the clergy; this, he thought, would prove a panacea for the prevailing licentiousness of the priesthood. Since he was the first of the mediæval reformers who assailed the Roman doctrine of clerical celibacy, it is of interest and importance to quote his first crude words upon emerging from the barbarism of that error

“To what a sad state have the clergy fallen, and how many priests do we find burdened with women and children and remorse, and yet no one comes to their aid. It is all very well for the pope and the bishops to let things go on as before, and for that to continue lost which is now lost; but I am determined to save my conscience and to open my mouth freely; after that, let the pope, the bishops, and any one else who pleases, take offence at it. I assert that according to the appointment of Christ and his apostles, each city should have a pastor or bishop, and that this pastor may have a wife, as St. Paul writes to Timothy: *A bishop must be the husband of one wife*,* and as is still practised in the

* 1 Tim. 3 : 2.

Greek church. But the devil has persuaded the pope, as that same apostle says again to Timothy,* to forbid the clergy to marry. And hence have proceeded miseries so numerous that we cannot mention all. What is to be done? How can we save so many pastors in whom we have no fault to find, save that they live with a woman to whom they would with all their heart be legitimately married? Ah, let them quiet their consciences. Let them take this woman as their lawful wife, and let them live virtuously with her, not troubling themselves whether the pontiff be pleased or not. The salvation of your souls, Oh pastors, is of greater consequence to you than tyrannical, unnatural, and arbitrary laws, that do not emanate from the Lord.”

Luther then condemned the multitudinous festivals of the church, attacked the frequent fasts, and the religious fraternities, proposed a sweeping and radical reformation of the entire ecclesiastical system, and added, “We must expel from every German state these Roman satellites, with their pretended benefits, which they sell us at their weight in gold, and which are downright impositions. They take our money, and for what? To legalize their ill-gotten gains, to absolve man from all just oaths, to teach us to be wanting in fidelity, to instruct us how to sin with ease, and to lead us direct to hell.

“No; let the pope restore to Germany what belongs to it. Let him resign to us our empire. Let

* 1 Tim. 4 : 1-3.



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timid, did not disapprove of the reformer ; it waited patiently. But the nobility and the people did not wait. The nation was reanimated. Luther's voice had shaken it ; it was won over, and rallied round the standard that he had uplifted. Nothing could be more advantageous to the reformer than this publication. In the palaces and castles, in the homes of the citizens, and in the cottages of the peasants, all was now prepared. Luther was defended by all classes, as with a breastplate, against the sentence of excommunication about to fall upon the head of this prophet of the people. All Germany was on fire. The papal bull, heretofore so dreadful to the populace, was now ardently desired. Let it arrive, cried they ; not by such means will this conflagration be extinguished."

Eck had proceeded to Rome to secure the condemnation of Luther, as we have seen. Even before the publication of the "Appeal," vague rumors announced his success. This report still further aroused the militant spirit of the enthusiastic monk. Determined to be beforehand with the pope, and to judge his judge, his tireless pen now produced his terrible book on the Captivity of Babylon, in which he openly repudiated the authority of the pontiff, maintained that the church was captive, and that Jesus Christ, constantly profaned in the idolatry of the mass, and set aside in the impious formulas of the ritual, was held a prisoner in the iron clutches of the pope.

He explains in the preface with daring freedom

the manner in which he found himself daily driven more and more to extremities by the conduct of his adversaries : “ Whether I will or no, I become each day more expert and learned ; driven about as I am, and kept in constant and active exercise by so many adversaries at once.

“ I wrote on indulgences two years ago, but in a way that makes me repent I sent forth what I had written to the public. At that time I was still prodigiously attached to the papal power, so that I dared not totally reject indulgences. I saw them, moreover, sanctioned by great numbers of intelligent persons—in fact I was left to roll the great stone myself. But since then, thanks to Sylvester, and the other brothers who so warmly defended them, I have found that they were nothing more than mere impostures, invented by the flatterers of Rome to ruin men’s faith and their pockets. Would to God that I could induce all booksellers, and all readers who possess my writings on the indulgences, to put them into the fire, and to replace them by this single proposition : *Indulgences are delusive trash, invented by the parasites of Rome !*

“ After that, Eck, Emser, and their gang came to tackle me on the question of the pope’s supremacy. I am bound to admit, in gratitude to these learned personages, that the trouble which they took in this matter was not without its effect, and that a considerable effect on my advancement towards ecclesiastical emancipation.

“ Previously I had merely denied that popery

was founded on *divine* right, admitting that it had human sanction on its side. But, after having heard the ultra-subtle subtleties on which these poor people based the rights of their idols, I have arrived at a sounder conclusion, and am convinced that the reign of the pope is that of Babylon, and of *Nimrod the mighty hunter*. And so I request all booksellers and readers, that nothing may be wanting to the success of my good friends, to burn also whatever I have written thus far concerning the papal supremacy, and to remember only this simple proposition : *The pope is the mighty hunter, the hidden devil of the Roman see !*”*

At the same time, in order that it might be seen that he was assailing popery *per se*, rather than the pontiff personally, Luther wrote a letter, both in German and Latin, to Leo X., in which he repudiated all personal ill-will to himself.†

Like its companion pamphlet, the “Appeal to the German Nobility,” the “Captivity of Babylon” created a profound sensation. The excitement was intense. The nobles and the people, the castles and the free towns, rivalled each other in zeal and enthusiasm for Luther. At Nuremberg, at Strasburg, even at Mayence, there was a constant struggle for his last pamphlets. The celebrated painter Lucas Kranach made designs for his works,‡ and the sheet yet wet was brought from the press under some one’s cloak, and passed eagerly from shop to

* Michelét, pp. 61, 62.

† Ibid.

‡ Seckendorf, p. 148.



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CHAPTER XXIX.

THE last writings of the Wittemberg doctor had stung Rome to the quick. The fierce clamors of the ruffled churchmen obliged the easy Florentine to abstain for a day from the indolent pleasures—the chase, the theatre, music, chats with Angelo concerning frescoes, and dilettante criticisms on Tuscan love poems—to which he gave his life.

The pontiff, angry at the incessant interruption which this irrepressible monk caused in the lazy peace of his ecclesiastical career, determined to end this heresy by one of those *coups de main* which had so often driven liberty and free lips from the sanctuary in the good old time.

On the 15th of June, 1520, Leo penned his bull of excommunication.

Luther had long been prepared for the anathema of the pope. He had even anticipated by his last pamphlet the pontifical maledictions. It may be regarded as an important circumstance in his life, that God allowed him sufficient intervals between the various severe trials of his strength and knowledge to prepare for their approach. Had the thunders of the Vatican burst suddenly upon his ears at the outset of this revolution, his habits of early reverence might have laid him open to all the terrors which they were intended to inspire, but now experience had taught him to estimate their force :

he was not ignorant that they might injure him, and even lead to consequences from which the generality of men would shrink with extreme dread. But he knew what he had to meet; no shadowy forms flitted before his vivid imagination; the pope had no longer the likeness of a heavenly crown upon his head; the dungeon of which he held the keys was the dungeon of an ordinary gaoler; and the condemnation he pronounced depended for its vitality solely upon his power to open and shut the doors of the common prison. And for this Luther cared little.* He immediately informed Spalatin of the arrival of the bull at Wittemberg, and spared no expression of utter contempt for this now useless instrument of papal tyranny. "I despise it," he said, "as a lying and impious document; *the hands are the hands of Leo, but the voice is the voice of Eck*. You see Christ himself condemned therein. I shall treat it as an impudent forgery. I am freer than ever, being confirmed in the conviction—and I needed no confirmation—that the pope is antichrist, and that his throne was set up for Satan."†

The reception of the bull in Germany was sullen and ominous. Even the heads of the various arch-episcopal sees were no more than coldly acquiescent. The German prelates had been provoked at the pontifical appointment of the braggart Eck to bear the anathema into their country, and promulgate it. It had heretofore been the custom

* Stebbing's Hist. Ref., Vol. I., pp. 69, 70.

† L. Epp. I., 196.

to forward the bulls directly to the bishops ; therefore the selection of this upstart schoolman was unprecedented, and the dignitaries of the church stooped only to the most formal and ceremonious action.

But Eck, blooming with his mushroom honors, and swelling with pride, hastened exultingly on, flourishing in his hand that papal curse before which he expected to see his hated rival succumb. The cowardly nuncio was not destined to walk through the empire on roses. He had posted his bull at Meissen, at Merseburg, at Brandenburg, and elsewhere. But in the first of these cities it is said to have been posted so high that no one could read it ;* and in Leipsic so great a revolution had occurred in the public sentiment since the disputation, that the students of the university went through the streets chanting satirical verses about Eck, and they placarded the city in ten different places with sharp attacks upon the new-fledged nuncio and his stolen thunder.† Eck was so terrified at these proceedings that, like his predecessor Tetzels, he fled for safety into the cloister of St. Paul ; nor was his fear lessened by the arrival at Leipsic of two hundred students from Wittemberg, who, with the true *esprit de corps* of university men, at once fraternized with their Leipsic brethren, and strolled arm in arm through the town boldly inveighing against the Ingolstadt doctor.‡

* Seckendorf ; Myconius.

† Meurer ; Cor. Ref.

‡ D'Aubigné.



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ing this terrific broadside full against the pontifical throne.* On the 17th of November he appealed solemnly, and in the presence of a notary and five witnesses, from Leo's judgment to a future council; and on the 10th of December, 1520, he marched with great pomp, at the head of a multitude of learned doctors, students, and burghers, to the eastern gate of Wittemberg, and there making a better application of the great Roman principle, built the first *auto da fé* of the Reformation; and as the flames leaped high to kiss the heavens, Luther, dressed in the full insignia of his order, approached the pile, and flinging the canon law, the decretals, the papal extravagants, some writings of Eck and Emser, and the recent bull into the jubilant flames, exclaimed with a sonorous voice, "OH ROME, SINCE THOU HAST VEXED THE HOLY ONE OF THE LORD, MAY EVERLASTING FIRE VEX AND CONSUME THEE!"

After this solemn and unprecedented ceremony, Luther returned calmly to the city, the crowd of professors, doctors, students, and citizens testifying their warm approval by tremendous plaudits.†

The pope had excommunicated Luther; thus it was then that Luther excommunicated the pontiff. He had already written to Leo this awful sentence: "Is there under the spreading firmament of heaven any thing more fetid, corrupt, and detestable than the Romish court? It infinitely exceeds the Ottoman Porte in its heathenish vices. Once it was the

* Meurer.

† Corpus Ref., D'Aubigné, Seckendorf, and others.

gate of heaven, now it is the mouth of hell, a mouth which the wrath of God keeps open so wide, that on witnessing the unhappy people rushing into it, I cannot but utter a warning cry, as in a tempest, that some at least may be saved from the terrible gulf. This, Oh Leo, is why I inveigh with such unwearied energy against your death-dealing see.”*

The same day that he burned the bull, he said of the decretals, that “they resemble a body whose face is as meek as a young maiden’s, but whose limbs are full of violence, like those of a lion, and whose tail is filled with wiles like a serpent. Among all the laws of the popes, there is not one word which teaches us who Jesus Christ is.”† On this same occasion he again said, “My enemies have been able by burning my books to injure the cause of truth in the minds of some, and to destroy souls; for this reason I consume their books in return. A serious struggle has just commenced. Hitherto I have been playing with the pope; now I wage open war. I began this work in God’s name; it will be ended without me, and by his might. If they dare burn my writings, in which more of the gospel is to be found, I speak without boasting, than in all the works of the whole line of popes, I can with much greater reason burn theirs, in which no good can be discovered.”

“The pope,” said Luther again, “has three crowns: the first is against God, for he condemns

* Letter to Leo X. L. Epp. I., 501.

† L. Opp. (W.) XXII., 1493, 1496.

religion ; the second is against the emperor, for he condemns the secular authority ; the third is against society, for he condemns marriage. I have been accused of inveighing too severely against this triple-headed papal tyrant ; alas, would that I could speak against it with a voice of thunder, and that each of my words was a thunderbolt.”*

On the day following this unique protestant *auto da fé*, Luther found his lecture-room even more densely thronged than usual. Ascending the pulpit, he exclaimed with astonishing energy, “Be on your guard against the laws and statutes of the Roman pontiff. I have burned his decretals ; but that is mere child’s play, a typical ceremony. It is time, and more than time, that the pope were burnt ; that is, the see of Rome with its thronging corrupt doctrines and abominations.

“If you do not contend with your whole heart against this impious Roman government, you who now know the true church cannot hope to be saved. If you reject it, you must expect to incur every kind of vexation, nay, danger hydra-headed, and even to lose your lives. But it is far better to be exposed, for the sake of truth, to such physical perils, than to keep silence at the risk of damnation. So long as I live I will denounce to Christendom the sore and plague of Babylon, for fear that many now with us should fall back like the rest into this gaping pit of iniquitous Rome.”†

“We are assured by the candid contemporane-

* L. Opp. (W.) XXII., 1313. † L. Opp. (L.) XVII., 333.



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But though Luther was evidently supported by the secular estate, by the nobles and the great body of the people, a perfect storm of reproaches smote him from every quarter of the ecclesiastical heavens. He was constantly taunted with the weakness of his cause within the church. “But who knows,” wrote he with prophetic sublimity, “if God has not chosen and called me to perform this needed work, and if these babblers ought not to fear that by despising me, they despise God himself? They say I am alone; no, for Jehovah is with me. In their sense, Moses was alone at the departure from Egypt; Elijah was alone in the reign of king Ahab; Isaiah was alone in Jerusalem; Ezekiel was alone in Babylon. Hear this, O Rome: God never selected as a prophet either the high-priest, or any great personage; but rather, he chose low and despised men, once even the shepherd Amos. In every age the saints have been compelled to rebuke kings, princes, recreant priests, and wise men at the peril of their lives.

“Was it not the same under the New Testament? Ambrose was alone in his time; Jerome was alone in his; and Augustine dwelt alone with his brave heart. I do not say that I also am a prophet; but I do say that they ought to fear precisely because I am alone, while on the side of the oppressor are numbers, caste, wealth, and mocking letters. Yes, I am alone; but I stand serene, because side by side with me is the word of God; and

with all their boasted numbers, this, the greatest of powers, is not with them.”*

“I am termed ‘heretic,’ and ‘Hussite.’ I accept these epithets proudly. I have said that *some* of the propositions of John Huss were Christian. This I retract; not *some*, but *all* of his articles are wholly Christian. By condemning John Huss the pope condemned the gospel. I have done five times more than that sainted martyr, yet I much fear that I have not done enough. Huss only said that a wicked pope is not supreme by divine appointment; but if Peter himself were now sitting at Rome, I should deny that he was pope by divine appointment.”†

Thus closed this momentous phase of Luther’s life; thus were snapped hopelessly and for ever the chains which had hitherto held him bound to the pontifical throne; thus was the Reformation definitely unbound—set free, like a strong man, to run its course, conquering and to conquer.

All this was indeed, as Michelét has finely said, something new. Up to this age most of the sects, schisms, and heresies that had arisen from time to time, had formed themselves in secret—burrowed, like the early Christians, in the catacombs of universal Rome, only too happy if their existence remained unknown. But here was a simple monk placing himself on an equality with that awful sovereign who was supposed to hold the keys to the elysian gates of both worlds, and constituting him-

* L. Opp. (L.) XVII., 338.

† L. Opp. (L.) XVII., 339.

self the judge of that pontiff's heretofore unquestioned actions. The chain of old tradition was thus broken, its continuity was destroyed, the seamless robe was torn.

Nor can it be believed that Luther took this last decisive step without great pain; it was tearing from his heart the memory of a past which he had been taught to venerate. He struggled long to avoid separating himself from the Roman communion. Every step he took away from the apostolic see, was taken from absolute necessity. The venomous assaults of baffled and malicious priestcraft forced him to defend himself. Defence required constant thought, and the most searching examination of principles and authorities. Thought and examination inevitably meant emancipation from the childish and unreasonable thralldom of the Roman see.

Still separation was bitter; and though he retained the Scripture, it was, after all, the Scripture otherwise interpreted than it had been for a thousand years. His enemies have often said this; but none of them have expressed it more eloquently than he himself. Thus he wrote on the 29th of November, 1520, to the Augustines of Wittemberg: "I feel more and more every day how difficult it is to lay aside the scruples which one has imbibed in childhood. Oh how much pain it has caused me, though I had the Scriptures on my side, to justify it to myself that I should dare to make a stand alone against the pope, and hold him forth as anti-



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CHAPTER XXX.

LUTHER now stood firmly planted on the table-land of the Reformation. Against the tradition of the middle ages, against the authority of the church, he sought a refuge in the Scriptures—anterior to tradition, superior to the church itself. He wrote his *postilla* on the evangelists and the epistles. He translated the Psalms; his indefatigable pen was perpetually employed. He found that the young emperor Charles, who had just been crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle, had allied himself too closely with the Vatican to listen to any appeal in favor of reform. Abandoning therefore the hope of securing the imperial assistance, he addressed himself directly to the patriotism, the common-sense, and the religious sentiment of Germany.

In this work he was powerfully aided by the zeal manifested by the booksellers and the printers in favor of the new ideas. “The books of Luther,” says a hostile contemporary, “were printed by the typographers with minute care, often at their own expense, and vast numbers of copies were thrown off. There was a complete body of ex-monks who, returned to the world, lived by vending the works of Luther throughout Germany. On the other hand, it was solely by dint of money that the Romanists could get their productions printed in

the empire, and even then they were sent forth with such a host of errors, that they seemed the work of ignorant barbarians. If any printer more or less conscientious than the rest, gave himself any trouble with a Roman writing, he was tormented to death by all his fellows, and by the people in the public streets, as a papist, and as a slave of the priests.”*

Of course these words of Cochläus are to be taken in their full scope with hesitation. But even if this statement contains only a modicum of truth, it still suffices to show what a tremendous hold the Saxon doctor had upon the whole German empire. Though Luther was assailed from many quarters, he answered all his enemies with remarkable fertility of resource, perspicuity, and vigor, as well as with great brilliancy of wit and poignancy of sarcasm. Never was it more truly said of any man, that HE WAS HIMSELF A HOST.†

It must be said to the credit of the German nobles, that great as was the zeal of the towns for the new theology, they yet surpassed the honest burghers in their service to the reformer; and indeed Luther was frequently compelled to moderate their Hotspur enthusiasm.

Much anxiety was felt at Wittemberg to learn what Fréderick's judgment of the papal bull and of Luther's audacious action would be. The elector had been absent at the time that the *auto da fé* of the Reformation occurred, being at Aix-la-Chapelle,

* Cochläus, n. 54.

† Milner.

where he assisted in placing the crown of Charlemagne upon the head of the young Spanish king.* On his return to Weimar, he was much disquieted by the startling aspect of the ecclesiastical horizon. Learning that Erasmus was sojourning in the neighboring city of Cologne, he sent that old friend word to meet him in the privacy of his own apartments. Erasmus, in obedience to the summons, hastened to the elector's court immediately. Upon meeting the eminent scholar, Frederick dismissed all his attendants save Spalatin,† and then exclaimed abruptly, "What think you of this Luther?" Erasmus, true to his hesitating and timid character, endeavored to avoid committing himself, and answered with that witticism which he had already uttered when Luther's theses on the indulgences first reached him in the Low Countries: "This monk has committed two grave errors: he has attacked the pope's tiara, and the monks' bellies."‡ But though the oddity of this quaint conceit won the elector to smile, he was not to be put off by such an answer, but fixing his keen eyes upon the face of his illustrious guest, he said gravely,

"I would rather the earth should yawn and swallow me up, than that I should be found favoring false doctrines. But if Luther has the truth on his side, whatever danger I may run, he shall not reckon me among his persecutors. Neither do I think myself qualified to judge in so important a

* Seckendorf; Maimbourg.

† Erasmus, Opp.

‡ See Chap. XIV., p. 171.



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“This monk aims at neither rank nor profit, and therefore he is the less to be suspected.”*

After he had dispatched the paper to Spalatin, Eras'mus' timidity returned, and he urgently solicited that confidant of the elector to restore it, alleging as a reason, “Lest the papal legate should make a bad use of its contents.”†

But whatever the after course of the vacillating Hollander might be, it is certain that what he said on this occasion mightily confirmed the elector in his steadfast friendship for Luther and his adherents—a friendship which, despite the open menaces of both pope and emperor, the firm Saxon prince never after allowed to be shaken or intimidated.‡

It has been said that anecdotes disclose more of the real judgment of men than whole pages of historical disquisition.

As showing the wide-spread fame of Luther at this period, and the general estimation in which he was held, take these anecdotes.

Aleander, who had been sent by Leo into Germany as Eek's coadjutor, once exclaimed, “It is impossible to soften this Luther by money. He is a brute who will not look either at bribes or honors; otherwise he might long since have had many thousands paid him at the bankers by the pope's order.”||

Shortly after his interview with Frederick of Saxony, the legates of the pope are said to have

* Luther's Opp., II.

