

IN GERMANY TO THE LEIPSIC DISPUTATION

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Chapter 1

Luther's Birth, Childhood, and School-days

GEOLOGISTS tell us of the many revolutions, each occupying its cycle of ages, through which the globe passed before its preparation for man was completed. There were ages during which the earth was shrouded in thickest night and frozen with intensest cold: and there were ages more in which a blazing sun shed his light and heat upon it. Periods passed in which the ocean slept in stagnant calm, and periods succeeded in which tempest convulsed the deep and thunder shook the heavens; and in the midst of the elemental war, the dry land, upheaved by volcanic fires, might have been seen emerging above the ocean. But alike in the tempest and in the calm nature worked with ceaseless energy, and the world steadily advanced toward its state of order. At last it reached it; and then, beneath a tranquil sky, and upon an earth covered with a carpet of verdure, man, the tenant and sovereign of the

world, stood up.

So was it when the world was being prepared to become the abode of pure Churches and free nations. From the fall of the Western Empire to the eleventh century, there intervened a period of unexampled torpor and darkness. The human mind seemed to have sunk into senility. Society seemed to have lost the vital principle of progress. Men looked back to former ages with a feeling of despair. They recalled the varied and brilliant achievements of the early time, and sighed to think that the world's better days were past, that old age had come upon the race, and that the end of all things was at hand. Indeed a belief was generally entertained that the year One thousand would usher in the Day of Judgment. It was a mistake. The world's best days were yet to come, though these – its true golden age – it could reach not otherwise than through terrible political and moral tempests.

The hurricane of the crusades it was that first broke the ice of the world's long winter. The frozen bands of Orion being loosed, the sweet influences

of the Pleiades began to act on society. Commerce and art, poetry and philosophy appeared, and like early flowers announced the coming of spring. That philosophy, it is true, was not of much intrinsic value, but, like the sports of childhood which develop the limbs and strengthen the faculties of the future man, the speculations of the Middle Ages, wherewith the young mind of Europe exercised itself, paved the way for the achievements of its manhood.

By-and-by came the printing-press, truly a Divine gift; and scarcely had the art of printing been perfected when Constantinople fell, the tomb of ancient literature was burst open, and the treasures of the ancient world were scattered over the West. From these seeds were to spring not the old thoughts, but new ones of greater power and beauty. Next came the mariner's compass, and with the mariner's compass came a new world, or, what is the same thing, the discovery by man of the large and goodly dimensions of the world he occupies. Hitherto he had been confined to a portion of it only; and on this little spot he had planted and

built, he had turned its soil with the plough, but oftener reddened it with the sword, unconscious the while that ampler and wealthier realms around him were lying unpeopled and uncultivated. But now magnificent continents and goodly islands rose out of the primeval night. It seemed a second Creation. On all sides the world was expanding around man, and this sudden revelation of the vastness of that kingdom of which he was lord, awoke in his bosom new desires, and speedily dispelled those gloomy apprehensions by which he had begun to be oppressed. He thought that Time's career was finished, and that the world was descending into its sepulcher; to his amazement and joy he saw that the world's youth was come only now, and that man was as yet but at the beginning of his destiny. He panted to enter on the new career opening before him.

Compared with his condition in the eleventh century, when man was groping in the thick night, and the rising breath of the crusades was just beginning to stir the lethargy of ages, it must have seemed to him as if he had already seen the full

opening of the day. But the true light had not yet risen, if we except a feeble dawn, in the skies of England and Bohemia, where gathering clouds threatened to extinguish it. Philosophy and poetry, even when to these are added ancient learning and modern discoveries, could not make it day. If something better had not succeeded, the awakening of the sixteenth century would have been but as a watch in the night. The world, after those merely terrestrial forces had spent themselves, would have fallen back into its tomb. It was necessary that God's own breath should vivify it, if it was to continue to live. The logic of the schools, the perfume of letters, the galvanic forces of art could not make of the corpse a living man. As with man at first, so with society, God must breathe into it in order that it might become a living soul. The Bible, so long buried, was resuscitated, was translated into the various tongues of Europe, and thus the breath of God was again moving over society. The light of heaven, after its long and disastrous eclipse, broke anew upon the world.