† Milner, Vol. II., p. 283.

‡ Melancthon's Annals, reflections on Frederick the Wise.

|| Selueccer, in Seckendorf.

plied Erasmus with the offer of a rich bishopric, if he would write against Luther; to which the cautious scholar retorted, "Luther is too great a man for me to encounter; I do not even always understand him. However, to speak plainly, he is so extraordinary a man that I learn more from a single page in his books than from all the writings of Thomas Aquinas."*

Count Nassau, governor of Flanders, Brabant, and Holland, exhorted the divines of the Hague thus: "Go, and preach the gospel in simplicity and truth *as Luther does*, and you will offend no one, nor will you suffer molestation."†

The academicians of Louvain complained to Margaret, the emperor's sister, governante of the Netherlands, that Luther, by his writings, was subverting Christianity. "Who is this Luther?" queried she. The bitter schoolmen replied, "He is an ignorant German monk." "Is it indeed so?" said she; "then do you, who are very learned and very numerous, write against this illiterate monk, and surely the world will pay more regard to many scholars than to one ignoramus."‡

Luther, secure for the present under the powerful protection of the elector, pursued the even tenor of his way at Wittemberg, busied now, while the pitiless pelting of the storm smote him, as before, in the calm days of the serene sunshine, in God's service.

* Pallavicini, and Comment de Luth.

† Milner, Vol. II., p. 283.

‡ Ibid.

He published at this time a very able pamphlet, in which he defended those points of doctrine which the papal bull had anathematized. The only fault which can now be found with this writing is its acerbity—a fault indeed which tarnishes the beauty of most of his polemical writings. This asperity does undoubtedly throw a shade over Luther's rhetorical virtues, and though the rudeness and indelicacy of his age, the savage bitterness of his enemies, and his own temperament, unite to apologize for his acrimony, it still remains true that it caused his friends, and especially the electoral court, considerable trouble. Frederick and Spalatin were constantly admonishing him to moderation.

Still it may be that Luther's philosophy was correct, and that in a warfare where both sides had drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard, rose-water and silken phrases were out of place. It is certain that reformers in every age have found it necessary to "speak daggers"—have made bullets of their words, and carried the weapons of Zeus on the tongue.

Luther, in writing to Spalatin, said, "I own that I am more vehement than I ought to be; but I have to do with men who blaspheme evangelical truth; with human wolves; with those who condemn me unheard, without admonishing, without instructing me; and who utter the most atrocious slanders against myself not only, but the word of God.

"Even the most phlegmatic spirit, so circumstanced, might well be moved to speak thunderbolts;



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at peace. Hence he thinks it proper on all subjects to display a sort of civility, good-nature, and fine breeding; but I say, ‘Behemoth’* will pay no regard to such treatment, nor ever be amended by it. Popery will never be reformed one tittle by writings that give no offence, that make no attack, that do not *bite*. For the pontiffs consider these gentle and civil admonitions as a species of servile cringing. They are content to be feared; and they persevere in their wicked course as though they had a right to remain incorrigible.”†

But whatever may be thought of Luther’s *rationale* of progress, it is very certain that his severity never led him either to injure his argumentation, nor even in the most trying scenes to transgress the fundamental rules of prudence. Even his great historical adversary, the Jesuit Maimbourg, admits that “it cannot be denied that, notwithstanding his heat and impetuosity, which are natural to him, he always considered and digested well what he wrote, ever displaying in his writings the man of genius and of erudition.”‡

* Job 40 : 15.

† Lib. I., Ep.

‡ Maimbourg, quoted in Milner, Vol. II., p. 286.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ON the festival of Charlemagne, January 28, 1521, the emperor Charles V. opened, at Worms, that diet which was destined to be so memorable in ecclesiastical history.

Before these diets all matters pertaining to the empire properly came for examination and final settlement. This one was universally esteemed to be of uncommon importance. It was the first over which the new emperor had presided. There were a multitude of vexatious political questions to be adjudicated. Francis I., Charles V., Henry VIII., the Moslem Solyman, a host of illustrious princes, were weaving their webs of intrigue to secure the preëminence in power and grandeur, and this diet was to settle the political policy of the empire.

But over all these sources of agitation hovered a greater one. It will be remembered that the archbishop of Treves, who had been, in 1519, appointed by Leo X., at the suggestion of Miltitz, to arbitrate in this ecclesiastical quarrel, adjourned the consideration of the whole dispute to the diet of Worms. The Reformation therefore was to stand face to face with its accusers, and await the judgment of imperial Cæsar.

Notwithstanding the vast political interests at stake, this religious question took precedence of all others from the very outset.

That pitiless Rome which, inflexible as the fabled destiny of the ancients, had successfully crushed for ages past every doctor, king, or people that had ventured to oppose its iron progress, now thoroughly awake to its peril, mustered once more its fell forces to snuff out the taper light which gleamed from Wittemberg.

A letter written from Rome in January, 1521, and by a Roman citizen, reveals the pontifical programme:

“If I am not mistaken,” so runs the missive, “the only business in the diet will be this affair of Luther’s, which gives us much more trouble than the Turk himself. We shall endeavor to gain over the young emperor by threats, by prayers, and by feigned caresses. We shall strive to win the Germans by extolling the piety of their ancestors, by making them rich presents, and by lavish promises.

“If these methods do not succeed, we shall depose the emperor, absolve the people from their obedience, elect another—and he will be one that suits us—in his place, stir up civil war among the Germans, as we have just done in Spain, and summon to our aid the armies of the kings of France, England, and other faithful nations of Christendom. Probity, honor, religion, Christ—we shall make light of all, if only our tyranny be saved.”*

Charles was in a quandary at the commencement. Aleander, Leo’s legate at the diet, clamored

* Robertson’s Hist. of Charles V., Book III.



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be of little consequence.” “Then,” says D’Aubigné, “committing his soul to the hands of Him who is faithful, Luther got into the car, and quitted Wittemberg. The town council had provided for him a modest conveyance, covered with an awning, which the travellers could set up or remove at their pleasure. The imperial herald, wearing his robe of office and carrying the imperial eagle; rode on horseback in front, attended by his servant. Next came Luther, Schurff, Amsdorff, and Suaren, in the car. The friends of the gospel and the citizens of Wittemberg were deeply agitated, and invoking God’s aid, burst into tears. Thus Luther began his journey.*

There is no doubt, from his own statements, that in undertaking this tour Luther firmly believed that he was marching to death. Yet he did not pause, but accepted death serenely, nay, joyfully, if it must come, in behalf of his idea. There is nothing in sacred or profane history grander than the self-immolation of this German monk.

On the 3d of April Luther arrived at Leipsic, where the cup of honor was offered him, according to an old custom of that and many other cities; on the 4th he reached Nuremberg, where he dined at the table of the burgomaster Græssler, with the herald. On the 5th he tarried over night at Weimar, where duke John, the elector’s brother, sent him the money necessary for his journey.

John Crotus, rector, Hesus, professor of rhetoric, and Justus Jonas, accompanied by forty

* D’Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 220, 221.

horsemen, met the doctor two miles from Erfurth. He was warmly received by his good friend John Lange, prior of his old convent. The next day was Easter Sunday, and he was persuaded to remain over and preach in the convent chapel. The little church was crowded. Every one was anxious to see and hear this monk, who from his narrow cell had been shaking the world now for three years. In the midst of the orator's discourse, a portion of the exterior walls gave way with a loud crash ; terror seized upon the audience, which rose to fly tumultuously, and were breaking the windows in order to escape what they regarded as imminent death.

Luther remained firm and unmoved in his pulpit ; he made a sign which the crowd at once obeyed, pausing in their flight to collect his words. "My brethren," said he, with a reassuring smile, "see you not that this is merely the hand of the demon, who desires to prevent you from hearing the word of God which I announce to you ? Remain where you are ; Christ is with us, and for us." At once, says the narrator, Daniel Gretzer, the whole throng turned back, and came still nearer the pulpit to hear the divine word.

At Eisenach, his dear Eisenach, where he paused for a while with tears in his eyes beneath the window of the worthy Cotta, Luther was on the point of arresting his journey, the pains in his stomach caused him such suffering. After a while, however, they diminished in their intensity, and he continued on his way.

At Frankfort-on-the-Main, which he reached on the 14th of April, he blessed two students whom Wilhelm Nesse presented to him. On the road he received from a priest of Nuremburg the portrait of Savonarola, with a letter exhorting him to persevere for the glory of God. Luther affectionately kissed the picture : he retained through life a great veneration for Savonarola, whom he regarded as a martyr armed by God with the sword of the faith.*

The procession advanced but slowly. It was from Frankfort that his friends at home received their first news of him, in a letter to Spalatin : “ We are proceeding on, my dear friend,” he says, “ notwithstanding the physical sufferings with which Satan has afflicted me, in order to delay my progress ; for you must know that all the way from Weimar to this city I have experienced greater pain than I ever before knew. But Christ lives, and I will go to Worms to brave the gates of hell and the powers of the air.”

The party stopped at Oppenheim to take some repose. Luther might easily have escaped, for Sturm, the herald, left him altogether at his own disposal. His companions advised him to flee. “ Flee !” exclaimed Luther, “ Oh no ; I will go on. I will enter the town in the name of Jesus Christ.”

At Pfiffingheim, near Worms, Luther saw a peasant planting elms on the way-side : “ Give me one of them,” said he, “ and I will place it in the earth ; God grant that my doctrine may flourish as

* Mathesius, Historien.



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Luaven. Before the car·marched the imperial herald in full dress, the eagle in his hand. Justus Jonas and his servant came next after the chariot. A great number of men had preceded the monk: Bernard Van Hirschfeldt, John Scholte, Albert Van Lindenau, and other cavaliers on horseback. At ten he made his entrance into the city, and thousands of the citizens accompanied him to his lodgings, the next house to the ‘Swan,’ where several town-councillors alighted with him.

“Luther passed nearly the whole night at his window, sometimes meditating with earnestly upcast eyes, sometimes breathing the air of his hymn upon his flute.”*

The next morning, Wednesday, April 17th, the good city of Worms was profoundly agitated. Luther’s arrival was bruited about, and multitudes thronged to his lodgings to catch sight of him.† Quite early in the day the hereditary marshal of the empire, Ulrich of Poppenheim, cited him to appear, at four in the afternoon, before his imperial majesty and the states of the empire.‡

There were present at the diet, besides the emperor, six electors of the empire, one archduke, two landgravēs, five margraves, twenty-seven dukes, and a host of inferior dignitaries, counts, archbishops, bishops, and others; in all, two hundred and six persons.§

* Warbeck’s letter to duke John. Archives of Saxe Gotha.

† Melch. Adam. Vita Lutheri.

‡ Cochläus.

§ Luth. Werke, IX., 104.

Each of the electors, on setting out for Worms, took with him a copy of Luther's "Appeal to the Emperor and the German Nobility." Accordingly, when the question was brought forward of the subsidies which Charles demanded on his going to Rome to be crowned by the pope, the states for the first time, in granting him the required troops, stipulated that while the nomination of the colonels should remain in his hands, the choice of the captains should belong to the respective squadrons, and that Germans only should be chosen. The national spirit, excited by the eloquent manifesto of Luther, thus speedily gave expression to its hatred of the foreign power which he had succeeded in making odious. His Tyrtæan hymn as effectually roused the nobility;—had the emperor but given the word, the whole body would have sounded to horse, and have marched over the Alps to combat Rome, to the resounding chorus of Luther's war-song.*

We are indebted to Luther himself for a fine narrative of what occurred at the diet, a narrative in all essential points in exact agreement with those accounts which have been given alike by friendly and inimical historians :

“The herald summoned me on Tuesday in Holy Week, and brought me safe-conducts from the emperor and from a number of princes. On the very next day, Wednesday, these safe-conducts were, in effect, violated at Worms, where thus, before my arrival, they condemned and burned my writings.

* Audin.

Intelligence of this reached me at Erfurth. The condemnation indeed was published in every town, so that the herald himself frankly asked me whether I still intended to repair to Worms.

“Though I in truth was physically fearful and trembling, God sustained me, and I replied firmly, ‘Yea, I will repair thither, though I should find there as many devils as there are tiles on the housetops.’

“When I arrived at Oppenheim, near Worms, my good friend Martin Bucer met me with a cavalcade, and tried to dissuade me from entering this sepulchre city. He told me that Glapian, the emperor’s confessor, had been to him, and had entreated him to warn me not to go to Worms; for if I did, like my books, I should be burned. I should do well, he added, to stop in the neighborhood, at Franz Van Sickingen’s, who would be very glad to entertain me.

“The wretches had thus cajoled my friends for the purpose of preventing me from making my appearance within the time prescribed; they knew that if I delayed but three days more, my safe-conduct would, by its expiration, have been no longer available;* then they would have shut the city gates in my face, and without hearing what I had to say, the diet would have arbitrarily condemned me.

* Charles dated his citation on the 6th of March, and allowed Luther but twenty-one days, not from his reception of the safe-conduct, but from the day he quitted Wittemberg, to appear at Worms. It reached him on the 24th inst., and he started on the 2d of April; the pass was within three days of expiring when Luther was at Oppenheim.



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be in the right, as I think you are, God will aid you.*

“On my arrival, I had written to Glapian, the emperor’s confessor, who had sent me word by Bucer that he desired to see me at Sickingen’s castle, when the papists wished to entrap me into voiding my safe-conduct, that I was now at Worms and ready to confer with him; but the wily confessor, chagrined at the failure of his stratagem, refused to come, saying that it would be useless to do so.”

Then follows a clear and succinct account of what occurred at Worms. But since Luther, immediately after his dismissal, wrote out, though in the third person, a still more graphic, minute, and picturesque report of the proceedings, we now quote from this fuller description :

“The day following his arrival, Wednesday, April 17th, at four in the afternoon, the imperial chamberlain and the herald who had accompanied Luther from Wittemberg, came to him at his inn, the ‘Court of Germany,’ and conducted him to the town-hall along by-ways, in order to avoid the crowds which had assembled in the leading streets. Notwithstanding this precaution, there were numbers collected at the gates of the town-hall, who essayed to enter with him, but the guards pushed

* The landgrave came to consult Luther on a curious point: whether a young woman might quit an elderly husband for a younger spouse. Luther smiled at this proposition, and said, “Dear master, I never taught any thing of the kind, nor may such things be.” Luther’s Werke, Halle, XV., 227.

the crowd resolutely back. Many persons had ascended to the tops of the houses to see Dr. Martin. As he proceeded up the hall, several noblemen successively addressed to him words of encouragement. ‘Be bold,’ said they, ‘and fear not those who can kill the body, but are powerless against the soul.’ ‘Monk,’ said the famous Captain George Freundsberg, putting his hand cheerfully on Martin’s shoulder, ‘take heed what thou doest: thou art adventuring on a more perilous path than any of us have ever trod; but if thou art in the right, God will not abandon thee.’

“Duke John of Weimar had previously supplied the doctor with money for his journey. Luther made his answers in Latin and in German.

“Dr. Eck,* official of the archbishop of Treves, opened the proceedings:

“ ‘Martin Luther, his sacred and invincible majesty has, on the advice of the states of the empire, summoned you hither that you may reply to the two questions I am about to put to you: Do you acknowledge yourself the author of the writings published in your name, and which are here before me? and will you consent to retract certain of the doctrines therein inculcated?’

“ ‘I think the books are mine,’ replied he. But immediately Doctor Jerome Schurff added, ‘Let the titles of the works be read.’ This was done, when he said, ‘Yes, they are mine.’

“Then he asked Luther, ‘Will you retract the

* Not the theologian of Ingolstadt, but the jurist Eck. Audin.

doctrines therein taught?' He replied, turning to Charles, 'Gracious emperor, as to the question whether I will retract the opinions I have given forth—a question of faith, in which are directly interested my own eternal salvation and the free enunciation of the divine word, that word which knows no master, neither on earth nor in heaven, and which we are all bound to obey, be we as mighty as we may—it would be rash and dangerous for me to answer such a question until I had meditated thereon in silence and sober retreat, lest by overhaste I should incur the anger of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has said, '*Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*' I therefore entreat your majesty to grant me the time necessary to enable me to reply with full knowledge of the point at issue, and without fear of blaspheming the word of God, or endangering the salvation of my own soul.'

"This speech caused a great stir, and after considerable whispering it was finally decided that Martin should have until the next day at the same hour for meditation.

"The morning of the following day was occupied by the subtle negotiators of the papal court in vain attempts to coax, inveigle, and menace Luther into a retraction.

"At four in the afternoon the monk again repaired to the council hall of the diet.

"Eck once more took the initiative.

"'Martin Luther,' he said, 'yesterday you ac-



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main the same as I sent them forth, undisturbed by malice, knavery, or mistaken prudence.

“ ‘I acknowledge further, that whatever I have written was first matured in my mind by earnest thought and prayerful meditation.

“ ‘Before replying to the second question, I entreat your majesty, and the states of the empire, to consider that my writings do not all treat of the same topics. Some of them are preceptive, destined for the edification of the faithful, for the advancement of piety, for the amelioration of manners ; yet pope Leo’s bull, while admitting the innocence and advantage of such treatises, with blind indiscrimination condemns these equally with all the rest.

“ ‘Now, if I were to disallow these, what, practically, should I be doing? proscribing a mode of instruction which every Christian sanctions, and thus putting myself in opposition to the universal voice of Christendom.

“ ‘There is another class of writings in which I attack the papacy, and the belief of the papists, as monstrosities, involving the ruin of sound doctrine and of men’s souls. None can deny, who will listen to the cries and evidences of the conscience within, that the pontiff’s decretals have thrown the Christianity of our age into utter disorder ; have surprised, imprisoned, tortured the faith of the faithful ; have devoured as a prey this noble Germany, because she has protested, not in murmurs, but aloud, against lying tales, absurd traditions, the

wicked inventions of mountebank monks, peddling these lies that they may swindle a living—a countless throng of impious heresies, alien alike to the opinions of the fathers, and to the well-digested systems of sacred writ.

“ ‘If, then, I were to retract these writings, I should lend additional strength and audacity to this greedy Roman tyranny, I should open the flood-gates to the torrent of impiety, making for it a breach by which it would rush in and overwhelm the Christian world. My recantation would only serve to extend and strengthen the reign of iniquity, more especially when it should become known that it was solely by your majesty’s order, and that of assembled Germany, that I had made my recantation.

.. “ ‘And there is still another class of my works : I refer to my polemical pamphlets. These I have thrown out, from time to time, against such of my adversaries as advocated the continued reign of the Roman see. I have no hesitation in admitting that in these I have shown greater violence than befitted a man of my calling. I do not set up for a saint. I never presumed to the honors of canonization, nor do I say that my conduct has always been above reproach ; but the dispute is not about my conduct—it concerns the doctrine of Christ.

“ ‘Still, though I freely acknowledge that in these writings I have been violent overmuch at times, I cannot disavow them. Why ? Because Rome would make use of the disavowal to extend her empire to the undoing of my Christ.

“ ‘A man, and not God, I would not seek to shield my books under any other patronage than that with which Christ covered his tenets. When interrogated before the high-priest as to what he taught, his cheek smitten by the sacrilegious hand of a valet, ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.’ If the Lord Jesus, who knew himself incapable of sin, did not disdain to respect the testimony which even the vilest mouths might give respecting his divine words, ought not I, scum of the earth that I am, and capable only of sin, to solicit the candid examination of my doctrines—as I do now ?

“ ‘I therefore entreat your sacred majesty, and you, your illustrious highnesses, yea, and every living creature, to come and depose against me ; and then, with the prophets in your right hands, and the gospel in your left, convict me, if you can, of error. I stand here ready, nay, anxious, if any one can prove me to have written falsely, to retract my errors, and to throw my books into the fire with my own willing hand.

“ ‘Be assured that I have well weighed the dangers, the pains, the strife, and the hatred that my reform will bring with it into the world ; and I frankly add, that I rejoice to see the word of God producing, as its first-fruits, discord and dissension ; for such is the heaven-appointed destiny of the gospel, as our Lord has himself set forth : *I came not to send peace, but a sword—to set the son against the father.*



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“‘I have already tried to be explicit, and to these questions I have just responded three separate times; but since your imperial majesty and your highnesses demand a simple answer, I will give one, brief and simple, but deprived of neither its teeth nor its horns.

“‘Unless I am convicted of error by the testimony of the Scripture, or by manifest evidence—for I put no faith in the mere authority of the pontiff or of councils, which have often been mistaken, and which have frequently contradicted one another, recognizing, as I do, no other guide than the Bible, the word of God—I cannot, and will not retract; for we must never act contrary to our conscience.

“‘Such is my confession of faith; expect none other from me. I have done; God help me. Amen.’

“The states then retired to deliberate; on their return, the official thus addressed Luther:

“‘Martin, you have assumed a tone which becomes not a man of your condition, and you have not answered the questions I put to you. Doubtless you have written some pieces which are in no way liable to censure; and had you retracted those writings which inculcate mischievous errors, his majesty in his infinite goodness would not have permitted any proceedings to be taken against those which contain orthodox doctrine.

“‘You have resuscitated dogmas which have been distinctly condemned by the Council of Constance, and you demand to be convicted thereupon out of the Scriptures. But if every one were at liberty to

bring back into discussion points which for ages have been settled by the church and by councils, nothing would be fixed, nothing would be certain, doctrine or dogma, and there would be no unity of belief, which men must adhere to under penalty of damnation.

“ ‘You, for instance, who to-day respect the authority of the Council of Constance, to-morrow may, in like manner, proscribe all councils together, and next the fathers and the doctors ; and there would remain no authority whatever, but that individual word which you call to witness, and which we also invoke. His majesty therefore once more demands a simple and precise answer, affirmative or negative : Will you defend all your principles as orthodox ? or are there any of them which you are prepared to retract ?’

“ Then Luther besought the emperor not to allow him to be thus called on to belie his conscience, which was bound up with the sacred writing. They had required of him a categorical answer, and he had given one. He could only repeat what he had already declared : that unless they proved to him by irresistible arguments that he was in the wrong, he would not go back a single inch ; that what the councils had laid down, was to him no article of faith ; that councils had often erred and contradicted one another, and that consequently their testimony was not convincing ; and that he could not disown what was written in the inspired pages.

“The official sharply observed, that Luther could not show that the councils had erred.

“Martin said he would undertake to do so at any time that might be assigned him.

“By this time the evening drew on, it grew dark apace, and the diet arose.

“When the Saxon monk quitted the hall to return to his lodgings, he was followed and insulted by some Spaniards.

“Next day the emperor sent for the electors and states, to discuss with them the form of the imperial ban against Luther and his adherents.

“Meantime Luther was visited by a great number of princes, counts, barons, prelates, and other persons of distinction, both lay and ecclesiastical. ‘The doctor’s little room,’ writes Spalatin, ‘could not contain all the visitors who presented themselves. I saw among them duke William of Brunswick, the landgrave Philip of Hesse, Count Wilhelm of Henneburg, the elector Frederick, and many others.’

“On Wednesday following, eight days after his first appearance at the diet, Luther was requested by the archbishop of Treves to wait upon him. He accordingly did so, accompanied by the imperial herald, and by the friends who had followed him from Saxony and Thuringia.

“In the apartment of the prelate they found assembled Joachim of Brandenburg, the elector George, the bishops of Augsburg and Brandenburg, Count George, grand master of the Teutonic order,



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time when every child of the Christian family had but one heart and soul; when the precept was one, like the society; when the rule was one, like the precept. It became necessary to modify all this, when time itself had modified society; but all was done without prejudice to the Roman idea.'

“‘I am quite aware, Martin,’ he added, ‘that many of your writings breathe the sweetest odor of piety; but we have judged the general spirit of your books as we judge a tree, not by its flowers, but by its fruits. The advice given you by the states of the empire is given in a desire for peace, with all good feeling towards yourself.

“‘Those states were established by God to watch over the security of the people whose tranquillity your doctrines are so powerfully calculated to disturb. To resist them is to resist God. Doubtless it is better to obey God than to obey men;—but do you think that we, any more than yourself, are deaf to God’s word, or have not meditated thereon?’

“Luther, after expressing his thanks for the peaceful and charitable sentiments entertained towards him, proceeded to answer what Vehus had said respecting the authority of councils. He maintained that the Council of Constance had erred in condemning this proposition of John Huss: ‘*Tantum una est sancta, universalis ecclesia quæ est numerus prædestinatorum.*’

“‘No retraction,’ he said in conclusion, with an animated voice; ‘you shall have my blood, my life, rather than a single word of retraction; for it is

better to obey God than to obey man. It is no fault of mine that this matter creates confusion among you. I cannot prevent the word of God from becoming a stumbling-block to men. If the sheep of the Good Shepherd were fed upon evangelical marrow, faith would live, and our spiritual masters would be honest and trustworthy.

“ ‘I know well that we must yield obedience to the civil magistrate, even though he be not a man after God’s own heart; and I am quite ready to yield that obedience in all things that do not shut out the sacred writ.’

“Luther was then about to take his leave, but he was told to stay, while Vehus pressingly urged upon him his previous arguments, conjuring him to submit his tenets to the definitive decision of the princes and states of the empire.

“Luther gently but firmly replied, ‘I would fain have it understood that I do not decline the judgment of the emperor and of the states; but the word of God, on which I rely, is to my eyes so clear that I cannot retract what I have said and writ until a still more luminous authority is opposed to it. St. Paul has said, ‘If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed;’ and I say to you, do not offer violence to my conscience, which is chained up with the Scripture.’

“The meeting then broke up; but the archbishop of Treves retained Luther, and went with him into another apartment. The reformer’s two friends, Jerome Schurff and Nicholas, followed. John Eck,

the jurist and official, and Cochläus, dean of the church of the Holy Virgin at Frankfort, were already in the room. Eck addressed Luther :

“ ‘Martin,’ said he, ‘there is no one of the heresies which have torn the bosom of the church which has not derived its origin from the various interpretations of the Scripture. The Bible itself is the arsenal whence each innovator has drawn his deceptive arguments. It was with biblical texts that Pelagius and Arius maintained their doctrines. Arius, for instance, found the negation of the eternity of the Word, an eternity which you admit, in this verse of the New Testament: ‘Joseph knew not his wife till she had brought forth her first-born son ;’ and he said, as you now say, that this passage enchained him.

“ ‘When the fathers of the Council of Constance condemned this proposition of John Huss, *The church of Christ is only the community of the elect*, they condemned an error ; for the church, like a good mother, embraces within her arms all who bear the name of Christian—all who are called to enjoy the celestial beatitude.’

“To this subtle and specious ecclesiastical sophistry Luther replied by reproducing all the arguments of which he had before made use. Cochläus then took him by both hands, and conjured him to restore peace to the church. Luther was inflexible, and so they separated.

“In the evening the archbishop of Treves sent word to Luther that, by order of the emperor, his



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ration from on high, in three years it will cease to be thought of.'

"The archbishop persisted: 'Suppose,' said he, 'that we made from your books faithful extracts of articles which we object to; would you submit these to a council?'

"'Provided they were none of those which the Council of Constance has already condemned,' quickly retorted Luther.

"'But if they were?'—

"'Then,' said Luther, 'I would not consent to submit them to a council; for I am certain that the decrees of that council condemned the truth. I would rather lose my head than abandon the divine word. IN WHAT CONCERNS THE WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH, EVERY CHRISTIAN IS AS GOOD A JUDGE AS THE POPE, THOUGH SUPPORTED BY A MILLION COUNCILS, CAN BE FOR HIM; for each man must live and die according to his belief. The word of God does not belong exclusively to Rome; it is not the property of the pope; it is the common heritage of humanity, and each member of the brotherhood has a right to explain it for himself. Still the passage of St. Paul, *If any thing is revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace*, proves clearly that the master must follow the disciple, if the latter understand the Scripture better than he himself.'

"And thus ended the conference.

"Soon after this the official sent for Luther, and in the presence of the arch-chancellor read to him the imperial sentence.

“ ‘Luther,’ he added, ‘since you have not chosen to listen to the counsels of his majesty and the states of the empire, and to confess your error, it is now for the emperor to act. By his order I give you twenty days wherein to return to Wittemberg, secure under the imperial safe-conduct, provided that on your way you excite no disorders by preaching or otherwise.’ ”

“As the official concluded, Sturm, the herald, inclined his staff in token of respect.

“Luther bowed and said, ‘Be it as the Lord pleases; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ He then added the expression of his warm gratitude towards the emperor personally, towards his ministers and the states of the empire, for whom he affirmed, with his hand on his heart, he was ready to sacrifice life, honor, reputation, all except God’s word.

“On the next day, April 26th, after a collation given him by his friends, the doctor quitted Worms.”*

Thus, says a sagacious writer, ended an affair which seemed, at the beginning, fraught with tremendous portent for Luther and his sacred cause. Beset by enemies who had resolved to employ the whole subtleties of the Roman see to ruin him, and by friends who, in their fears for his safety, half forgot the sacredness of the vows which were upon him, it required not less discretion than firmness to save his integrity, and ward off the manifold blows intended for his destruction.

* Luther’s Werke, II, 107, Halle.

Had he yielded the principle that neither popes nor princes, churches nor councils, can have any authority to demand respect for doctrines not found in Scripture, Christendom might still have had to endure for bitter ages the iron yoke of Roman superstition; had he, on the other hand, pressed his opinions with the air of a zealot, the princes of the empire would have felt no sympathy for his character, and the full weight of the imperial wrath would have fallen upon his uncovered head.

Happily for him and for Christianity, he was preserved from abandoning the calm and moderate tone which so well became a preacher of righteousness conscious of his integrity, and anxious mainly that all men should bow in willing homage to the imperious truth.

This gave added weight and dignity to his eloquence, and while it awed the petulant spirits of one portion of his adversaries into unwilling silence, it convinced the rest of his moderation, of his sincerity, fortitude, elevation of thought, and thorough purity of intention.*

“The Romanist himself,” observes Audin, “if he will for a moment forget the sectary in the man, cannot but contemplate with admiration, in this grand historical scene of the diet of Worms, that tall, sombre, black-robed monk, standing face to face with, and resolutely bearding the throng of princes and nobles in their steel panoply, their gauntleted hands grasping the massive handles of

* Stebbing, Hist. Ref., Vol. I., pp. 91, 92



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CHAPTER XXXII.

MEANTIME, while Luther quitted Worms by one gate, Frederick of Saxony, the elector palatine, the elector archbishop of Cologne, and many inferior friendly members of the diet left the city by another.

“Banishment,” wrote the elector to his brother, duke John, “is Luther’s only hope of protection. If God permits me to return to you, I shall have matters to relate that are almost beyond credence. It is not only Annas and Caiaphas, but Pilate and Herod also, that have combined against him.”

By the withdrawal of these friends of the Reformation the field was left free; only the Spaniards, the Italians, and the most *ultramontane* of the Germans remained.

The papal legate, Aleander, hastened to Charles, and laid before him the outline of an edict intended by him as a model of that which the diet ought to issue against Luther.* The emperor assembled the remaining members of the diet; had the edict of the nuncio read to them, and it was accepted by all present.†

“The next day, which was a great festival, the emperor went to the cathedral, attended by all the lords of his splendid retinue.

“When the religious ceremonies were over, and a crowd of people still thronged the sanctuary, Aleander

* Pallavicini, Vol. I., 120.

† Ibid.

der, robed in all the insignia of his dignity, approached Charles V.; he held in his hand two copies of the edict against Luther, one in Latin, the other in German, and kneeling before his imperial majesty, he implored him to affix to them his signature and the seal of his empire.

“It was at the moment when the sacrifice had been offered, when the incense still filled the temple, the melancholy wail of the sacred chants was still reëchoing through the the dim, mysterious aisles, and as it were in the presence of the Deity, that the enemy of Rome was to be pronounced a heretic, and placed under a ban both civil and ecclesiastical.

“Charles assumed a gracious air, and taking the pen, wrote his name. Aleander withdrew in triumph, and he immediately sent the decree to the printers, and then forwarded the still wet copies to all parts of Christendom. This crowning act of the toils of Rome had cost the papacy no little trouble. Pallavicini himself informs us that this edict, although bearing date the 8th of May, was not signed till later; but it was antedated to make it appear that the signature was affixed at a time when all the members of the diet were assembled in solemn state.”*

This formidable edict was much more dreadful than the mock thunders and Chinese gongs of the Vatican. The papal bulls might indeed be published in Italy, but they could not be executed in

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 272, 273.

Germany. But now the emperor and the pontiff joined hands to crush heresy.

“We, Charles,” so ran the imperial decree, and then followed his titles, “to all electors, princes, prelates, and others whom it may concern.

“The Almighty having confided to us, for the defence of the most holy faith, more kingdoms and greater authority than he has ever given to our predecessors, we propose employing every means in our power to prevent our holy empire from being polluted by heresy.

“The Augustine monk, Martin Luther, notwithstanding our exhortation, has rushed like a madman on our holy church, and has attempted to destroy it by books overflowing with blasphemy. He has shamefully polluted the indestructible law of holy matrimony; he has endeavored to excite the laity to dye their hands in the blood of the clergy; and setting at naught all authority, has incessantly urged the people to revolt, schism, war, murder, robbery, incendiarism, and to the utter ruin of the Christian faith. In a word, not to mention his other evil practices, this man, who is in truth not so much a man as Satan himself under the form of a man, and dressed in a monk’s frock, has collected into one stinking slough all the vilest heresies of past times, and has added to them new ones of his own invention.

“We have therefore dismissed from our presence this Luther, whom all pious and sensible men deem a madman, or one possessed of the devil, and



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should dare to act in contradiction to the decree of our imperial majesty, we order him to be placed under the ban of the empire.

“Let every man behave according to this decree.”

On the publication of this ponderous edict, Rome shouted in triumph. “You have got to the end of the tragedy,” wrote the Spaniard Alfonso Valderas to his friend Piero D’Anghiera, at this juncture; “the *end* according to *some*, but in my opinion only the *beginning*, for the Germans are exceedingly indignant against the holy see.”

The Spaniard was right; the very next day after the burning of Luther’s works, according to the imperial decree, in the public square at Worms, the booksellers of that city went about offering a number of other copies for sale, from door to door, and even had the audacity to call with them at the imperial residence.*

Meantime how sped this feeble monk, against whom earth and heaven seemed leagued? How did he escape this imminent and deadly imperial thunderbolt?

The elector Frederick, deeply anxious for Luther’s personal safety, foreseeing his danger, and determined to shield him from it, had, on quitting Wittemberg, arranged with Spalatin, Frederick of Thun, Feilitsch, and other adherents of the Saxon doctor, that, unknown to himself, he should be seized by their friendly, but masked hands, and borne

* Audin.

away to some secure retreat, until the first fury of the persecuting storm should pass by.* The secret of this stratagem was kept so close that it was not until long afterwards that it leaked out.†

Let us now return to Luther.

The Augustine performed the first stages of his journey without the occurrence of any incident of special significance. On his arrival at Freyburg he wrote two letters, one to the emperor, the other to the states assembled at Worms. In the first he expressed his regret at having found himself obliged to disobey his majesty, but he reminded Charles that God and his word were above principalities and powers. He also lamented that he had not been able to obtain a discussion of the evidences he had collected from Scripture, adding that he was ready to present himself before any other assembly that might be convened for that purpose, and to submit himself in all things without exception, provided the word of God received no detriment.

The letter to the states was written in a similar spirit.‡

Having confided these two letters to Sturm, the imperial herald, who had been deputed to accompany him for his protection, Luther dismissed that officer, and entered the friendly states of the prince of Hesse unguarded.§

This fugitive monk, anathematized alike by the Roman see and by the empire, was nevertheless the

* Spalatin's Annals.

† Ibid.

‡ Luther, Werke, IX., 107.

§ Spalatin's Annals.

recipient of the most courteous attentions as he hurried across the country towards his asylum at Wittemberg. Still, some superstitious persons were doubtless filled with horror at the thought of this incarnate devil, covered with a monk's hood, whom the emperor had pointed out to the revengeful suspicion of the nations.

At Hirschfeldt, Luther received quite an ovation. "You would hardly believe the civility with which I was received at Hirschfeldt," wrote he to Spalatin, on the 14th of May: "the abbot Crato Milius sent forward his chancellor and his treasurer a full mile on the road to meet us, and he himself came to receive us at a short distance from his castle, attended by a troop of cavaliers, who escorted us into the town. The good abbot entertained us splendidly in his monastery, and assigned me his own bed to sleep in. On the fifth day they absolutely forced me to preach, though I represented to them the risk they ran of losing their privileges, should the imperialist party choose to treat this as a violation of my undertaking not to preach my doctrines on the way. But then I added, that I never pledged myself to chain up the word of God—nor will I.

"I preached also at Eisenach, in the presence of the minister, who was in a great fright, and of a notary and two witnesses, who formally protested against what I was doing, but excused themselves privately to me, on the ground that otherwise they dreaded the resentment of their tyrants. So, very likely, you will hear it said at Worms that I twice



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CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was to the lofty and isolated fortress of Wartburg, where in former times the old landgraves were accustomed to shelter themselves, that Luther, by the prudent forethought of the Saxon elector, had been borne to his pleasant and honorable captivity.

Here, while the Roman see raged furiously at the audacious innovator's escape, he himself looked down securely from the platform of his dungeon-keep; finding in this quiet retreat full leisure to resume his flute, to sing his German psalms, to translate his Bible, and to thunder forth against the pope and the devil.*

On his disappearance, a cry of grief and rage resounded through Germany. The pope and the emperor were openly and menacingly accused of compassing his death. Ulric Van Hütten and Hermann Busch filled the country with their plaintive war-songs, and an ominous growl of discontent foretokened the first heavings of an insurrection.†

But the secreted monk speedily acquainted his adherents with the fact of his continued existence, though concealing the precise place of his confinement, and the menacing wail of Germany quickly subsided into an undemonstrative smile of satisfaction.

* Michelét, p. 99.

† Lindner, Let. Luth., p. 220.

The first weeks of his confinement passed rather pleasantly than otherwise. The overtasked frame and mind of the reformer really needed the repose. "A strange prisoner I am," he exclaimed; "captive with and against my will."* But ere long his impetuous and active intellect began to fret and repine at this forced seclusion. He was revisited by those trials and temptations which had so terribly racked him at the outset of his career in the cloister cell at Erfurth. At the same time his sufferings were still further increased by a return of those severe cramps in the stomach which seem to have been chronic with him.†

But though his confinement was rigorous—though he was obliged to conceal his personality, to change his name, assuming that of "the knight George," and though he was not permitted to wander beyond the castle walls, every thing that devoted kindness could suggest was done by the chatelain to render his guest comfortable. He even at times sent secretly for some of Luther's acquaintances who resided near at hand, and these were admitted to Wartburg under cover of the night, and rising early in the morning, assembled round the monk in the fortress chapel, returning to their homes at nightfall.‡

But despite all that could be done to cheer him, Luther gave way to great depression. Thus in writing to Melancthon, July 13, 1521, he says, "I

* L. Epp. XIII., 12th May.

† Tischreden.

‡ Michelét, p. 99, note.

see myself insensible and hardened, a slave to sloth, rarely, alas, praying, unable even to send forth a groan for the church. Let me confess the horrible truth : my flesh, my flesh, my untamed flesh burns with a devouring flame ; with a flame which should only animate my spirit to good. Idleness, sluggishness, the lusts of the flesh, close about me, assail me closely and fiercely. Is it because thou hast ceased to pray for me to God, that he has thus turned his face from me ? It were well for thee to take my place—thou so much more richly endowed by God, so much more pleasing in his sight.

“ Here have I been eight days without praying, without studying ; whether from temptations of the flesh, or from some other vexations that are upon me, I know not. If things do not take a better turn with me, I will return publicly to Erfurth, and thou wilt see me there ; for I must fain consult the physicians or the surgeons, whichever of them it be I need.”

In June he wrote again : “ The priests and monks who played their gambols while I was at liberty, have become so afraid since my captivity that they are beginning to modify the preposterous extravagances they were wont to send forth against me. They find they can no longer resist the pressure of the increasing crowd of questioners, and they know not in what direction to make their escape. See you not herein the arm of the Mighty One of Jacob ? all that he is doing for us while we hold our peace, while we stand aside, while we pray to him ? . Is



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demned his works. Melancthon wrote a Latin *Apology against the Blockhead Theologians of Paris*. This Luther now translated into German, adding a caustic commentary of his own. He also devoted a large portion of his time to his translation of the New Testament, sadly missing Melancthon's assistance.

A little volume against a work of Catharinus on Antichrist, a commentary on the sixty-seventh Psalm, another on the Canticle of May, and a Consolation to the Church at Wittenberg, were published at this time. All these writings were in German. "I was born," says Luther, "for the good of my dear Germans, and I will never cease to serve them."*

It was while engaged in translating the Holy Scriptures that Luther had that conflict with Satan of which such frequent mention has been made.†

"Solitary, in ill health, and saddened by the exertions of his enemies and the extravagances of some of his followers, seeing his life wearing away in the gloom of that old castle, he had occasionally to endure terrible struggles. In those times men inclined to carry into the visible world the conflicts that the soul sustains with its spiritual enemies.

"Luther's lively imagination easily embodied the emotions of his heart, and the superstitions of the middle ages had still, and continued to have through his life, some hold upon his mind; so that

* Tischreden.

† See all the biographies of Luther, especially the *Memoirs of Michelét*, who devotes thirty odd pages to this subject.

we might say that there was yet a remnant of popery in him.

“Satan was not, in Luther’s view, an invisible, but real being. He thought that he appeared to men as he appeared to Christ. Although the authenticity of many of the stories on this subject contained in the ‘Table Talk’ and elsewhere is more than doubtful, history must still record this failing in the reformer.