Three great princes occupied the three leading

thrones of Europe. To these we may add the potentate of the Vatican, in some points the least, but in others the greatest of the four. The conflicting interests and passions of these four men preserved a sort of balance, and restrained the tempests of war from ravaging Christendom. The long and bloody conflicts which had devastated Germany were ended as the fifteenth century drew to its close.

The sword rested meanwhile in Europe. As in the Roman world the wars of centuries were concluded, and the doors of the temple of Janus were shut, when a great birth was to take place, and a new era to open, so was it once again at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Protestantism was about to step upon the stage, and to proclaim the good news of the recovery of the long-lost Gospel; and on all sides, from the Carpathians to the Atlantic, there was comparative quiet, that the nations might be able to listen to the blessed tidings. It was now that Luther was born.

First of the father. His name was John – John

Luther. His family was an old one, and had dwelt in these parts a long while. The patrimonial inheritance was gone, and without estate or title, rich only in the superior qualities of his mind, John Luther earned his daily bread by his daily labor. There is more of dignity in honest labor than in titled idleness.

This man married a daughter of one of the villagers of Neustadt, Margaret Lindemann by name. At the period of their marriage they lived near Eisenach, a romantic town at the foot of the Wartburg, with the glades of the Thuringian forest around it. Soon after their marriage they left Eisenach, and went to live at Eisleben, a town near by, belonging to the Counts of Mansfeld.

They were a worthy pair, and, though in humble condition, greatly respected. John Luther, the father of the Reformer, was a fearer of God, very upright in his dealings and very diligent in his business. He was marked by his good sense, his manly bearing, and the firmness with which he held by his opinions. What was rare in that age, he

was a lover of books. Books then were scarce, and consequently dear, and John Luther had not much money to spend on their purchase, nor much time to read those he was able to buy. Still the miner – for he was a miner by trade – managed to get a few, which he read at meal-times, or in the calm German evenings, after his return from his work.

Margaret Lindemann, the mother of Luther, was a woman of superior mind and character. She was a peasant by birth, as we have said, but she was truly pious, and piety lends a grace to humble station which is often wanting in lofty rank. The fear of God gives a refinement to the sentiments, and a delicacy and grace to the manners, more fascinating by far than any conventional ease or airs which a coronet can bestow. The purity of the soul shining through the face lends it beauty, even as the lamp transmits its radiance through the alabaster vase and enhances its symmetry. Margaret Lindemann was looked up to by all her neighbors, who regarded her as a pattern to be followed for her good sense, her household economy, and her virtue. To this worthy couple,

both much given to prayer, there was born a son, on the 10th of November, 1483. He was their first-born, and as the 10th of November is St. Martin's Eve, they called their son Martin. Thus was ushered into the world the future Reformer.

When a prince is born, bells are rung, cannons are discharged, and a nation's congratulations are carried to the foot of the throne. What rejoicings and splendors around the cradle where lies the heir of some great empire! When God sends his heroes into the world there are no such ceremonies. They step quietly upon the stage where they are to act their great parts. Like that kingdom of which they are the heralds and champions, their coming is not with observation. Let us visit the cottage of John Luther, of Eisleben, on the evening of November 10th, 1483; there slumbers the miner's first-born. The miner and his wife are proud of their babe, no doubt; but the child is just like other German children; there is no indication about it of the wondrous future that awaits the child that has come into existence in this lowly household. When he grows up he will toil doubtless with his father as a