“Never was he more assailed by these gloomy, ghostly ideas than in the solitude of the Wartburg. In the days of his strength he had braved the devil in Worms, but now his powers were somewhat broken. He was thrown aside ; Satan was victorious in his turn ; and in the anguish of his soul, Luther imagined he saw his giant form towering before him, lifting his finger in threatening attitude, exulting with a bitter and hellish sneer, and gnashing his teeth in fearful rage.

“One day especially he fancied that he beheld Satan, filled with horror at his work, tormenting him, and prowling about him like a lion about to seize his prey.

“Luther, alarmed and incensed, snatched up his inkstand and flung it at the head of his enemy. The figure disappeared with a dismal howl, and the missile dashed in pieces against the wall.

“The keeper of the Wartburg still carefully directs the attention of travellers to the spot made upon the wall by Luther’s inkstand.”*

* D’Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 31, 32.

The archbishop of Mayence, unconvinced by Luther's arguments, ventured to resume the sale of indulgences within his diocese; and just before this time a priest at Halle had ascended the pulpit, by the prelate's direction, to urge the purchase of pardons by the public. On this occasion however, the money raised was to be devoted, not to the erection of St. Peter's, but to the extermination of the hordes of Mussulmans who were menacing Hungary.*

Immediately upon hearing of this, Luther wrote Spalatin, "I shall enjoy no rest until I have attacked the idol of Mentz, with its brothel at Halle;"† and he instantly commenced the composition of his German pamphlet *Against the New Idol of Halle*.

On the reception of this news, the electoral court was thrown into a panic. The universal comment was, "Luther can only be saved by being forgotten; yet now he proposes to war upon the first ecclesiastical prince in the empire." "Tell him," said Frederick to Spalatin, "that I will not suffer him to write against the archbishop of Mentz, and thus redisturb the public tranquillity."‡

Spalatin accordingly wrote Luther to that effect; whereupon the indignant monk indited this epistle to Frederick's confidant:

"The elector will not suffer! and I too will not suffer the elector not to permit me to write; rather would I destroy myself, you, the elector, nay, the

* Audin.

† L. Epp. II., 59; 7th October, 1521.

‡ Ibid., 94.



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this affair—how a tiny spark kindled a terrible conflagration. All the world was at that time in a state of security. This poor begging friar, thought they, who, unaided, would attack the pope, is too weak for such a crusade. But God interposed, and he caused the pope more labor and anxiety than he had ever felt since he first took his seat in the temple of God to tyrannize over the church. This same God still lives; let no one doubt it. He will know how to withstand a cardinal of Mentz, even were he supported by four emperors; for He is placed above all things, to hew down the lofty cedars, and to abase the haughty Pharaohs.

“For this reason I inform your highness by letter, that if the idol is not thrown down, I must, in obedience to God’s teachings, publicly attack your highness, as I have attacked the pope himself. Let your highness conduct yourself in accordance with this advice; I shall wait a fortnight for a favorable reply.

“Given in my wilderness, the Sunday after St. Catherine’s day, 15th November, 1521.

“From your electoral highness’ obedient and devoted servant,

“MARTIN LUTHER.”*

The weak archbishop is said to have been greatly frightened on the reception of this terrible and mysterious epistle. He immediately sat down and wrote this excommunicated monk—he, a prince of the empire, and the leading primate of the church

in Germany—this submissive letter, fully as singular as the letter which called it forth :

“ My dear doctor, I have received your missive, and have taken it in good part. But I think the motive that has led you to write me such an epistle has long ceased to exist. I desire, with God’s help, to conduct myself as a pious bishop and a Christian prince, and I confess my need of the grace of God.

“ I do not deny that I am a sinner, liable to sin and error, sinning and erring daily. I am well assured that without God’s grace I am worthless and offensive mire, even as other men, if not more so.

“ In replying to your letter, I would not conceal this gracious disposition, for I am more than desirous of showing you all kindness and favor, for the love of Christ. I know how to receive a Christian and fraternal rebuke.

“ With my own hand,

“ALBERT.”*

This remarkable letter was dispatched to Luther, and reached him at Wartburg within the specified fortnight.

Fabricius Capito, the archbishop’s chaplain, sent with his master’s letter one of his own, in which he censured the harshness of the monk’s language. He remarked that it was necessary to observe some reserve in our intercourse with great people, to make allowances for them, sometimes to shut our

* L. Epp. II., 115.

eyes to their defects ; to all which Luther responded thus : “ The Christian faith is an open, a public, a sincere faith ; it sees things as they really are, it proclaims the truth. My opinion is, that we ought to unmask all hypocrites and ill-doers, that we ought to spare none of them, to excuse none of them, to shut our eyes to none of their proceedings, so that truth may remain free and manifest, as on a broad, open field. ‘ *Cursed be he that doeth the Lord’s work deceitfully,*’ says Jeremiah. It is one thing, my dear Fabricius, to praise or extenuate vice, and another to set about its cure with kindness and gentleness. Before all things, it is essential to declare aloud and unequivocally what is just and what is unjust ; afterwards, when our hearer is thoroughly imbued with that lesson, we should soothe him and assist him, despite of, nay, all the more for, any weaknesses whereunto he may fall back. ‘ *Brethren, comfort ye the feeble-minded,*’ says St. Paul.

“ I trust that no one will ever have occasion to charge me with any want of charity or patience towards the feeble-minded. If your cardinal had written his letter in true sincerity of heart, O God, with what joy, with what humility would I fall at his feet. Oh, how unworthy should I deem myself to kiss the dust before him ; for I myself, what am I but dust and filth ? Let him truly accept the word of God, and we will all of us obey him as faithful, submissive servants.

“ With respect to those who persecute the word,



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fessor! His name is *one another*. Whence it would follow that the confessors should also confess to their penitents; that each Christian should be, in his turn, pope, bishop, priest; and that the pope himself should confess to all.”*

Luther next approached another momentous question, that of monkish celibacy. The Germans are fond of social life and domestic joys; hence, of all the papal ordinances, compulsory celibacy was that which produced the saddest consequences. This law, which at first had been imposed on the heads of the clergy, had prevented the ecclesiastical fiefs from becoming hereditary. But when extended by Gregory VII. to the inferior clergy, it was attended with the most deplorable results. Many priests evaded the obligations imposed upon them by this arbitrary and unnatural decree, by the most scandalous disorders, which in time drew general contempt and hatred upon the whole order; while those who submitted to Hildebrande’s law were inwardly exasperated against the church, because, while conferring on its superior dignitaries so much power, wealth, and earthly enjoyment, it bound its humbler ministers, who were its most indispensable supporters, to a self-denial so contrary to the gospel.†

There was accordingly at this period of the Reformation a very general disposition manifested, both by the clergy and the monks, to break over the law enjoining celibacy, and to marry.

* L. Opp., XVII., 701.

† D’Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 16.

Luther thought the priests ought to marry. Accordingly, when he heard that Bernard Feldkirchen, who had been the first under his direction to assail the errors of Rome; had married, he exclaimed, "I admire this new bridegroom, priest of Romberg, who fears nothing, but hastens forward in the midst of uproar." But touching that kindred question, the marriage of monks, of men who had deliberately given up the pleasures of this life, and accepted all the rigors of asceticism, he was doubtful, nay, at first he was firmly persuaded that it might not be.

Therefore, on learning that the question was much agitated throughout Germany, and on receiving the theses which Carlstadt had published against monachism, and some masterly propositions by Melancthon on the same side, Luther was sorely troubled. "Gracious God," exclaimed he, "our Wittembergers then would give wives even to the monks!"

In the various letters which he wrote at this time, he showed how anxious and undecided he was. The fact is, that Luther in this matter did not lead, he followed public opinion. "Ah," said he indignantly on another occasion, "they will not force *me* to take a wife."* But his rare good sense finally emancipated him from this monkish superstition, and as we shall shortly see, the circumstances under which he married placed his conduct an arrow's flight beyond that of the most radical of his com-

* L. Epp., II., 40.

peers. Indeed Melancthon's logic convinced him ere he quitted Wartburg of the essential justice of the abolition of celibacy, as applied not only to priests, but also to monks.

But while Luther was thus engaged in the investigation and settlement of doctrines, the Reformation abruptly left the domain of speculation, and went into the field of action.



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outer walls of the Christian church was about to be taken down.

The Augustine monastery at Wittemberg inaugurated this reform. They abated the rigors of the cloister asceticism, and abolished private masses. They affirmed that, since they no longer believed in the efficacy of private masses for the taking away of sins, they could not continue to celebrate them without sin; that Jesus had instituted the eucharist with his apostles, who, in their time, had never celebrated the sacrament except by way of communion; and lastly, that as our Lord had at the beginning given both the bread and the wine to his disciples, they also were bound in the most solemn manner to administer both whenever they celebrated mass.*

These strange doctrines echoing from the Wittemberg cloister, caused an intense commotion in the good old town, and in the whole vicinage. So great indeed was the disturbance at the monastery, that the university interfered, and invoked Frederick's mediation. That prince accordingly appointed a committee of the Wittemberg professors, Amsdorff, Justus Jonas, Carlstadt, Melancthon, and one or two others, to inquire into the reason why these Augustines had departed from the usual discipline of the church.

The monks returned their answer in writing, giving substantially the reasons just recited. The deputies who had come to convict, returned them-

* Stebbing, Hist. Ref., Vol. I., p. 98.

selves convicted. They then apprized the elector of their sudden conversion, and even out-Heroded Herod by going beyond the monks in their advocacy of this startling innovation. "To none of the corruptions of the dark ages," they said, "was greater reprobation due than to the alterations which the Roman see had arbitrarily introduced into the service of the last supper. The mass was in fact nothing more than the communion of the body and blood of Christ; and it is as absurd to celebrate the mass for the salvation of those not present, as it would be to baptize one person for another."

In attributing the origin of the most superstitious practices of the mediæval church to the notion that the mass was a sacrifice, the Wittemberg theologians manifested equal knowledge and acuteness. This instant capitulation of a militant deputation to the irresistible logic of those whom they were sent to reduce to obedience, is a beautiful and striking instance of the omnipotent influence of Christianity, and proves very conclusively that the fathers of the Reformation were more intent upon the discovery of truth than upon the establishment of a sect.

The cautious elector was astonished upon the reception of this epistle, but his strength of mind enabled him to appreciate the cogency of argument with which the deputies supported the new principle. Still he thought that in a matter which so vitally concerned the church at large, and which

struck so severe a blow at these peculant corrupters of the institution of the eucharist, who had founded their superstitions and extortions upon the Roman system, it behooved him to proceed with moderation. Therefore, in his answer to the deputies, he counselled caution, and requested to be informed of the time when the changes were to be made.*

But the prudent counsels of Frederick were disregarded. Carlstadt, though possessing neither the vigor nor the elevated genius of Luther, was inspired by a zeal as resolute, if not as wise as that of his great master. This fervor of disposition, unmodified by the force which Luther derived from his wonderful strength of understanding, urged him to take a step which could only have been rendered safe by the concurrent voices of the whole body of the reformers.

It was part of Carlstadt's duty to perform service in the castle church on Christmas day, and he seized the occasion to make numerous and essential alterations in the office of the eucharist. He not only read the service in German, instead of the prescribed Latin forms, but he left out the regular ordinance of the confessional, most of the old usages and ceremonies, and distributed the bread and wine freely to all present, saying, "Whosoever feels the burden of his sins, and hungers and thirsts for the grace of God, let him come and receive the body and blood of our Lord."†

An explosion instantly followed. Frederick had

* Stebbing, Hist. Ref. Vol. I., p. 99. † Corp. Ref. I., 512.



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monastery was completely broken up; the monks, stripping off their gowns, returned into the world.

“There resided in Wittemberg a few men who, agitated by the great events that were then stirring all Christendom, aspired to direct revelations from the Deity, instead of meekly desiring sanctification of heart, and who asserted that they were called to complete the Reformation so feebly sketched out by Luther.

“‘What is the use,’ said they, ‘of clinging so closely to the Bible? The Bible! the Bible! always the Bible! Can the Bible preach to us? Is it sufficient for our instruction? If God had designed to instruct us by a book, would he not have sent us a Bible from heaven? It is by the Spirit alone that we can be enlightened. God himself speaks to us. God himself reveals to us what we should do and what we should preach.’

“Thus did these fanatics, like the adherents of Rome, attack the fundamental principle upon which the Reformation was founded, the all-sufficiency of the word of God.”*

The new prophets then ran foaming through the streets, crying, “Woe! Woe!” declaring that infant baptism was valueless; that all priests, as well those who had quitted the cloister as those who continued in it, should be put to death; that the earth must be purified by blood; and that the end of all things drew near.

Not contenting themselves with words, the fanat-

* D'Aubigné, Vol. I., pp. 46, 47.

ics rushed to the churches, spoiled them of their relics, and broke the images.*

The university and the civil authorities, which had already, in January, 1522, regulated the Lord's supper according to the new ritual,† set themselves earnestly to check these disturbances, and threw the ringleaders into prison;‡ but still the agitation continued; indeed it received a fresh impetus by the open adhesion of Carlstadt, who, to the lasting blemish of his fame, placed himself at the head of this rabble, and did his utmost to break up the university. The first leader of the fanatics had been an ignorant tailor named Claus Storch.§ But on his incarceration, Carlstadt, followed by Zwilling and a number of persons of the lowest class, entered the church of All-Saints during divine service, and commenced to destroy the statues, pictures, and images; vociferating, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters under the earth." At the enunciation of this text, which seemed to dazzle their understandings, the magistrates of Wittemberg stood passive, while Carlstadt extended his work of destruction to the other churches.||

Not content with these violent proceedings, Carlstadt returned to the university, and inveighed against the vanity of learning. He maintained that knowledge was a snare and a delusion, urged the

* Seckendorf, p. 480.

† Corp. Ref., I., 545.

‡ Mel. Corp. Ref., I., 513. § Corp. Ref., I., 514. || Audin.

students to quit the university, and himself practised his doctrine by visiting the haunts of the most ignorant men, where repeating the text, *The truth is hidden from wise men, and revealed unto babes*, he solicited their opinion on the most obscure biblical passages.*

Instantly a unanimous cry arose for Luther. It was thought that he alone could avert ruin and disgrace.†

The reformer, sad and anxious, at first contented himself with writing an urgent letter to Carlstadt, in which he conjured him to desist from his intemperate demonstrations.

In a letter to Melancthon, he implored him to use his utmost exertions to prevent the prince from staining his hands with the blood of the new prophets.‡ And writing a little later to the citizens of Wittemberg, he said,

“You are directing your energies against the mass, images, and other comparatively unimportant matters, and in doing so, laying aside that faith and charity of which you have so much need. You have afflicted, by your outrageous conduct, many pious men—men perhaps better than yourselves. You have forgotten what is due to the weak. If the strong run on at their utmost speed, regardless of their feebler brethren who advance more slowly, these last must be left helpless behind—must needs succumb.

“It is by the aid of the word alone that we must

* Meurer.

† Corp. Ref., I., 566.

‡ Michelét, p. 115.



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donjon-keep of Wartburg for ever, and set out upon his journey for Wittemberg.

He had allowed his beard to grow, and laid aside his pilgrim's staff for a stout horse and a riding-whip. His monastic habiliments were exchanged for the steel cuirass, the long, heavy sword, the plumed casque, the spurs and boots of a man-at-arms of the sixteenth century. In this warlike costume, amid a crowd of valets and a cloud of dust, his painter friend, Lucas Cranach, has represented him as making his entry into Wittemberg.*

One of the historians of the Reformation relates a curious incident of the journey:

“John Kressler, a young theologian of St. Gall, was proceeding with a friend to Wittemberg, to finish his studies there, when one evening, in an inn named the ‘Black Bear,’ situated near the gate of Jena, he met Luther disguised as a cavalier. Neither of the young men was acquainted with his person. He was seated at a table reading a little book, which the inquisitive students soon discovered to be a Psalter in Hebrew. The cavalier politely saluted them, and invited them to a seat at his table.

“In the conversation which ensued, he asked them what they thought of Luther in Switzerland. Kressler replied, that some there knew not how to honor him sufficiently, and thanked God daily for having sent him to vindicate and raise up the wounded and shackled truth; while others, more partic-

* Audin.

larly the priests, denounced him as a heretic, who ought to be condignly punished.

“From some words which fell from the landlord, the travellers were disposed to think that the mysterious trooper who thus read the Hebrew Psalter was Ulric Von Hütten.

“By and by in came some merchants. One of them, soon after his arrival, pulled out of his pocket a pamphlet of Luther’s just published, and not yet bound, and asked the rest of the company whether they had yet seen it.

“In the course of the conversation which arose hereupon, the cavalier spoke of the indisposition to approach religious topics then manifested by the princes assembled at the diet of Nuremberg. He also expressed a fervent hope that evangelical truth would bear fuller fruit in the persons of future teachers, not poisoned, like their predecessors, with papal errors.

“One of the merchants replied, ‘I am not learned in these matters; but to my mind, Luther must be decidedly one of two things, either an angel from heaven or a demon from hell; and at any rate, he is so remarkable a person that I have put by ten florins to go and confess to him.’

“This passed at supper. Previously to the meal, Luther had arranged with the host to pay the bill for the whole party. When they separated for the night, Luther, giving a hand to each of the young Swiss—the merchants had gone out on their business—requested them, on their arrival at Wittem-

berg, to go and salute, on his part, their countryman, Dr. Jerome Schurff. On their asking him what name they should mention, he replied, ‘Merely tell him that he who is to come salutes him; he will not fail to comprehend these words.’

“When the merchants, on their return to the inn, learned from the landlord that he suspected that the strange cavalier was Luther himself, with whom they had supped, they were inconsolable at not having known it earlier, so that they might have shown him greater respect, and saved themselves the shame of making so many indifferent remarks.

“They arose early in the morning to wait upon him, and offered a thousand apologies; Luther however only tacitly admitted that it was he.

“The Swiss learned the name of their strange companion from Dr. Schurff, to whom they had gone on reaching Wittemberg; so that when Luther arrived, they met him most cordially.”*

Luther meantime hastened on. From the neighborhood of Leipsic he addressed a letter to the elector, informing him that he had quitted the asylum which his kindness had provided, and speaking in the strongest terms of the anxiety which afflicted his mind on account of the disorders into which the university had fallen. He affirmed that it was not for his own safety that he trembled, but for that of the just emancipated gospel; and he added, that since he had found it vain to make sub-

* Marheinecke, I.



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might receive a careful and more impartial investigation. This failing, Schurff was empowered to demand of Luther his reasons for precipitation.

Dr. Schurff met the intrepid monk some miles from Wittemberg, on the 7th of March, and strove in vain to prevent his reëntrance into the city. Luther gave his friend, however, his reasons for adhering to his determination : first, that the church demanded his reappearance ; second, that disorder had crept in among his flock ; thirdly, that he wished to avert, as far as in him lay, the smouldering insurrection which he rightly regarded as threatening the country. These reasons he wrote out for the elector's inspection, and added, "I have been called, and I will go ; time presses ; let destiny be accomplished in the name of Christ, master alike of life and death. Satan in my absence has penetrated into my fold and committed ravages which my presence alone can remedy. A letter would not quiet the commotion ; I must make use of my own eyes and mouth to see and speak."

Requesting Schurff to dispatch this missive to his electoral grace with all speed, Luther pressed forward, and reëntering Wittemberg that same day, was clasped once more in the arms of his devoted friends.

Nor had he miscalculated the effect of his presence. The course of sermons which he proceeded to deliver exorcised the devil of disorder, and the new prophets at once quitted the city.* Luther

* Michelét, p. 120, note.

was destined, however, to have a severe tussle with Carlstadt, who, for the sake of peace, gave way for a time, outwardly at least, to his colleague's impressive exhortations, and resumed his lectures at the university;* but *mars gravior sub pace latet*—war, bitterer for its disguise, followed presently.

* L. Epp. II., 284.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AFTER exorcising the spirit of discord, which was his first care on his return to Wittemberg, Luther sat down at his dear Philip's side, in the restored quiet of the Augustine monastery, where he still continued to reside, though it was optional with others whether they should do so or not, for a final revision of his translation of the New Testament.

At length the work was completed. It was turned over to the printers, who seemed in their turn to be impressed with its importance, so zealously did they push it forward. Luther informs us that three presses were constantly employed in printing the German Testament, and that ten thousand sheets were daily struck off,* an immense number for those rude typographical days.

On the 21st of September, 1522, the first complete edition of three thousand copies in two folio volumes appeared, with this simple title : THE NEW TESTAMENT—GERMAN—WITTEMBERG.†

This at once brought this portion of the sacred oracles within the reach and comprehension of the common, unlearned people, and was the greatest stride towards success which the Reformation had yet made. Luther based his whole doctrine on the holy writ ; but while that lay locked up in the Greek

* L. Epp. II., 236.

† Ibid.



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translation of the Old Testament. This was published in parts as they were finished, and was absorbed as quickly as the gospel had been. It was not until some years later that the Old and New Testaments were bound together, and the complete Bible was given to the people.

But while the masses received the Bible with joy, the adherents of Rome scornfully rejected it. Bavaria, Brandenburg, Austria—all these states which bowed beneath the Roman yoke, decreed that the Testament should not be sold within their borders, but should be placed in the hands of the magistrates. “But despite my prohibition,” wrote duke George of Saxony, “many thousands of copies were sold and read in my dominions.”

Perceiving that it could not suppress this popular work, the Roman see had recourse to stratagem: it published a German version, which it stamped with its own imprimatur. In reality this was Luther’s translation, altered in various places to conform with the Romish traditions.* Still the people preferred the Lutheran version, and continued to purchase the Wittemberg editions.

At about the time of the publication of the first edition of the New Testament at Wittemberg, Leo X. died suddenly, at the early age of forty-five, and in the full vigor of his faculties. Dying thus in the flower of his age, this pontiff left the Roman see little edified or profited by the splendor of his reputation. Those mocking letters which he had so

* Roscoe’s Life of Leo X.

highly valued, found themselves unable to sneer down the Reformation, and Leo dropped the tiara just when the new publication at Wittemberg had smitten the papacy with terrific force.

Leo X. left enormous debts, and his cheated creditors followed him to his grave, loading his name with curses. The satirical Romans pronounced this funeral oration upon him: "Leo, you gained your pontificate like a fox; you held it like a lion; and you left it like a dog."*

His successor was the octogenarian cardinal Tortosa, a native of Utrecht, a conceited pedant, who had been invested with the Roman purple in 1517, through the influence of Charles V., whose tutor he had been, and he now reigned under the title of Adrian VI.

This election had been manœuvred by the subtle Cardinal de Medici, afterwards Clement VIII., who, seeing that he had then no chance of clutching the tiara, desired to fill the pontifical throne with a pope whose advanced years might be his title-deed to the succession.

But the election was very unpopular in Italy. Sleidan relates that the Romans were so exasperated at this selection of a foreigner, that the members of the holy conclave thought themselves fortunate to have escaped being ducked in the Tiber.†

But in Utrecht great joy was manifested; banners were flung out, upon which this legend was in-

* Ranke's History of the Popes.

† Sleidan, Hist. de la Ref., I., p. 124.

scribed: "Utrecht planted; Louvain watered; the emperor gave the increase;" to which a wag appended, "And God had nothing to do with it."*

Meantime the diet had met at Nuremberg, and Adrian had written a very severe letter to Frederick of Saxony, in which he charged him with apostasy, and urged him, as he valued his soul's salvation, to make amends for his past wicked connivance at heresy, by energetically striving to secure Luther's conviction at Nuremberg.†

But though every effort was made by the new pontiff, and by his nuncio in attendance upon the diet, the states of the empire, emboldened by the absence of the emperor, could not be persuaded to pronounce an opinion upon the Augustine further than this collateral one: they demanded, as Luther had done, the convocation of a free council; they complained of the grievances under which Germany had labored for centuries, owing to the Roman domination; and exhibiting to Rome a list of evils which needed correction, with one hand, with the other the diet showed Germany its decree: for the present, no interference with the Reformation.‡

This decision was regarded as a triumph by the reformers. Toleration was all that they ventured to demand of the state; the concession of that exceeded their wildest dreams of success. Consequently the adherents of reform rent the air with their hilarious shouts.

* Sleidan, *Hist. de la Ref.*, I., p. 124.

† Pallavicini.

‡ Meurer, Sleidan, Myconius, Van Brunt.



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In the democracy of letters, kings are unknown; titles are not so important as quality: in the literary guild, truth only wears a crown. Luther proved this in his reply to Henry: "Nay, an thou'lt mouth, I'll rant," exclaimed the fiery reformer, in spirit, if not in words. And his pamphlet as much exceeded that of his kingly antagonist in terror of invective, as in strength of argument and aptness of illustration.

Luther opened his response to Henry by reproaching that monarch with basing his doctrines wholly upon human traditions. He said, "As for me, I never cease crying, Gospel, gospel; Christ, Christ; and my adversaries retort, Custom, custom; ordinances, ordinances; fathers, fathers. St. Paul says, *Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.** By this thunder-clap the apostle disperses, as a whirlwind scatters the dust, all the hobgoblins of this Henry."

After refuting in detail the errors with which Henry's tract swarmed, and refuting them in that disdainful, yet perspicuous and spirited style peculiar to him, he turns, at the conclusion, like a stag at bay.

"To all the words of the fathers and of men, of angels and of devils," he wrote, "I oppose not old customs, not the multitude of men, but the word of eternal majesty, the gospel, which even my adversaries are obliged to recognize. To this I hold fast, on this I repose, in this I boast, in this I exult

* 1 Cor. 2 : 5.

and triumph over the papists, the Thomists, the Henrys, the sophists, and all the swine of hell. The King of heaven is with me. For this reason I fear nothing, although a thousand Augustines, a thousand Cyprians, and a thousand of these churches which Henry defends, should rise up against me. It is a small matter that I should despise and revile a king of the earth, since he himself does not fear in his writings to blaspheme the King of heaven, and to profane his holy name by the most impudent falsehoods.

“I will not be gentle towards thee, king of England. I know that it is vain for me to humble myself, to give way, to entreat, to try peaceful methods. At length I will show myself more terrible towards these furious beasts, who goad me daily with their horns. I will turn mine upon them. I will provoke Satan until he falls lifeless and exhausted. If this heretic does not recant, says Henry VIII., the new Thomas, he must be burned alive. Such are the weapons you employ against me; the fury of the stupid asses and swine of the brood of Thomas Aquinas, then the stake. Well, then, be it so. Let these hogs advance, if they dare, and let them burn me. I reside at Wittemberg—I await them. After my death, though my ashes should be strewn into a thousand seas, they will rise, reunite, pursue, and swallow up this abominable herd. Living, I shall be the enemy of the papacy; burned, I shall be its destruction. Go, then, swine of St. Thomas, do what seemeth good to you.

You will ever find Luther like a bear upon your way, and as a lion upon your path. He will spring upon you whithersoever you go, and will never leave you at peace until he has broken your iron heads, and ground your brazen foreheads into dust.

“Papists, will you never cease from your vile attacks? Do what you please. Nevertheless, before that gospel which I preach, down must come popes, bishops, priests, monks, princes, devils, death, sin, and all that is not Christ, or in Christ.”*

This fierce pamphlet fell like an avalanche upon poor Henry, and he felt the laurels wither upon his head even in the full flush of his triumph. He had no wish to provoke a fresh assault from this Titanic monk, who gloamed like an avenging Nemesis upon the ecclesiastical horizon, who grasped such thunder-bolts, and spoke such daggers.

The festivities of Greenwich were interrupted; the courtiers stood aghast; while the bishop of Rochester and Sir Thomas More tottered feebly forward to the support of their smitten sovereign.

When Henry had recovered his breath, he wrote to the elector and to duke George of Saxony, bitterly complaining of Luther's tract, and conjuring them to unite in thrusting him from their joint dominions.

But while duke George was very willing to comply with this request, and had indeed for years been exerting every energy to secure Luther's condemnation and banishment, the friendly elector contin-

* L. Opp., (Leipsic,) XVIII., 209.



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CHAPTER XXXVI.

ON the 14th of September, 1523, Pope Adrian VI. died. The Romans, delighted at being thus delivered from the rigorous rule of the ascetic foreigner, are said to have crowned the door of his physician with flowers, and to have inscribed over it these words: “*To the saviour of his country.*”*

He was succeeded by Giulio Medici, another son of that famous Florentine house, and a cousin of Leo X. Like Léo, he was fond of gayeties, of luxury, and of idleness. All idea of reform vanished under the new *régime*, and the Reformation was mainly hated by the new pontiff, because it interfered with his pleasures and meddled with the established routine.

Meantime the Reformation continued to spread. Several princes, distinguished alike for their virtue and their rank, became its open adherents. The young landgrave of Hesse, who had seen and became interested in Luther at Worms, and Prince Albert of Brandenburg, both men of singular energy and strength of character, had recently espoused the reform tenets; and about this time George of Palenz, bishop of Sumland, declared his conversion to the new theology. All Denmark was Lutheran, and the free cities of Magdeburg and of

* Cochläus.

Nuremberg embraced the reform by solemn decrees of their respective senates.*

The flame thus lit up rapidly extended itself, and before the close of the year 1523, the Reformation counted among its ardent adherents and firm allies Livonia, Mecklenberg, the duchy of Holstein, Pomerania, Westphalia, Leipsic, Brunswick, and Strasburg.†

But if the reformers were active, Rome was not idle. Startled by the spread of the heresy, she began to muster her squadrons, and bade her fierce crusaders whet their swords in preparation for a bloody glut of her vengeance.

Despairing of success from the obstinate members of the Germanic diet, still in session at Nuremberg, she turned elsewhere for succor. By skilful manipulation, the new pontiff, Clement VII., gained over to the support of his wavering cause a number of the most powerful houses in the empire. The Swabian league, the wealthiest cities in the empire, the oldest and most powerful nobles, Charles V. himself—out of such materials did Clement construct his new rampart against the Reformation.

A great council, convened expressly to decide upon the policy to be pursued by the Vatican at this momentous juncture, was held at Ratisbon, and attended by a host of influential nobles and illustrious prelates.‡ After a conference of fifteen days' duration, the most severe measures for the extirpation

* Stebbing, Vol. I., p. 142.

† Corp. Ref.

‡ Sleiden, Hist. Ref.

of heresy were fixed on; it was decided to “cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war” against the Reformation.

Then a pitiless storm of persecution arose. Luther trembled for the tranquillity of Germany, and did his utmost to still the tempest. “If the princes,” said he, “oppose the truth, the result will be a confusion which will destroy princes, magistrates, priests, and people. I fear to see all Germany, ere long, deluged with blood. Let us rise up as a wall, and preserve our people from the wrath of God. Nations are not now what they have heretofore been. The sword of civil war is impending over the heads of our kings. They are resolved to destroy Luther; but Luther is resolved to save them. Christ lives and reigns, and I shall live and reign with him.”

But these prophetic words did not stay the persecution. Attempts to choke the heresy in blood were made in various sections. In the Low Countries, which were under the personal supervision of Charles V., and especially in Antwerp, the Inquisition, under the congenial charge of Hochstraaten, revelled in a ghastly carnival. “The executions have begun,” sadly exclaimed Erasmus. “At last,” cried Luther, “Christ is gathering some fruit of our preaching, and has created new martyrs.” But the heretical fire refused to be dampened by this bloody baptism. “Wherever the inquisitors raise a pile,” said Erasmus, “there they seem to have been sowing heretics.”*

* Erasm. Epp. to Duke George.



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Swiss reformers, by Zwingle and Œcolampadius, but also by a number of the German reformed theologians besides Carlstadt, by Bucer and by Capito, for instance.

But Carlstadt went beyond this difference of opinion. His zeal against the images now returned in full force. Impatient of the restraint exercised upon him at Wittemberg, and conscientiously desirous of stereotyping his convictions into action, his ill-regulated zeal impelled him to quit the university early in 1523. He did so, and that so suddenly, that neither his colleagues nor the elector were apprized of his intention. Repairing to the neighboring village of Orlamund, he had the incumbent of the church there dismissed, and he was himself appointed pastor in his stead. And all this also occurred without the permission or knowledge of the university chapter or of the elector.*

Carlstadt then began to propagate his doctrines. We are assured that his imprudent discourses and enthusiastic language speedily inflamed the minds of his hearers in those agitated times; and the people, believing that they heard a second Elijah, hastened under his direction to break the idols of Baal.

The dismayed elector dispatched Luther to the scene of these outbreaks, in the hope that he might restore the wonted tranquillity. But so far was this from being the case, that he was almost mobbed by the admirers of Carlstadt on reaching Orlamund. His exhortations were vain. On leaving the town,

* Spalatin's Annals. Erasmus' Epp.

he was followed, hooted, cursed. "Begone, in the name of all the devils," shouted some; "May you break your neck before you get out of the city," vociferated others. "I was -glad," said Luther afterwards, in relating the incident, "I was glad to escape without being pelted with mud and stones."*

The indignant elector now interfered, and banished Carlstadt from the electoral states.†

We are assured that Luther had absolutely nothing to do with these severe measures of his prince.‡ But Carlstadt held him responsible in his farewell address to his flock at Orlamund, which he signed, "Andrew Bodenstein, expelled by Luther, unheard, unconvicted."

In narrating this sad phase of the Reformation, this unhappy breaking of a long, close friendship, this separation amid crimination and recrimination of the father of the Reformation and his earliest prominent supporter, D'Aubigné remarks, "The fanaticism of the day explains the direction that Luther now took. Enthusiasts were not content with undervaluing what they called in their mystical jargon the 'External Word,' that is, the Bible, and with pretending to special revelations from the Holy Ghost; they went so far as to despise the sacrament of the Lord's supper as something *outward*, and they spoke of an *inward* communion as the only true communion.

"From that time, in every attempt to explain the

* L. Epp. II., 579.

† Dr. Markeineke, Ref. Gesch.

‡ D'Aubigné, Vol. II., p. 164.

Lord's supper in a symbolical manner, Luther saw only the danger of weakening the authority of the holy Scripture; of substituting arbitrary allegories for their real meaning; of spiritualizing every thing in religion; of making it consist not in the gifts of God, but in the impressions of men; and of substituting by these means for true Christianity a mysticism, a theosophy, a fanaticism, that would infallibly become its grave.

“We must acknowledge that, had it not been for Luther's violent opposition, the mystical, enthusiastic, and subjective tendency would then perhaps have made rapid progress, and would have turned back the tide of blessings which the Reformation was to spread over the world.”*

But despite this defence, it must be confessed that, in the several interviews which Luther had with his old friend and coadjutor, he acted harshly and domineeringly, and that this haughty course was in no way conducive to Carlstadt's reconciliation. The point upon which they differed was one upon which, by a little concession on both sides, they might have consented to differ. They would thus have avoided that fierce quarrel which tore the vitals of the Reformation, assailed from within and from without, and which so sorely grieved all good men and true throughout Christendom.

Carlstadt first took refuge at Strasburg, where he published several works. He was a sound Latin, Greek, and Hebrew scholar, says Dr. Schuer, and

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., 159, 160.



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as a reward to any one who should undertake his defence ; at the same time he applied to Erasmus, who was esteemed the foremost writer of his age—a reputation for which he was as much indebted to the racy vigor and *bonhomie* of his style as to his erudition.

Reasoning from the past, Luther had a right to expect that the sage of Rotterdam would join him in chastising with the rod of his irony the imperfect and bigoted logic of the English Bluebeard. But Erasmus was as open to the suggestions of pride as Henry himself; therefore when the monarch stooped from his throne to solicit his aid, the renegade scholar weakly yielded to the temptation of having a monarch for his friend, rather than a monk, however eloquent, renowned, and pious.*

Accordingly in the autumn of 1524, Erasmus published his famous book entitled the *Diatrobe*, which was a treatise on *freewill*, written from the standpoint of scholasticism. Like every thing from his pen, it was calm, able, and philosophical. It greatly enhanced his contemporary reputation, and was felt to be a severe blow at the Reformation for two reasons: it detached from its ranks a scholar who had been more than suspected of favoring its tenets; it hurt the reform by its intrinsic power and subtle sophisms.

Luther was deeply pained by this disingenuous conduct of his old friend and correspondent: Erasmus had been among the earliest to encourage him

* Stebbing, Hist. Ref.

to enter upon his career of reform, and he had looked to him for sympathy and support; nor had Luther till now seen reason to doubt his sincerity. The defection would have afflicted him from whatever cause it had proceeded, for the Reformation needed belles-lettres support; but occasioned as it was by the meanest of vanities, it appeared to have happened to show him the rottenness of worldly genius, however splendid, and to teach him to place less trust than ever in human helpers.

The “*Diatribes*” created a sensation. But the timid philosopher could scarce credit his own boldness. He had been employed during the past ten years in carefully steering his scholastic bark so as to avoid the Scylla of reform and the Charybdis of the papacy. Now he had deserted this middle course, taken his faction, allied himself with the side of retrogression. He fixed his eyes tremblingly upon that gauntlet which he had flung down. He knew perfectly the Hercules whom he had summoned into the arena, and he gave way to bitter wailing: “Why was I not permitted to grow old in the garden of the muses?” he exclaimed. “Here am I at sixty driven into the arena, and holding the cestus and the net of a gladiator, instead of the congenial lyre. I am congratulated on my triumph, but I have gone beyond my sphere, and I know not that I triumph. The Reformation is daily spreading.”*

Thus did the timid scholar sing—not a jubilant

* Erasm. Epp., p. 811.

pæan, but the sad and tearful notes of a broken and dejected old age.

Luther felt, and indeed the Reformation demanded, that a response to Erasmus must be penned. But he determined to take his time for the composition of his answer, so that it should be worthy alike of the august subject and of the eminent scholar whom it was to rebut. He preferred to wait, and even to endure the mocking jeers of his enemies at his delay, rather than to send forth immediately a crude work, and one which might but imperfectly express his views. He therefore commenced to study the whole subject with that thoroughness which was an essential part of his intellectual structure, and meanwhile he bided his time.

The period succeeding the return of Luther to Wittemberg was the most active and laborious of his life. His life no longer presented that uniformity which had characterized its earlier phases. Descended from his poetical solitude at Wartburg, and plunged into the most pitiful realities, he became a prey to the whole world, and it was to him that all the enemies of Rome addressed themselves. All flocked to him; besieging his door hourly, trooped citizens, doctors, princes. Diplomatic enigmas were to be solved, knotty theological points were to be settled, the ethics of social life were to be laid down.

As showing Luther's Titanic literary activity at this period, it may be stated that in 1520, one hun-



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great treasures, in building strong walls, in erecting splendid mansions, in possessing glittering arms. If madmen fall upon such rotten prosperity, its ruin is assured. The true wealth of a city, its safety, its impregnable strength, is to have many worthy, serious, and well-educated citizens. And whom must we blame because there are so few at present but you magistrates who withhold the means, and permit our youth to grow up like trees in a forest?

“Do you inquire what use there is in learning the languages and in literature? Do you say, ‘We can read the Bible very well in German?’ Without languages we could not have received the gospel. Languages are the scabbard that contains the sword of the Spirit; they are the casket which contains the priceless jewels of antique thought; they are the vessel that holds the wine; and as the gospel says, they are the baskets in which the loaves and fishes are kept to feed the multitude.

“If we neglect literature we shall eventually lose the gospel, and through gross ignorance we shall be unable first to write in Latin, then in German. No sooner did men cease to cultivate the languages than Christendom declined, even until it fell under the undisputed dominion of the pope. But no sooner was this torch relighted, than this papal owl fled with a shriek into congenial gloom. Now literature is so much honored that every one is able to appreciate our gospel, and to perceive that it is almost as pure as that of the apostles themselves.

“In former times the fathers were frequently

mistaken, because they were ignorant of languages, and in our days there are some who, like the Waldenses, do not think the languages of any use; but although their doctrine is good, they have often erred in the real meaning of the sacred text; they are without arms against error, and I fear me much that their faith will not remain pure.

“If the languages had not made me positive as to the true meaning of the word, I might have still remained a chained monk, engaged in quietly preaching Romish errors in the obscurity of a cloister; the pope, the sophists, and their antichristian empire would have remained unshaken.”*

Thus wrote this wise and prophetic monk in the early part of the sixteenth century. How much are we in advance of his intelligence to-day?

In obedience to this requisition, libraries sprang up in every direction, schools were planted, and the four corners of the empire were taken up by societies for the amelioration of the people. Poetry received a fresh impetus. Hütten and Hans Sach sang with fresh vigor; Cranach and Albrecht Dürer revolutionized painting; and more books were now printed in one year than had before issued from the press in a century.† Learning had been shut up in the cells of the cloister, it had been confined in the swaddling bands of outward ordinances; but the priests were now forced to loose their exclusive clutch upon it, and it flowed out upon the people, humanizing and elevating humanity.

* L. Opp. (W.) X., 535.

† Corpus Ref. I., 613.

At this time many of Luther's brethren married, and all had entered the world to partake of its cares and its duties, deeming themselves more bound to holiness by the cross and their simple faith in the gospel, than they had been by the vows which wedded them to a life of solitude.

Towards the close of the year 1524, Luther formed the resolution of following the example of those whose freedom was the practical result of his speculations. He had been living in the Wittenberg cloister, and still wore the old monastic dress. He now informed the elector of his projected change, and with that caution which, despite his fiery disposition, he always carried into important actions, he solicited the opinion of his prince in the matter. Frederick responded by sending him a roll of cloth, and bidding him fashion from it any form of dress he pleased. Luther thenceforward rejected both the habit and the title of a monk, and quitting the monastery, he took suitable apartments near the university.* He was now known only by his academic distinctions, and having thus emancipated himself from most of the few remaining trammels of his monkish state; he determined to complete the work by marrying.†

In the convent of Nimptisch, near Grimma, in Saxony, dwelt, in the year 1523, nine nuns who were diligent in reading the word of God, and who had discovered the contrast that exists between a Chris-

* Seckendorf, Lib. I., Sec. 182, p. 314, ed. 1692.