miner. Had the Pope (Sextus V. was then reigning) looked in upon the child, and marked how lowly was the cot in which he lay, and how entirely absent were all signs of worldly power and wealth, he would have asked with disdain, "Can any harm to the Popedom come of this child? Can any danger to the chair of Peter, that seat more august than the throne of kings, lurk in this poor dwelling?" Or if the emperor had chanced to pass that way, and had learned that there was born a son to John Luther, the miner, "Well, what of that?" he would have asked; "there is one child more in Germany, that is all. He may one day be a soldier in my ranks, who knows, and help to fight my battles." How greatly would these potentates, looking only at things seen, and believing only in material forces, have miscalculated! The miner's child was to become mightier than Pope, mightier than emperor. One Luther was stronger than all the cardinals of Rome, than all the legions of the Empire. His voice was to shake the Popedom, and his strong hands were to pull down its pillars that a new edifice might be erected in its room. Again it might be said, as at the birth of a yet greater Child, "He hath scattered the

proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."

When Martin was six months old his parents removed to Mansfeld. At that time the portion of this world's goods which his father possessed was small indeed; but the mines of Mansfeld were lucrative, John Luther was industrious, and by-and-by his business began to thrive, and his table was better spread. He was now the owner of two furnaces; he became in time a member of the Town Council, and was able to gratify his taste for knowledge by entertaining at times the more learned among the clergy of his neighborhood, and the conversation that passed had doubtless its influence upon the mind of a boy of so quick parts as the young Martin. The child grew, and might now be seen playing with the other children of Mansfeld on the banks of the Wipper. His home was happier than it had been, his health was good, his spirits buoyant, and his clear joyous voice rang out above those of his playmates. But there was a cross in his lot even then. It was a stern age. John

Luther, with all his excellence, was a somewhat austere man. As a father he was a strict disciplinarian; no fault of the son went unpunished, and not un-frequently was the chastisement in excess of the fault. This severity was not wise. A nature less elastic than Luther's would have sunk under it into sullenness, or it may be hardened into wickedness. But what the father on earth did for his own pleasure, or from a mistaken sense of duty, the Father in heaven overruled for the lasting good of the future Reformer. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, for it is in youth, sometimes even in childhood, that the great turning-points of life occur. Luther's nature was one of strong impulses; these forces were all needed in his future work; but, had they not been disciplined and brought under control, they might have made him rash, impetuous, and headlong; therefore he was betimes taught to submit to the curb. His nature, moreover, rich in the finest sensibilities, might, but for this discipline, have become self-indulgent. Turning away from the harder tasks of life, Luther might have laid himself out only to enjoy the good within his reach, had not the hardships and

severities of his youth attempered his character, and imported into it that element of hardness which was necessary for the greater trials before him.

Besides the examples of piety which he daily beheld, Luther received a little rudimental instruction under the domestic roof. But by-and-by he was sent to school at Mansfeld. He was yet a "little one," to use Melancthon's phrase; so young, indeed, that his father sometimes carried him to school on his shoulders. The thought that his son would one day be a scholar, cheered John Luther in his labors; and the hope was strengthened by the retentive memory, the sound understanding, and the power of application which the young Luther already displayed.

At the age of fourteen years (1497) Martin was sent to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. At school the hardships and privations amid which his childhood had been passed not only attended him but increased. His master often flogged him; for it was a maxim of those days that nothing could be learned without a free use of the rod; and we can

imagine that the buoyant or boisterous nature of the boy often led him into transgressions of the rules of school etiquette. He mentions having one day been flogged fifteen times. What added to his hardships was the custom then universal in the German towns, and continued till a recent date, if even now wholly abandoned, of the scholars begging their bread, in addition to the task of conning their lessons. They went, in small companies, singing from door to door, and receiving whatever alms the good burghers were pleased to give them. At times it would happen that they received more blows, or at least more rebuffs, than alms.

The instruction was gratis, but the young scholar had not bread to eat, and though the means of his father were ampler than before, all were needed for the support of his family, now numerous; and after a year Luther was withdrawn from Magdeburg and sent to a school in Eisenach, where having relatives, he would have less difficulty, it was thought, in supporting himself. These hopes were not realized, because perhaps his relations were poor. The young scholar had still to

earn his meals by singing in the streets. One day Luther was perambulating Eisenach, stopping before its likeliest dwellings, and striving with a brief hymn to woo the inmates to kindness. He was sore pressed with hunger, but no door opened, and no hand was extended to him. He was greatly downcast; he stood musing within himself what should become of him. Alas! he could not endure these hardships much longer; he must abandon his studies; he must return home, and work with his father in the mines. It was at that moment that Providence opened for him a home.