† Stebbing, Vol. I., p. 140.



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conscience with increasing energy : marriage is an institution of God, celibacy an institution of man. He had a horror of any thing that emanated from Rome. He would say to his friends, "I desire to retain no pledge of my papistical slavery." Day and night he prayed God to deliver him from his uncertainty in this matter. At last a single thought broke the slender link which yet bound him captive. To all the motives of propriety and personal obedience which led him to apply to himself this declaration of God, "*It is not good that man should be alone,*"* was added a motive of a higher and more powerful nature. He saw that if he was called to the marriage state as a man, he was also called to it as a reformer. This decided him.

"If this monk should marry," said his friend Schurff, the lawyer, "he will make all the world, and the devil himself, burst with laughter, and will destroy the work so grandly begun." This sarcasm made a different impression from the intended one. To brave the world, the devil, and his enemies, and by an action which they thought calculated to ruin his cause, to prevent its success from being ascribed to his conduct, this was what Luther ardently desired. Accordingly boldly raising his head, he exclaimed, "Well, then, I will do it : I will play the devil and the world this trick ; I will content my father, and marry Catherine."

Luther had always kept an oversight over Catherine Bora : he had even made two efforts to secure

* Genesis 2 : 13.

her hand for a couple of his friends ; the attempts had failed however, and feeling drawn towards her himself, he solicited her to ally herself with him, and this time his efforts were crowned with success ; the vestal consented, and repairing with her to the house of his friend Amsdorff, on the 11th of June, 1525, the emancipated monk was united to the runaway nun, by Pomeranus, whom he emphatically styled the *pastor*, and who publicly blessed the union. The celebrated painter, Lucas Cranach, and Doctor John Apella witnessed the marriage.

No sooner was Luther married, than all Europe was disturbed. He was overwhelmed with accusations and calumnies from every quarter. “It is incest,” cried Henry VIII., from England ; “A monk has married a vestal,” said some ; “Antichrist will be the offspring of such a union,” cried others, “for a prophecy announces that he will be born of a monk and a nun.” To this Erasmus replied with a sarcastic smile, “If the prophecy is true, what thousands of antichrists must already exist in the world.”

But while Luther was thus assailed, many good and moderate men undertook his defence. “Luther,” said Erasmus, “has taken a wife from the noble family of Bora, but she brought him no dowry.” A more valuable testimony was next given in his favor. Philip Melancthon, whom this bold step had at first alarmed, said with that grave, sweet voice, to which even his enemies listened with respect, “It is false and slanderous to maintain that there is any thing

unbecoming in Luther's marriage. I think that in marrying he must have done violence to his own wishes, impelled thereto by conscience. A married life is one of humility, but it is also a holy state, if there be any such in the world, and the Scriptures everywhere represent it as honorable and desirable for all men in God's eyes."

Luther is said to have been troubled at first, when he saw such floods of contempt poured out upon him; but Melancthon became more earnest in his friendship and kindness, and it was not long ere the reformer saw a mark of God's approbation in this bitter opposition of man. "If it did not offend the world," said he, "I should fear that what I have done is displeasing to God."*

Luther was happy in this union. "The best gift of God," said he, "is a pious and amiable wife who fears God, loves her family, with whom a man may live in peace, and in whom he may safely confide." Some months after his marriage he informed one of his friends of Catherine's pregnancy; and a year after their union, she gave birth to a son. The sweets of domestic life, which Luther was eminently suited to enjoy, soon dispersed the storm which the exasperation of his enemies had at first gathered over him. His *Ketha*, as he styled her, manifested the tenderest affection towards him, consoled him in his dejection by repeating passages from the Bible, relieved him from all household cares, sat near him in his leisure moments, worked his por-

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 203-208, *passim*.



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CHAPTER XXXVII.

JUST prior to the occurrence of the domestic events last recited, that wide-spread and desolating insurrection whose symptoms Luther's keen eye had detected from the summit of the Wartburg,* and which his prophetic ken foretold, burst forth—the curtain rose upon the terrible tragedy of the peasants' war.

The serfs, slumbering for ages beneath the crushing weight of feudal tyranny in a dull, heavy sleep, had of late been awakened by the frequent repetition of the magical word liberty by learned men and wise princes. In their ignorance they mistook the religious emancipation which the Reformation inaugurated for political enfranchisement. Their forefathers had left them a heritage of servitude, and the weight of the yoke had increased with each succeeding generation. The fruit of their toil was filched from them, and wasted in the riotous luxury of ungrateful nobles, and that this spoilation might be carried on with greater security, the gates of knowledge were locked and double-barred against them, that they might have no access to those sources of information which exercise and develop the faculties. An eternal, uninterrupted, awful night gloomed over them.

In its inception, the insurrection was meant

* Chap. XXXIV., p. 450.

only to remedy these evils no longer supportable. Tramping forth from the remotest corners of Belgium to the furthest boundaries of Germany, came the infuriated multitudes, making kings, princes, and mitred bishops tremble, but claiming at this time, before they were bewildered by the subtle appeals of enthusiasts, intoxicated by success, and blinded by rage, only what was just and fitting.

The protest of the poor peasants of Suabia, in its barbarian simplicity, will always remain as a monument of courageous insurrectionary moderation. They divided their grievances under twelve heads ;* claiming first the right to choose their own religious teachers, such as should teach them the pure word, unpolluted by human traditions. And this was a manifest declaration in favor of the Reformation. Second, the abolition of tithes, which were felt to be peculiarly oppressive by the poor tillers of the soil, for which they asserted that there was no authority, save the abrogated law of the Old Testament. But if the *seigneurs* did not see fit to grant this, they prayed that the revenue collected from this source might be more fairly apportioned, and that a portion of it might go towards the support of their pastors and towards the relief of the poor.†

In the succeeding articles, they contended for the rank of freemen, for the restoration of certain rights belonging by custom to tillers of the soil, for liberty to hunt and fish in the open plains, forests, and rivers of the country, for exemption from heavy

* Sleidan.

† Beausobre.

taxes, and for the abolition of laws which were partial and unjust. They concluded this remarkable political manifesto by expressing their willingness to withdraw their petition, should it, or any part of it, be shown by Scripture to be unlawful, and by appealing to Luther to arbitrate between them and their oppressors.*

Thus called upon, Luther did not refuse this critical office of arbiter. He was himself sprung from the people, he had a heart to sympathize with their woes, he was acquainted with their wants; yet he knew well that, under the circumstances, insurrection was madness; that these unarmed, undisciplined, unorganized masses would be butchered with relentless fury by their mailed lords; that the rebellion must inevitably, after expending its fury and desolating the empire, be choked in blood. The revolution was a Samson, but it was a blind Samson; it could not stand an hour before the trained *Lanzknechts*. He ardently desired therefore to save these poor rebels from inevitable defeat and slaughter; he feared also that their violence might compromise the Reformation. Yet he wished to clutch for them, from the iron grasp of the nobles, every right he could.

In his reply to the twelve articles of the insurgents, he constituted himself judge between the princes and the people; he told both sides some grand truths, and at no crisis of his life did he assume a position more elevated or more commanding.

* Beausobre, Sleidan.



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the free election of their pastors; they desire that these pastors should preach the gospel to them. Authority may not interpose any prohibition upon this, seeing indeed that of right it should permit each man to teach and to believe that which to him seems good and fitting, whether it be gospel or whether it be false. All that authority is competent to prohibit, is the preaching of disorder and revolt.

“The articles having reference to the physical condition of the peasants, the fines and payments, the exaction of illegal services, and others, are equally just, for authority was not instituted for its own aggrandizement, nor to make use of its subjects for the accomplishment of its own caprices and ill-passions, but for the interest and advantage of the people. Now the people have become fully impressed with this fact, and, being impressed with it, they submit no longer to your crying extortions and tyrannies. Of what benefit were it to a peasant that his field should produce as many florins as it produces grains of corn if his lord may despoil him of the produce, and lavish like dirt the money unjustly derived from the vassal in fine clothes, fine castles, fine eating, and fine drinking? What you should do first and foremost is to put a stop to all this vain luxury of yours, to close up the holes through which this money runs, so that you may leave some little matter in the peasant’s pocket.”*

Then turning to the peasants, the statesman-like

* L. Werke, II., 36.

monk exhorts them in strains of equal wisdom, concedes the justice of many of their demands, conjures them not to sully their cause by violence, counsels patience, informs them that civilization must ere long melt off their shackles, points out to them the mad folly of insurrection, and the certainty of its suppression, with the inevitable loss of the few privileges they then enjoyed.*

But all was in vain. The wise counsels of the father of the Reformation whistled over the heads of the infuriated and now demonized insurgents, as passed the idle wind, unheeded, unheard. The insurrection had now lost that fine moderation which distinguished its early phases. Ambitious demagogues and heated enthusiasts had seized upon it, and the frenzied peasants rushed with blind, indiscriminate fury to their carnival of death. Suabia, Thuringia, Alsace, the whole western end of the empire, heaved in insurrection. Each day the insurgents were joined by new forces; cities and the strongest fortified castles opened their gates on their approach; throughout Rhinegau and Bavaria the revolution became as successful as it was general; a host of apocalyptic visionaries put themselves in motion; the insurrection quitted the domain of politics for that of religious fanaticism; as at first the rallying word had been equal rights, it now become the necessity of a "second baptism."† Like that of the French *Jacquerie*, it became a war against property, and it thus robbed the poor man; a war

* Beausobre.

† Beausobre, Michelét.

against science, and it thus broke up all natural equality—a war against all order, and it held that God revealed every thing to his saints, and that all books, pictures, statues, were inventions of Satan.*

A fanatic named Thomas Munzer, perhaps honestly heated in the cause, and a priest named Pfeifer, were the preachers of the crusade.† Like Attila of old, these zealots left behind them nothing but desolation. Treasure, cities, lives were thrown relentlessly into the greedy maw of the insurrection.

The reformers looked upon this picture with dismay. Luther was too good a citizen to regard this butchery with any feeling but disgust, and he united with Melancthon in urging the princes to take the field against the maddened peasants.‡

At length the princes shook off the fatal lethargy which at first had bound them, and giving the leadership of their allied forces to Philip, landgrave of Hesse, essayed to breast the torrent of destruction.

Philip came upon the insurgents at Frankenhäusen, and ere ordering the charge, he said, “I will not assert that we princes are free from blame in this matter; but though we have been guilty of injustice, this will not excuse those who fall into the sin of hopeless rebellion, violating at once the laws and their oaths;”§ then sounding the attack, the insurgents were speedily routed with awful slaugh-

* Sleidan.

† Seckendorf, Lib. II., Sec. IV.

‡ Briese.

§ Sleidan.



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Frederick possessed neither brilliant genius, nor the more glittering qualities of a statesman and sovereign. But good sense, experience, prudence, foresight, and iron firmness, appeared in the whole system of his policy. He always acted as it is best for a prince to act, not with an ambitious aim to display his own virtues and piety, but in the manner which he thought most likely to secure the general and permanent interests of religious civilization. It was not his disposition to make great and sudden sacrifices, but to follow with steady, resolute, yet almost silent step the signals of the Deity. In his personal conduct, the benignity of his disposition diffused a grace over all his actions, and the paternal attributes of sovereignty mingled in his character with the mildest virtues of friendship and domestic piety. For these reasons Frederick deserves to be remembered by all good men with profound respect.*

His brother John Frederick succeeded to the electoral dignity, a prince whose gentle vigor, whose progressive tendencies, and whose executive ability made him Frederick's fitting successor, and a proper sovereign to carry on to completion the work so auspiciously begun.

Luther was profoundly grieved by the death of the good elector. He was saddened both on his own account, for the prince had been a true and thoughtful friend to him, and on account of his august cause. The powers of the empire now

* Stebbing, Vol. I., pp. 153, 154.

seemed combined against the Reformation. The Roman league of Ratisbon, triumphant against the peasants in the west, and reinforced by the adhesion of other princes in the south, seemed now about to swoop upon the unprotected reformers. Charles V. had recently written a letter from Toledo in which he had ordered another diet to be convoked ere long at Augsburg, and the haughty conqueror at Pavia had expressed a determination to hunt the German heretics into their holes.* And now, by Frederick's death, the sole breakwater seemed removed, and Luther imagined that he could already feel the raging torrent closing about him and swallowing him up.

But still the undaunted monk "bated no jot of heart or hope." Standing beside the corpse of Frederick, that was scarcely cold, and the dead bodies of the peasants that yet strewed the German plains, he pledged himself with fresh enthusiasm never to abandon his work, and repeated with fiery faith, "Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies; in vain do they gnash their teeth, their desire shall perish."†

The many exciting and engrossing events which had occurred since the publication of the "*Dia-tribe*" of Erasmus in 1524,‡ combined to postpone Luther's reply much longer than he had at first intended, so that it was not until towards the close of this momentous year of 1525 that the answer *De*

* Robertson's Hist. of Charles V.

† L Epp. III., 22.

‡ See chap. XXXVI.

Servo Arbitrio was published. What his work lost in lack of spontaneity, it gained in calmness of statement and philosophical strength.

Erasmus belonged to that class of thinkers who maintain that good proceeds from man himself; and though in his treatise on freewill he had not ventured openly to take that ground, he had yet covertly done so, and his arguments meant that or nothing.

Luther believed that every good thing in man came down from God through grace; and concerning the freedom of the will, he made this fine distinction: "Man's will may be called a free will, not in relation to that which is above him, that is to say, God, but with respect to what is below, that is, to the things of the earth. As regards my property, my fields, my houses, my farm, I may act my pleasure freely; but in the things of salvation, man is a captive, he is subject to the will of God."* He then proceeded with that remarkable copiousness of biblical quotation, of which he was one of the greatest of masters, to prove his doctrine that GRACE did every thing.

As illustrating the effect which Luther's pamphlet had upon Erasmus personally, it may be stated that, despite its remarkable freedom from invective, and his candor of statement, it yet cut the philosophic Hollander so deeply that, to borrow the language of one of his panegyrists, "He began to pour forth invectives with a broken voice and hoary hair."†

* L. Opp. XIX., 27.

† M. Nisard, Erasmus, p. 417.



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of the elector, which it must be confessed was not of such a nature as to make him desire to change, at least in this respect, the scriptural commandment, *Put not your trust in princes*. On more than one occasion Luther was obliged to remind the parsimonious elector of his pecuniary destitution, and to solicit a donation. *

Writing in February, 1527, to a friend who had requested a loan of him, he said, "You ask me for eight florins. Where on earth am I to get eight florins? As you know, I am compelled to live with the strictest economy; and yet my want of means, perhaps my want of care, has necessitated me to contract, during the past year, debts amounting to more than a hundred florins, which I must somehow and some time repay to various persons. I have even been obliged to pawn three goblets, presents from different people, for fifty florins, and absolutely to sell one for twelve. Neither Lucas nor Christian will any longer accept me as security, for they have found that by doing so they either lose their money or my poor purse is drained of its last penny."

A little later in the same year he wrote, "Tell Nicholas Endrissus to send to me for some copies of my works. I have retained certain claims upon my publishers in this respect, which is just, seeing that, poor as I am, I get from them no money for my labor, nor any return save an occasional copy or two of my own productions. This is not too

* Seckendorf.

much to expect, I should say, since other writers, and even translators, receive a ducat a sheet for their manuscript.”

Indeed the pinched state of Luther's exchequer actually obliged him to have recourse to a manual occupation in order to win his bread.*

As a matter of choice, he would doubtless have selected one of the arts he so loved, that of Cranach and Albrecht Dürer, or music, which he was wont to call the first science after theology; but unprovided with a master to teach him either of these, he became a turner and a gardener alternately. “If the world will not support us for the sake of the word, let us learn to support ourselves by the labor of our own hands,” said the indomitable monk. At another time he remarked, “Since among us barbarians there is no man of art to instruct us in better things, I and my servant Wolfgang have set ourselves to turning in our leisure moments.”

Yet despite the manifold vexations of abject poverty, of that poverty which pinches and gnaws, Luther was happy—happy in his faith, happy in his family. Writing, a year or two after his marriage, to his friend Sliepel, he said, “Catharine, my dear rib, salutes thee. She is quite well, thank God; gentle, obedient, and kind in all things, far beyond my hopes. I would not exchange my poverty with her for all the riches of Croesus without her.”

Mention has already been made of the son that

* Myconius, Michelét.

had been born to him,* his little John, as the boy was named after his grandfather. In November, 1527, the poor little fellow was attacked by the plague, which had made its appearance in Saxony, and was then raging in its most virulent form. Although little John descended into "the valley of the shadow of death," he was yet spared to his parents. "My little favorite John does not salute thee," wrote he on the fourth of November to Spalatin, "for he is still too ill to speak ; but through me he solicits your prayers. For the last twelve days he has not eaten a morsel. 'Tis wonderful to see how the poor child keeps up his spirits; he would manifestly be as gay and joyous as ever, were it not for the excess of his physical weakness. However the crisis of his disease is now past."†

Two women, Hannah and Margaret Mochime, who were on a visit at his house, were attacked by the pestilence at the same time. It also appears that on the death of the wife of a friend by the dread disease, every one was so afraid to come near the infected family, that Luther took him in. "Everybody," wrote he, "seemed to be afraid to have any intercourse with the poor fellow; so we took him and his children into our house." Under these circumstances he might truly write Amsdorff, "My house has become a regular hospital.‡

Towards the close of this year, 1527, Luther was himself attacked with severe illness, both of body and

* Chap. XXXVI., p. 480.

† Luther's Werke, IX., 238.

‡ Ibid.



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ing; but God, who feeds the ravens, will care for you—he who is the father of widows and orphans. Preserve them, Oh God; teach them, as thou hast preserved and taught me.”

He then said a few words to his wife, who never left his side, about some silver goblets, adding, “Thou knowest they are all we possess.”

He then fell asleep, and the slumber proving long and deep, restored him so much strength, that the next day he found himself much better.

“‘I shall never forget the day I spent yesterday,’ he observed to Dr. Jonas. ‘The Lord leads man to the brink of hell, and then withdraws him from its wide jaws. The tempest which yesterday morning swept over my soul was infinitely more terrible than that which in the evening assailed my body. God kills and revives us. He is the Master of life and death.’”*

This, and several other similar attacks, were undoubtedly superinduced by the terrific strain, both of body and mind, which Luther had been called to endure now for many years. Even the splendid physique which he had inherited could not endure unshaken those awful asceticisms of his early cloister, those stormy excitements of his middle age, those fierce abandonments to impulse and passion which occasionally shook him like an aspen. The bent bow cracked ominously at times, and Luther’s affrighted friends united in urging him to avoid for a little all undue intellectual tension.

* Werke, IX., 254.

In the early months of 1528, Ketha gave Luther a daughter; but his cup of joy was shortly dashed: the infant lingered but a few months, and on the fifth of August Luther wrote a friend, "My little rosebud daughter Elizabeth is dead; 't is wonderful how sick at heart her loss has made me; I feel a mere woman, so great is the agitation that has since pervaded me. I could never have dreamed that a man's soul could be flooded with such tenderness even towards his child."

In Germany, hospitality is at once an instinct and a duty. Like that khan in the Eastern story whose gates stood ever open night and day, so that whether king came or beggar, all found a royal welcome, and when no traveller passed, the wind sang sweetly in the doorway, Luther was never happier, never made a finer figure, than when, seated at his table, surrounded by his family and his friends, he played his flute and sang his chants, dispensed his generous hospitality, and uttered those memorable sayings, upon all imaginable topics, which have been grouped in the "Table Talk."

Let us too draw up into the listening circle of his intimate associates, and heed his wise words.

Respecting marriage, Luther was wont to say, "The utmost blessing that God can confer on man, is the possession of a good and pious wife, with whom he may live in peace and tranquillity; to whom he can confide his whole possessions, even his life and welfare. Catherine, thou hast a loving husband, and thou—thou art an empress. To rise

betimes, and to marry young, are what no man ever repents of doing.”*

Some one was once justifying a man who was accustomed to associate with loose women, when Luther observed, “He ought to know that he shows an utter contempt for the whole female sex in what he does. It is an impious abuse of woman, who was not created for such purposes. When I was at school, my good hostess at Eisenach had a good saying: ‘There is nothing on earth so sweet and consoling as the love of a woman.’”