As he stood absorbed in these melancholy thoughts, a door near him was opened, and a voice bade him come in. He turned to see who it was that spoke to him. It was Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, a man of consideration among the burghers of Eisenach. Ursula Cotta had marked the young scholar before. He was accustomed to sing in the church choir on Sundays. She had been struck with the sweetness of his voice. She had heard the harsh words with which he had been driven away from other doors. Taking pity, she took him in, and

made him sit down at her board; and not only did she appease his hunger for the time, but her husband, won by the open face and sweet disposition of the boy, made him come and live with them.

Luther had now a home; he could eat without begging or singing for his bread. He had found a father and mother in this worthy pair. His heart opened; his young genius grew livelier and lovelier every day. Penury, like the chill of winter, had threatened to blight his powers in the bud; but this kindness, like the sun, with genial warmth, awakened them into new vigor. He gave himself to study with fresh ardor; tasks difficult before became easy now. If his voice was less frequently heard in the streets, it cheered the dwelling of his adopted parents. Madame Cotta was fond of music, and in what way could the young scholar so well repay her kindness as by cultivating his talent for singing, and exercising it for the delight of this "good Shunammite?" Luther passed, after this, nearly two years at Eisenach, equally happy at school in the study of Latin, rhetoric, and verse-

making, and at home where his hours of leisure were filled up with song, in which he not unfrequently accompanied himself on the lute. He never, all his after-life, forgot either Eisenach or the good Madame Cotta. He was accustomed to speak of the former as "his own beautiful town," and with reference to the latter he would say, "There is nothing kinder than a good woman's heart." The incident helped also to strengthen his trust in God. When greater perils threatened in his future career, when man stood aloof, and he could descry no deliverance near, he remembered his agony in the streets of Eisenach, and how visibly God had come to his help.

We cannot but mark the wisdom of God in the training of the future Reformer. By nature he was loving and trustful, with a heart ever yearning for human sympathy, and a mind ever planning largely for the happiness of others. But this was not enough. These qualities must be attempered by others which should enable him to confront opposition, endure reproach, despise ease, and brave peril. The first without the last would have

issued in mere benevolent schemings, and Luther would have died sighing over the stupidity or malignity of those who had thwarted his philanthropic projects. He would have abandoned his plans on the first appearance of opposition, and said, "Well, if the world won't be reformed, I shall let it alone." Luther, on the other hand, reckoned on meeting this opposition; he was trained to endure and bear with it, and in his early life we see the hardening and the expanding process going on by turns. And so is it with all whom God selects for rendering great services to the Church or to the world. He sends them to a hard school, and he keeps them in it till their education is complete. Let us mark the eagle and the bird of song, how dissimilar their rearing. The one is to spend its life in the groves, flitting from bough to bough, and enlivening the woods with its melody. Look what a warm nest it lies in; the thick branches cover it, and its dam sits brooding over it. How differently is the eaglet nursed! On yonder ledge, amid the naked crags, open to the lashing rain, and the pelting hail, and the stormy gust, are spread on the bare rock a few twigs. These are the nest of that bird which is

to spend its after-life in soaring among the clouds, battling with the winds, and gazing upon the sun.

Luther was to spend his life in conflict with emperors and Popes, and the powers of temporal and spiritual despotism; therefore his cradle was placed in a miner's cot, and his childhood and youth were passed amid hardship and peril. It was thus he came to know that man lives not to enjoy, but to achieve; and that to achieve anything great, he must sacrifice self, turn away from man, and lean only on God.