“The Trinity,” said Luther one day, “is discernable throughout all creation. In the sun there coëxist body, brilliancy, and heat; in rivers, body, current, and strength; the same is true of the arts and sciences. In astronomy there are motion, light, and attraction; in music, the three notes *re*, *me*, *fa*, and so on. The schoolmen have neglected these important signs for empty frivolities.”†

St. Augustine was represented, in a book that Luther once saw, habited in a monk’s gown. On looking at the picture he observed, “The painter wronged the holy father, for he led an ordinary life like the rest of his countrymen. He did not live apart like a monk.” Having delivered his opinion of Augustine, he added, “But since I became, by the grace of God, capable of understanding St. Paul, I have been unable to esteem any of these doctors; they have shrunk into insignificance in my estimation.”‡

* Table Talk.

† Tischreden, 49.

‡ Ibid. 207.



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important duties which the magistrate has to perform. Private tuition is quite insufficient. Schools are the cradles of great states, and they ought to be confided to none but the most fit, judicious, and learned men. It will be an evil day for Germany when she permits her schools to decay. Popery hates popular education, and turns the key of her massive dungeon upon it. Where the liberal arts are cultivated, her baleful light is quenched in a more dazzling effulgence.”*

On one occasion Luther wrote to Ludwig Sienpel, one of the musicians to the popish court of Bavaria, soliciting him to set to music for him some verses which he had composed. “The love of music,” he said, “has enabled me to surmount the fear of being repulsed when you see at the foot of this request a name which is doubtless odious to you. The same love for, the same faith in music which inspires you, inspires me to hope that my correspondence will not involve you in any trouble or annoyance. The Turk himself could not make the receipt of a letter upon such a subject matter of reproach against you. Except theology, there is no art which can be placed in comparison with music.”

“Why is it,” he exclaimed again, “that we have such a number of grand tunes in secular minstrelsy, while all our spiritual music is poor and cold?” and here he sang, by way of illustration, one or two German songs, and then some of the hymns in ordinary use, adding, “I despise those who despise music.”†

* Luther's Treatise on Education.

† Tischreden.

Printing Luther esteemed the latest and best gift vouchsafed by God to man;* certainly no one had better reason to esteem it.

Concerning sermons, Luther once said, “Albrecht Dürer, the famous painter of Nuremburg, used to say, that he took no pleasure in the works of art which were overladen with coloring, and that he much preferred those which were plain and simple in their execution; and so say I of sermons. Let them be compact and lively, but not verbose or affected; and so of their delivery.”†

To us these wise and kindly phases of Luther's domestic character are replete with strange fascination. We say again, never does he present a finer figure than when seated at his fireside, engaged in the exercise of the charities of life. Grandeur than at Augsburg, defending himself against the subtleties of Cajetan; grandeur than at Leipsic, where the massive sword of his eloquence beat Eck to the ground; grandeur than at Worms, breasting the fierce torrent of the Romish onslaught, is he when taking into his house the plague-stricken father and his little ones, when bending over the dying-bed of his “rose-bud daughter,” and uttering his sad yet submissive wail.

Hard and bigoted must be the man who can, in the presence of these facts, deny to Martin Luther the possession of the kindest and the gentlest of hearts.

* Tischreden.

† Ibid.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

IN 1529 Luther was recalled from his quiet teaching at the university, from his turning, from his gardening, from the delicious repose of his fire-side, into active life, by the dangers that menaced the Reformation and Germany.

A league of the Romish princes was formed against the elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse;* the Turks having overrun Hungary, pitched their tents before Vienna.

The reformers had been accused of manœuvring to reduce the empire into vassalage to the Ottoman Porte. Absurd as the charge was, it gained credence in those credulous days, and this idea Luther now set himself to repudiate. Accordingly, in a stirring pamphlet dedicated to the prince of Hesse, he summoned his countrymen to arms against the Moslems; and Germany, responding to the fiery appeal, arose and saved its independence.

At the same time the Lutheran princes set themselves in motion to crush the league against their religious liberty, and falling upon their foes ere their opposing muster was completed, mulcted them in the sum of one hundred thousand crowns of gold, as an indemnity for the expense of their armaments, and as the price of peace.†

The Reformation was now in the full tide of

* Cochlæus, p. 171.

† Ukent, p. 216.



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protest against the decree of the diet, declaring it alike unjust and impious. •

“From this protest the whole reform party assumed, and ever after retained, the name of *Protestants*.”*

Under this threatening state of affairs, the chiefs of the Protestants felt the absolute necessity of uniting the dissenting sects, and of melting all minor differences into one grand opposition to the Roman see. ’

In order to effect this object, it was regarded as essential to reconcile Luther and those followers of Zwingle and Carlstadt who were called Sacramentarians.

Accordingly the landgrave of Hesse summoned Luther, Zwingle, Œcolampadius, Bucer, and others of the prominent leaders of the Reformation, to meet and attempt a settlement of the disputed points at Marburg.†

It is sad to relate that Luther, in the controversy which ensued concerning the *real presence*, did not display his accustomed charity and fairness. He showed no disposition to heal the breach, and indeed went to the conference with the resolute intention of making it still wider and more pronounced.

Luther and Zwingle agreed upon every essential point, save this alone; yet when the great Swiss conjured him to acknowledge the brotherhood of the two sides, Luther dogmatically refused to grant

* Michelét, pp. 216, 217,

† Meurer, Seckendorf, etc.

even this slight concession; and stranger still, the gentle Melancthon sided with him.*

“Let us confess our union in all things in which we agree,” said Zwingli at the conclusion of a prolonged debate, during which neither party had yielded an inch, and when it became certain that neither disputant could convince the other; “and as for the rest, let us remember that we are brothers, with the same cause at heart. There will never be peace between the churches if, while we all maintain the grand doctrine of salvation by faith, we cannot consent to differ on secondary points.”†

“Yes, yes,” cried the impatient landgrave of Hesse, who was present, and anxious at least for outward unity, “acknowledge them as brothers.” Zwingli, bursting into tears in the presence of the prince, the courtiers, and the divines—it is Luther himself who relates this—approached Luther, and held out his hand; and this proffered hand the great apostle of the Reformation, the St. Paul of the sixteenth century, rejected.‡

The followers of the Swiss reformer felt this unchristian conduct, this contemptuous rejection of proffered amity and fellowship, keenly; but with admirable good sense they maintained their composure, and having exhausted their solicitations, quitted the council hall, serenely appealing to posterity for an unprejudiced verdict.§

Upon the merits of the point at issue at Mar-

* D'Aubigné, Vol. II., pp. 92, 93. † Corpus Ref. I., 1108.

‡ Corpus Ref., I., 1108.

§ Zwingli, Opp. IV., 194.

burg, it is not within the scope of this work to pronounce ; but it is simply just to say that Luther's warmest admirers united in condemning his uncharitable spirit upon that occasion, and always when this question was argued, and in wishing that this dark spot did not rest upon the disc of his fair fame.

Zwingle's principle of agreement upon essential points is the true principle of Christian union. It has been said that the sixteenth century was too deeply sunk in the slough of scholasticism to understand it. Still this unhappy conference at Marburg proves that some keen souls perceived it then, and it has now become an essential canon of Christian fellowship.

This unsatisfactory theological strife filled up the interstices of that great European war which Charles V. waged with Francis I. and the Turks. But during the most violent crises of the military operations, in the very spasms of the war, the religious conflict knew neither relaxation nor abatement. It was a solemn and imposing spectacle that Germany then offered, absorbed by a religious sentiment, and unmindful in that entrancement of the imminent dangers in which her formidable enemies threatened to envelop her.

While the Turks were bursting through all the ancient barriers which once protected her, and while Solyman was pouring his Tartar hordes into the country beyond Vienna, Germany was lost in the intricacies of a dispute respecting transubstan-



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heretic, was, much against his own will, and through the prudence of his friends, compelled to absent himself from Augsburg, his place being supplied by Melancthon : but the great reformer was conveyed, by the elector John Frederick, as near to the place of convocation as a regard for his safety would permit, and he was stationed in the strong and neighboring fortress of Coburg, whence he was enabled to maintain with ease and expedition a constant intercourse with the Protestant representatives.

The states of Germany had never been more nobly represented than they were at the opening of this famous diet. Charles V. took his seat as arbiter, and attendant upon him were Ferdinand, the newly elected king of the Romans, the pope's legate, the subtle Campeggio, charged with all the authority and the weighty counsels of the pontifical court, and a glittering retinue of princely prelates.

Representing the Protestant interest, stood the venerable elector of Saxony, the chivalrous landgrave of Hesse, the learned and ardent Albert of Brandenburg, and the deputies of those cities which, in the true spirit of free and wealthy communities, had been among the first to oppose the superstitions and tyrannical dogmas of the Roman see.*

After the accomplishment of the routine business of the diet, the emperor turned to the Protestant envoys, and bade them present in writing a concise exposition of what they believed and of what they denied. This was on Friday, the 17th

* Stebbing, Vol. II., p. 241.

of June, 1530, and Charles gave the Protestants until the 25th instant for the composition of their confession.*

This proposition was received with delight in the reform camp. In the absence of Luther, Melancthon was selected to draw up the confession. This he immediately set about doing; and so incessantly did he work at it, that in this service of God he was near committing suicide.† By Thursday, the 23d inst., by dint of this incessant labor, the manuscript was ready; and after receiving the assent of the princes, deputies, chancellors, and theologians of the Protestant party, who had met early in the morning at the elector's lodgings for the purpose of hearing it read, it was forwarded to Luther at Coburg, for his revision and final judgment.

Luther gave it an attentive perusal, and on returning it to the elector he wrote, "I like it well enough, and have no essential corrections to make. Besides, simple corrections would hardly suit me; 'tis not in my vein. I cannot walk so meekly and so silently. Pray God 'tis for the best, and that it may bear much and good fruit."‡

Melancthon had based the fundamental doctrines of the confession upon the principles which Luther had so luminously explained and defended; but his conciliatory temper led him to penetrate the overpowering vehemence of his great friend's tenets with the gentler and more pacific tone of his own intel-

* Mosheim.

† Camer, Vita Phil. Melanc.

‡ Corp. Ref. H., 40.

lect ; so that the writing was couched in words which savored not so much of rigorous independence as of persuasive deprecation. Still it was regarded as a masterly performance, and in the main gave general satisfaction to the dissenting sects, though the article on the real presence did not meet the approbation of the very large party which held with Zwingle, Bucer, and Œcolampadius, that the biblical expression, *This is my body*, was symbolical.*

On the 25th of June, the chapel of the palatine palace was crowded densely, and the approaches to it were blocked up by an excited throng.†

After all were seated, and in the midst of one of those painful hushes which usually precede what are felt to be momentous enterprises, chancellor Bayer arose, and in a distinct and finely modulated voice which carried his words far beyond the echoing arches of the little chapel to the greedy ears of the outer thousands, read the Protestant confession of faith.‡

Bayer held in his hand two copies of the writing, one in Latin the other in German ; perceiving which, Charles, incited thereto by the wily Cochläens, requested him to read the confession in Latin. By this manœuvre the Romanists intended to ruin the effect of what was uttered, since the vast majority of those present would not have been able to comprehend a word.§

But the Saxon elector defeated this notable

* Spalatin's Narrative.

† Jonas, Corp. Ref. II., 150.

‡ Seckendorf.

§ Ibid.



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“ We teach at the same time that this faith ought to bear good fruits, and that we must do all the good works commanded by God, for the love of God, and not by their means to gain the grace of God.”*

The Protestants next declare their faith in the Christian church, which they asserted to be “the assembly of all true believers;” and they then successively confessed their adherence to the evangelical idea of the doctrines of confession, penance, the nature of the sacraments—“not only signs whereby the profession of the gospel is set forth, but the witnesses of the love of God towards men, which serve to excite and establish faith;” the “real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord’s supper, under the form of the bread and wine;” the right of each church to select its own pastor; the freedom of the will, in regard to which Bayer said, “We confess that man’s will has a certain liberty of accomplishing civil justice, and of loving the things that reason comprehends; that man can do the good which is within the sphere of nature : plough his fields, eat, drink, have a friend, put on or off a coat, build a house, take a wife, and exercise a calling; as also he can of his own movement do evil, kneel before an idol, and commit murder. But we maintain that without the Holy Ghost he cannot do what is righteous in the sight of God.”† Then returning to the grand doctrine of the Reformation, and recalling to mind that the doctors of the pope have never ceased impelling the faithful to

* Urkund, Confessio. Augs.

† Ibid. I., 488.

puerile and useless works, as the custom of chaplets, invocations of saints, monastic vows, processions, fasts, feast-days, brotherhoods, abstinence from meat on certain days—all of which the confession repudiated, and placed under the ban of reason—the Protestants added, that as for themselves, while urging the practice of truly Christian works, of which little had been said before their time, “they still taught that man is justified by faith alone; not by that faith which is a simple knowledge of ecclesiastical history, and which wicked men and even devils possess, but by a faith which believes not only the history, but the effects of history, which believes that through Christ we obtain needed grace and salvation.”*

“Such,” said Bayer, “is a summary of the doctrine professed in our churches: by this recital it may be seen that we in no respect oppose the Scriptures, the universal church, nor even the Romish church as it is described by the fathers; and since this is so, to reject us as heretics is an offence against unity and charity.”†

Here ended the first part of the confession, the aim of which was to explain the scriptural grounds upon which the Reformation based itself. The second portion was devoted to an exposition of the abuses which had occasioned the movement for reform. These were divided under separate heads:

1. The refusal of the cup to the laity in the celebration of the Lord’s supper.

* Urkund, Confessio. Augs., p. 498.

† Ibid. 501.

2. The celibacy of the clergy, which was pronounced to be contrary to the freedom of the gospel, and productive of great evils.

3. The abuses of the mass, “which,” says the confession, “we have not completely abolished except as a *sacrifice*, in which respect it has no virtue for the expiation of sins, unless the sinner performs the conditions enjoined by Christ.”

4. Auricular confession, the efficacy of which the Protestants declared to depend entirely upon the *faith* of the penitent.

5. The abstinence from meats on prescribed days.

6. Monastic vows, which are declared to be dangerous snares to the conscience.

7. The temporal power of the pontiff, and the union of church and state.

“Many,” says the confession, “have unskilfully confounded the episcopal and the temporal power, and from this confusion have sprung great wars, revolts, and seditions. It is for this reason, and to reassure men’s consciences, that we find ourselves constrained to point out the difference which exists between the power of the church and the power of the sword.

“We therefore teach, that the power of the key or of the bishops is conformably with the written word, a commandment emanating from God, to preach the gospel, to remit or retain sins, and to administer the sacraments. This power has reference only to eternal good, is exercised only by the



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garded as official, to the elector of Mentz.* Then with a whispered request to the Protestant princes that the confession might not be published for the present, and with an assurance of his gracious consideration of their “apology,” the emperor dismissed the assembly.†

* Jonas in Corp. Ref. II., 183.

† Corp. Ref. II., 143.

CHAPTER XL.

WHILE these events were occurring, Luther, quietly resigning himself to his prescribed retirement at Coburg, employed his time in alternate study and composition. He had already translated some of the most important parts of the Old Testament, explaining the text by his commentaries; and he was now engaged in translating the book of Zechariah.*

When wearied with these grave pursuits, he turned for relaxation to the fables of Æsop, rendering them into German. The only society he enjoyed was that of Vitus Theodoric, the pastor of Nuremberg; but a guard was kept upon the ramparts of the fortress night and day.†

• Theodoric recites that not a day passed in which Luther did not spend at least three hours in earnest prayer; and though he appears to have suffered occasionally from an intense melancholy, and from depressing conjectures, the inevitable concomitants of his confinement, yet despite this nervous excitement, he enjoyed on the whole great consolations.

Couriers were kept in constant motion between this “Sinai,” as Luther termed it,‡ and the city of Augsburg. The Protestant princes saw to it that

* Stebbing’s Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. I., p. 254.

† Ibid.

‡ Briese, Book V., p. 92.

the absent leader of their host was apprized of what passed, immediately upon its occurrence.

Luther besides kept up a constant correspondence with Melancthon.

Poor Philip, unfitted for the responsibility and turmoil of such a scene, was often terribly depressed by the care and fatigue of his position, and he poured his woes and Cassandra-like predictions into the ears of his more independent and self-centred friend.

Luther, by way of consolation, rebuked him harshly.

“You talk to me of your labors, your dangers, your tears; and I, is mine a bed of roses? Ah, Philip, your faith is weak. Do not fear to trust God. In personal temptations I am weaker than you; but in public trials you are as weak as I am in my trials at home, if I may so call the temptations with which Satan unceasingly besets me. You regard not your own life, yet you tremble for the public cause; I look upon the public cause, however gloomy and portentous the horizon may appear, with absolute serenity, and tremble only for my own sins. Let us exchange natures for this occasion. I will dwell in this castle as Philip Melancthon; do you bear yourself in Augsburg as should Martin Luther.”

After prolonged consideration, it was at length decided by the emperor, that the Protestant confession should be submitted to the examination of the papal theologians. The Romanists consented



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hand is not ours but God's ; that it is above all human strength to fathom, to defend, or to defeat this business. Believe me, in this Christ does not desire that success should result either from human counsels or from human power."

By this and kindred epistles, Melancthon's natural timidity was propped up into tolerable boldness, and no concessions which touched the essential points of the reformed creed could be wrung from the Protestants.

After tedious movings and counter-movings, after incessant consultation, and the exercise of a greater number of ingenious arts than were ever known to Machiavelli, the diet was prorogued, and Charles announced his decision, that he would award six months, or until the 15th of the following April, to the Protestant princes to repudiate their errors, shown to be such by the papal theologians, and that meantime, they should live peaceably, and observe the existing laws, civil and ecclesiastical.*

On the 23d of September, 1530, the Protestant princes quitted Augsburg, and Luther exclaimed, as he began his preparations for his homeward journey, "Thank God that our friends are out of hell."†

On the 4th of October, Charles V. wrote to the pope, "The negotiations are broken off; our adversaries are more obstinate than ever; and I am resolved to employ force and my own person in

* Stebbing, Vol. 1., pp. 265, 266.

† L. Epp. IV., 175.

combating them. For this reason, I beg your holiness to demand the support of all Christian princes.”*

Rumors of this martial determination having reached the Protestant princes, they reassembled at Schmalkald, and on the 31st of December, 1530, entered into a defensive league, thus constituting themselves one united body.†

Luther was at once accused of having persuaded the Protestants to assume this hostile attitude. He thus responded to the charge: “I did not, as has been asserted, urge resistance to the emperor. The advice which I, as a theologian, tendered, was this: if the jurists can show that the course proposed is permitted by the law, I also permit them to follow the course of their law. If by the emperor’s laws it is established that under such circumstances as these resistance is lawful, then let Charles be amenable to that law which he has himself made.”‡

In this same year, Luther wrote a powerful and biting pamphlet against a tract published anonymously at Dresden, in which the Protestants were accused of secretly arming themselves, with the intention of suddenly falling upon the unsuspecting papists, who were in the meanwhile intent only upon the reestablishment of peace and fraternity.§

“It is most carefully concealed whence this

* Robertson’s Life of Charles V.

† Seckendorf, Michelét, Sleidan, and others.

‡ Tischreden.

§ Michelét.

book has proceeded,” said Luther in this memorial. “Nobody is to know. Well, I am content to remain with the rest in ignorance.

“I will consent to have my nostrils closed up with rheum, that I may not smell the unlucky pedant. Nevertheless I shall call into action all my adroitness, and endeavor to strike a blow at the lion’s skin, satisfied that if I shall hit the ass who is concealed beneath it, no fault will be imputable either to me or to him, but solely to the covering in which he has enveloped himself.

“Be it true, or be it not, that the Protestants are making preparations and assembling together, what is that to me? I have neither enjoined nor counselled them to do so. I neither know what they do, nor what they do not; but since the papists announce, through the pages of this book, that they believe in the reality of the armaments, I welcome the report with pleasure, and I rejoice in their delusions and alarms. I would even assist in augmenting the illusive fears, if I only knew how, were it but to make them die of fright. If Cain kills Abel, if Annas and Caiaphas persecute Jesus, is it not just that they be punished? Let then God’s foes live in perpetual agony; let them tremble at the sound of each falling leaf; let them behold on every side the phantoms of insurrection and death; nothing could be more equitable.

“Is it not, ye impostors, true, that when our princes presented their confession of faith at Augsburg, a papist exclaimed, ‘These fathers have pre-



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our people not to make any preparations for that relentless war with which you have so long menaced the reform, but that they should quietly suffer their throats to be cut, like so many sheep in a slaughter-house, without either complaining or standing on their defence. Much obliged to you, good folk. I, a preacher of the word, might submit to such a proceeding; and perhaps others to whom the grace of God has been given might also serenely accept this fate.

“But I cannot guarantee to tyrants that all will follow my example. If I publicly advised the Protestants to meet quietly their fate, the tyrants would doubtless thank me; nay, perchance, canonize me; but I am by no means disposed to relieve them of the apprehensions they entertain of our resistance. Do they seek to win their spurs by massacring our congregations? Let them gain their honors as it behoves gallant soldiers, by braving real dangers. Cut-throats by profession, let them at least look to be met as such.”*

In June, 1530, Luther's dear old father died at Eisleben, ripe in years, in honors, and in grace.

“I write to you,” he said to a friend, upon learning of his father's decease, “under the depression of heavy sadness, for I have just received intelligence of the death of my father, that good old man whom I so loved. And though by my means he passed hence easily and happily into the bosom of Christ, and now, escaped from the monsters of this

* Luther, quoted in Michelét, at pp. 227-229.

world, reposes in eternal peace, yet my heart is sad and agitated to think that he is gone from me—he who gave me birth, and nourished my early years.”*

In a letter written on the same day, June 5th, to Philip Melancthon, he says, “My dear father is now no more. I succeed to his name and place. It is I now who am ‘old Luther.’ Presently it will be my turn, my privilege, to follow him through the jaws of death to that kingdom which Christ has promised to all those who for his sake undergo misery and opprobrium upon earth.”

Luther’s mother did not long survive her husband. Early in 1531 she also died, and Martin was again grief-stricken; but he rejoiced that she, like his father, lived long enough to see and accept the truth.†

From this time Luther’s connection with great public events ceased. Through Melancthon, he had stood out in bold relief on the grand historic stage at Augsburg, and uttered that confession of faith which justified the Reformation, and which was saluted by Germany at large with boisterous enthusiasm. The politics of the Reformation now passed into the hands of the princes who had espoused the new tenets. There was accordingly less occasion than at the feeble outset for a theologian to play the political gladiator, and to struggle in the arena of statescraft with worldly cardinals and coroneted emperors.

Luther very gladly availed himself of this oppor-

* Tischreden, p. 331.

† Seckendorf.

tunity to retreat into the inner sanctuary of the reform. He had never courted distinction or notoriety. Pushed into prominence by the relentless force of circumstances sorely against his will, beckoned forward by the imperious finger of God, he accepted serenely the necessities of the battle. But when the battle was fought and won, when Europe recognized the right of Protestantism to breathe, when other champions came forward to defend the political rights of the reformed theology, Luther voluntarily severed the ties that bound him to the leadership, and devoted his whole attention to lucid expositions of the Protestant tenets, and to the settlement of the discipline of the Reformation.

It is easy to conceive what anxiety this occupation must have caused him. Considerations involving the highest questions of Christian duty arose at every step. He could borrow but few ideas from the constitution of the Roman church.

That see whose omnipotence Luther had conquered had been supported for centuries by the mightiest efforts of power, was adorned with the spoils of ages, and had been able to employ in its service the finest and subtlest minds that ever engaged in the task of representing spiritual truths by outward symbols. The different orders of its clergy were linked together by ties which converted them into a well-disciplined army. Their means of provision were ample, brilliant rewards tempted the eloquent and accomplished to the highest exercise of their talents, the ambitious had examples to lure



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new light was let in “by the chinks which time had made.”

But his bodily health suffered more and more from those distressing chronic diseases to which his otherwise robust physique had long been subject. Still he wrote and spoke with the vigor of the opening years of his career. His infirmities could not bind his soul, nor had they much power to interrupt his labors, so Herculean was his determination. But while he breathed forth the earnest convictions of a mature spirit—while he hurled defiance at the fortresses of darkness and error, he more frequently than of old spoke as a man who felt that his extraordinary career would shortly be judged, not by his own, or by any human judgment, but by Him unto whom all hearts are known, and from whom no secret can be hid.

In 1536 Erasmus died at Basle, despised by the reformers, suspected by the papists, anathematized by the Sorbonne, and sadly broken in his influence.* This event, which would have convulsed the learned world had it occurred earlier, caused scarcely a ripple on the European sea, and indeed the sage of Rotterdam had already outlived both his usefulness and his fame.

About this same time Luther's determined and bitter enemy, George duke of Saxony, also died. He was succeeded by his brother Henry, who had long been a declared Protestant, and who upon his accession immediately summoned Luther to Leip-

* Sleidan, Fleury.

sic—a sphere which, as the ancient seat of George's persecutions, required the most energetic attention. The reformers of this city and the surrounding territory had long been compelled to support their faith on the scanty food which they could find under the jealous eye of the late prince. It was therefore but just that, in these better days, they should be nourished by a fuller supply of spiritual gifts.*

From this busy scene Luther was recalled ere long to his own hearthstone by the dangerous illness of his favorite daughter Magdalene. But though he travelled post-haste, he reached Wittemberg only just in time to close poor Maggie's eyes.†

The loss of this daughter, who died at the early age of fourteen, was felt severely both by Luther and his wife. But he bore up nobly under the trial, and comforted poor "Ketha" so far as any earthly consoler could.

When his friends came in to remove the body, and expressed their sympathy with his affliction, he replied, "Friends, be not grieved, I have sent a saint to heaven. Could such a death be mine, I would die joyfully this moment." Then turning to his wife who stood weeping bitterly, he said, "Dear Catherine, console yourself; think where our daughter is gone, for sure she has passed happily into peace. The flesh bleeds doubtless, for such is its nature, but the spirit lives and speeds to the place of its wishes."‡

* Melancthon, Vita Lutheri.

† Tischreden, 226.

‡ Tischreden, 228.

This bereavement served still further to wean Luther from the vanities of earth. His mind almost constantly dwelt upon the heavenly beatitudes, and he murmured frequently those words of Simeon, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

He did not take much interest nor put much faith in the several attempts at reconciliation which were made by the Protestant princes at intervals during the years 1540–41, and even up to 1546. He saw, and had long seen the deadly and irrepressible nature of this ecclesiastical warfare, and he looked upon all further conference with the Roman antichrist as blasphemous.

Accordingly he did not even attend the conferences at Worms and at Ratisbon, but from the outset predicted failure. "I will anticipate your letters," so he wrote a friend who was bent upon being present at these diets, "and tell you what will pass at Ratisbon before you can inform me. You have been sent for by the emperor; he has told you to turn over in your mind conditions of peace. You replied in Latin as well as you could, all to no purpose. Eck in his usual way vociferated, 'Most gracious emperor, I will prove against any one that we are right, and that the pope is the infallible head of the church.' You will then adjourn in confusion and with augmented bitterness, and that's all you will tell me."*

Luther was right. These conferences were

* L. Opp. XV., 169.



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ther on the 9th of July, 1545, "that the emperor has been urging our people to consent to his council, and that he is much enraged at our refusal. I cannot comprehend such absurdities. The pope absolutely refuses to heretics like ourselves any standing in a council, while the emperor wills that we at once consent to its appointment, and obey its decrees. It is perhaps God who has caused them to become thus foolish, but I can fathom their absurd combination. As up to the present time they have not been able, under the titles of pope, emperor, and diet, to render their unjust cause formidable, they now think to clothe themselves with the name of a council, in order to be able to obtain an excuse for accusing us of being so utterly lost and without hope, that we will listen neither to pope, church, emperor, the edicts of the empire, nor even to a council itself, though we have so repeatedly invoked one.

"Therein may be discovered the wonderful cleverness displayed by knowing Satan against poor half-witted God, who doubtless will have great difficulty in escaping from a snare so aptly contrived. No, it is our God who will mock the designs of those who lay toils for him. If we are now to consent to the convention of a council entertaining such intentions towards us, why, let me ask, did we not submit ourselves twenty-five years ago to the alleged supreme head of all councils, the pope, and his bulls?"*

* L. Opp. XXVI., p. 178.

From this extract it plainly appears that Luther's statesman-like acumen was no more to be deceived in his later years than in middle life. Still he wearied and grew sick of the petty chicaneries and of the wicked manœuvres of this earthly kingdom of palpable imposture, and he was often heard to exclaim, "I have lived long enough; God grant that I may soon lay quietly aside this burdensome worm-bag in earth. I have undoubtedly seen the best that man can see in this world; all things will now, I fear, grow worse for me here."*

He was driven by the constantly increasing force of these feelings to ally himself more closely with all the followers of the reformed theology. His charity grew with his years, and he was won more and more to sink non-essential differences in a grand brotherhood of essential uniformity of belief.

Thus the fierce controversy which had raged so long and so discreditably between the Saxon theologians and the followers of Zwingli, had been happily accommodated some years previous to this time by the mutual signature at Wittemberg of certain articles of agreement, whereby both parties agreed to differ amicably, and the Swiss were received as brothers.†

Luther also in this, the twilight of his life, made more of his home than ever, though he had never been remiss in his domestic relations. His own statement of his family, made in the *Tischreden*, is as follows: "I married on the 14th June, 1525; on

* *Tischreden*.

† Ukert, I., 307.

the 5th June, 1526, was born my eldest son, John ; in 1527, my second child, my daughter Elizabeth, who shortly after died ; in 1529, poor Magdalen, who died in 1542 ; in November, 1531, Martin ; 28th January, 1534, Paul ; and lastly, in 1536, little Margaret.”*

Notwithstanding this large and expensive family and his scanty income, his generosity was very great. He would even give away to the poor, in default of any thing else, the presents which his children had received from their baptismal sponsors. A poor student asking him for relief one day, he desired his wife to give him some money ; on her replying that there was none in the house, he took a valuable silver cup that had been presented to him, and handing this to the needy scholar told him to sell it at the goldsmith's and keep the proceeds.† When expostulated with, he was wont to say, “Nay, friends, it is better to give than to receive.”

Luther was surrounded at his table not only by his children, but by a number of intimate friends. Melancthon, Jonas, Amsdorff, and others of his coadjutors found a frequent and ever welcome place there, becoming thus companions of his leisure as well as of his labor. A seat at Luther's board was a coveted distinction. “I would willingly,” he wrote Gaspard Muller, a valued friend, “have received Kegel into my family circle, for various reasons ; but as young Pense of Jena is upon the eve of returning to me, my table will be full, and I cannot

* Tischreden, 812.

† Ukert, II., 7.



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to believe that his departure would be the signal for a general onset, by the enemies of truth and holiness, upon the newly erected fortress of the Reformation. "As long as I live," he said one day prophetically to the friends gathered round his board, "no danger will arise, and Germany will, I trust in God, enjoy the blessings of peace. But when I die, then begin to pray, for you will have need of prayer; our children must grasp the spear, and the land will be called to bleed."*

But though he lived with the death-angel hovering above his head, and in the daily expectation of feeling the stroke that should lay him low, he was still anxious to employ his remaining hours to the best advantage. He therefore continued to preach, to lecture, and to write at intervals; he also busied himself in collecting, revising, and reprinting the various editions of his works. He seemed determined that when death did strike him, he would fall in the harness, actively engaged in promoting the amelioration of society, and the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

* Stebbing, Vol. II., p. 169.

CHAPTER XLI.

It was appointed that Luther's should be a life of active beneficence and of excitement to the very last; his latest days were occupied in the delicate and difficult task of reconciling the two estranged counts of Mansfeldt, whose subject he was by birth, and who had fallen into a quarrel of great bitterness.

In November, 1545, Count Albert had written to Wittemberg earnestly soliciting Luther to hasten to Eisleben to act as arbiter. Luther had replied, "A week more or less, dear count, will not stop me from coming, though truly I am very much occupied with other affairs. But I feel that I shall lie down on my death-bed with joy, when I have seen my dear lords reconciled and once more friends."*

On the 23d of January, 1546, Luther set out for Eisleben. He was almost sick when he started, and the inclement season of the year added not a little to the fatigue of the journey. Three of his sons and Justus Jonas accompanied him. The party were detained at Halle several days by the impassable state of the swollen rivers. But impatient of further delay, Luther at length determined to make the passage under his own auspices. When the raging stream was safely passed, he turned to his friends

* Luther's Leben, Pfizer.

and said laughingly, "What a joy it would have been to Satan if he could only have managed to plunge us all into this fierce river."*

Upon his arrival at Eisleben he was received most cordially, and with every demonstration of respect. These greetings over, he at once sat down and wrote thus to his wife:

"To the very learned and deeply profound dame Catherine Luther, my most gracious spouse: Dear Catherine, we are terribly annoyed here in one way and another by this sad quarrel, but I think we shall have to stay a week longer. You may tell Maître Philip from me, that he would do well to revise his notes on the gospel; for he does not seem in writing them to have clearly understood why our Lord, in the parable, calls riches *thorns*. This is the school in which we learn these things. The Scripture throughout menaces thorns with the eternal fire; this at once alarms me, and gives me patience with life, for I must exercise my utmost powers in settling this unhappy matter, by God's aid."†

So fine was Luther's *finesse*, and so great was his authority, that on the 14th of February, about a week after his arrival at the Mansfeldt castle, he could write his wife, "We hope, dear Catherine, to be with you again this week, please God. The Almighty has manifested the power of his grace in this affair. Counts Gebhard and Albert are reconciled. I send you some trout that Countess Albert has given me. This lady is full of joy at seeing

* Meurer.

† L. Epp., XXXVI.



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Upon awaking at about eleven o'clock, he said to the anxious company gathered about his bedside, "What, are you still here? Will you not go, dear friends, and rest yourselves?" On their replying that they would remain with him, he began to pray with fervor in the Latin tongue, saying, "*In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum; redemisti me, Domine, Deus veritatis.*"*

He then said to those present, "Pray all of you, dear friends, for the gospel of our Lord; pray that its reign may extend, for the Council of Trent and the pope menace it round about." He then fell asleep again for half an hour. When he again awoke, Dr. Jonas asked him how he felt. "Very ill, very ill," he feebly murmured. He shortly added, "My dear Jonas, I think I shall die here at Eisleben, here where I was born." His pain now became so intense that he could not lie down; he therefore arose with some difficulty, and walked slowly once or twice across the room, supported by his friends; after which he again lay down, and had a number of clothes and cushions placed upon him to produce perspiration.

Two physicians, accompanied by Count Albert and his wife, now entered the apartment. Luther said to them feebly, "Friends, I am dying; I shall remain with you at Eisleben."

When Dr. Jonas expressed a hope that perspiration would supervene and relieve him, he rejoined—

* Into thy hands I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth."

ed, “No, dear Jonas, I feel no wholesome perspiration, but a cold, dry sweat; I grow worse every instant.” He then commenced to pray: “Oh my Father, thou, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, thou, the source of all consolation, I thank thee for having revealed unto me thy well-beloved Son, in whom I believe, whom I have acknowledged, preached, and made known; whom I have loved and celebrated, and whom the pope and the impious persecute. I commend my soul to thee, my Jesus: I am about to quit this terrestrial body, I am about to be removed from this life, but I know that I shall abide eternally with thee.” He then repeated three times slowly and solemnly, “Into thy hands, I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.”

Suddenly his eyes closed, and he fell back in a swoon. Count Albert, his wife, the physicians, all made every effort to restore him to life, but for some time altogether in vain. When he was somewhat revived, Dr. Jonas said to him, “Reverend father, do you die firm in the faith you have taught?” Luther opened his eyes, which had been half closed, looked fixedly at Jonas, and summoning, as it seemed, all the remaining strength of his shattered faculties, he replied firmly and distinctly, “Yes.” After which he fell asleep: soon those nearest his side saw that he grew paler and paler; he now became cold, his breathing was more and more faint, and at length the tender cord of life snapped, and at midnight on the 17th of February, 1546, in the

keep of the Mansfeldt castle at Eisleben, Martin Luther lay dead.*

A few days after, the body was conveyed in a leaden coffin to Wittemberg, where it was interred on the 22d day of February, with the greatest honors.† He sleeps in the castle church, at the foot of that pulpit from which the thunders of his eloquence had so often shaken Christendom.‡

* Ukert, I., 324. Derived from the personal narrative drawn up by Jonas and Coelius of Luther's death.

† Hornii, Hist. Eccles., p. 328.

‡ The following is Luther's will: it bears date January 6, 1542. "I the undersigned, Martin Luther, doctor of divinity, do hereby give and grant unto my dear and faithful wife Catherine, as dower to be enjoyed by her during her life at her own will and pleasure, the farm of Zeilsdorf, with all the improvements and additions I have made thereto; the house called *Brun*, which I purchased under the name of Wolff, and all my silver goblets and other valuables, such as rings, chains, gold and silver medals, etc., to the amount of about a thousand florins.

"I make this disposition of my means, in the first place, because my Catherine has always been a gentle, pious, and faithful wife to me, has loved me tenderly, and has, by the blessing of God, given me, and brought up for me five children still, I thank God, living, besides others now dead. Secondly, that out of the said means she may discharge my debts, amounting to about four hundred and fifty florins, in the event of my not paying them myself during my life. In the third place, and more especially, because I would not have her dependent on her children, but would rather prefer that her children should be dependent on her, honoring her, and submissive to her, according to God's command, and that they should not act as I have seen some children act, whom the devil has excited to disobey the law of God in this respect, more particularly in cases where their mother has become a widow, and they themselves have married. I consider moreover, that the mother will be the best guardian of these means in behalf of her children, and I feel that she will not abuse this confidence that I place in her, to the detriment of those who are her own flesh and blood, whom she has borne in her bosom.



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of character, and his marvellous ability to mould circumstances to suit his necessities.

In the ranks of philosophy he might have rivalled Plato, and many of his philosophical disquisitions are as interesting for their profound originality as his theological writings are for their terse force and scriptural tendency.

But no promptings of ambition could lure him from his chosen path. He dedicated his brilliant versatility of intellect to God's service, and verily he had his reward.

Luther was great too in every sphere in which he acted. His writings are so voluminous that, did we not know his history, it might be imagined that he devoted his life to the elaboration of his rhetorical thunderbolts—that in the seclusion of the cloister he spent his years in balancing his dainty periods, in shaping his sarcastic arrows, and in letting the plummet down into the lowest deeps of religious philosophy. What then shall we say of the genius of this monk, learned beyond his age, and able to compose such sublime, erudite, and unrivalled works in the midst of the dangers and distractions of a reformation which he long bore, like Atlas, upon his unaided shoulders?

He was, besides, as diligent in exercising the office of a preacher as he could have been as a simple parish priest. His sermons were usually such as would have been preached by a man who had no other business but the instruction of his congregation. Added to this, he was an able, tire-

less professor in the Wittemberg university ; in his later years he was constantly called upon to arbitrate in quarrels which had arisen among his adherents ; he was forced by his poverty to earn his bread by manual labor ; he was obliged to act to the last as the polemical gladiator of the Reformation ; and he was forced by his popularity to keep open house, and to entertain a constant crowd of guests, who plied him with questions, and thus even in his hours of leisure kept his mind in the severest tension.

“Whoever was familiarly acquainted with Luther,” says Melancthon, “and knew his habits, must admit that he was the most excellent of men, agreeable and soft in his social moments, and in no respect dogmatic, or a lover of disputes. To these characteristics he added the gravity which became his position. If he displayed any obduracy or harshness in his struggles with his opponents, it did not arise from the malignity of his nature, but sprang from his ardor and passion for the truth.”

Although Luther was neither small in stature nor naturally of a weak constitution, he was yet singularly temperate in eating and dieting. Melancthon assures us that he had known him, at a period when his health was excellent, pass four entire days without taking any nourishment, and that he frequently took nothing during the day save a herring and a morsel of bread.

Luther's faults are soon numbered. They were impetuosity of temper, and a consequent want of

patience and charity towards opponents ; a strong tendency towards haughtiness ; and an occasional indulgence of wrath, cherished from a principle of zeal, but which, when given loose reign to, could not but be evil in its results. These, it has been fittingly said, were the remains of the natural man ; they were the humbling evidences that faith and wisdom may have wrought wonders, while charity had still to plead for full admission into his heart.

We have seen how Luther was pushed step by step into reluctant opposition to the Roman see. Nor with all his boldness can we wonder at his hesitation. He knew full well what conflict with Rome meant—success, or annihilation. He was aware that if he fought Leo, he must also overcome the potent influences of his splendid court, the literature, the poetry, the science, and the fine arts of the epoch. He was well acquainted with the unscrupulous and tremendous strength of the papal hierarchy ; he knew that that flagitious court had never hesitated to adopt any, the most infamous means, for the destruction of those who presumed to rebuke its wickedness, or to menace its safety. He had himself seen pontiffs mutter prayers with equal readiness over the merciless harries of fierce crusaders, over the blackest intrigues of tortuous statesmanship, over the bowl of the poisoner, and the accursed steel of the bravo.

What wonder then, if the prospect of a battle with this formidable, and death-dealing hierarchy gave Luther, reared in the most credulous belief in



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went singly and serenely in its behalf into the conflict, alone with God and his brave heart—

“The star that looked on tempests, and was still unshaken.”

As Grattan said of Fox, “You are to measure the magnitude of such a mind by parallels of latitude.”

And God gave him for this faithfulness the happiest reward ever before vouchsafed to man. Luther lived to see the triumph of that Reformation which he was commissioned to commence—lived to see the rotten foundations of the papacy in Germany crack, topple, and fall—lived to be crowned teacher and benefactor.

Then God called him to his own side, and the saying of Pericles was again fulfilled, and “the whole earth was the sepulchre of the illustrious man.” The angels sang pæans, and God pronounced his gracious benediction upon that earthly course which Martin Luther had run so well.