Chapter 2

Luther's College Life

IN 1501 Luther entered the University of Erfurt. He had now attained the age of eighteen years. This seat of learning had been founded about a century before; it owed its rise to the patronage of the princely houses of Brunswick and Saxony, and it had already become one of the more famous schools of Central Europe. Erfurt is an ancient town. Journeying from Eisenach eastward, along the Thuringian plain, it makes an imposing show as its steeples, cathedral towers, and ramparts rise before the eye of the traveler. Thirsting for knowledge, the young scholar came hither to drink his fill. His father wished him to study law, not doubting that with his great talents he would speedily achieve eminence, and fill some post of emolument and dignity in the civic administration of his country. In this hope John Luther toiled harder than ever, that he might support his son more liberally than heretofore.

At Erfurt new studies engaged the attention of Luther. The scholastic philosophy was still in great repute. Aristotle, and the humbler but still mighty names of Aquinas, Duns, Occam, and others, were the great sovereigns of the schools. So had the verdict of the ages pronounced, although the time was now near when that verdict would be reversed, and the darkness of oblivion would quench those lights placed, as was supposed, eternally in the firmament for the guidance of mankind. The young man threw himself with avidity upon this branch of study. It was an attempt to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles; yet Luther profited by the effort, for the Aristotelian philosophy had some redeeming virtues. It was radically hostile to the true method of acquiring knowledge, afterwards laid open by Bacon; yet it tried the strength of the faculties, and the discipline to which it subjected them was beneficial in proportion as it was stringent. Not only did it minister to the ripening of the logical understanding, it gave an agility of mind, a keenness of discrimination, a dialectic skill, and a nicety of fence which were of the greatest value in the discussion of subtle questions.

In these studies Luther forged the weapon which he was to wield with such terrible effect in the combats of his after-life. Two years of his university course were now run. From the thorny yet profitable paths of the scholastics, he would turn aside at times to regale himself in the greener and richer fields opened to him in the orations of Cicero and the lays of Virgil. What he most studied to master was not the words but the thinking of the ancients; it was their wisdom which he wished to garner up. His progress was great; he became par excellence the scholar of Erfurt.

It was now that an event occurred that changed the whole future life of the young student. Fond of books, like his father, he went day by day to the library of the university and spent some hours amid its treasures. He was now twenty years of age, and he reveled in the riches around him. One day, as he took down the books from their shelves, and opened them one after another, he came to a volume unlike all the others. Taking it from its place, he opened it, and to his surprise found that it was a Bible – the Vulgate, or Latin translation of

the Holy Scriptures, by Jerome.

The Bible he had never seen till now. His joy was great. There are certain portions which the Church prescribes to be read in public on Sundays and saints' days, and Luther imagined that these were the whole Bible. His surprise was great when, on opening the volume, he found in it whole books and epistles of which he had never before heard. He began to read with the feelings of one to whom the heavens have been opened. The part of the book which he read was the story of Samuel, dedicated to the Lord from his childhood by his mother, growing up in the Temple, and becoming the witness of the wickedness of Eli's sons, the priests of the Lord, who made the people to transgress, and to abhor the offering of the Lord. In all this Luther could fancy that he saw no very indistinct image of his own times.

Day after day Luther returned to the library, took down the old book, devoured some Gospel of the New or story of the Old Testament, rejoicing as one that finds great store of spoil, gazing upon its

page as Columbus may be supposed to have gazed on the plains and mountains of the New World, when the mists of ocean opened and unveiled it to him. Meanwhile, a change was passing upon Luther by the reading of that book. Other books had developed and strengthened his faculties, this book was awakening new powers within him. The old Luther was passing away, another Luther was coming in his place. From that moment began those struggles in his soul which were destined never to cease till they issued not merely in a new man, but a new age – a new Europe. Out of the Bible at Oxford came the first dawn of the Reformation: out of this old Bible at Erfurt came its second morning.

It was the year 1503. Luther now took his first academic degree. But his Bachelorship in Arts had nearly cost him his life. So close had been his application to study that he was seized with a dangerous illness, and for some time lay at the point of death. Among others who came to see him was an old priest, who seems to have had a presentiment of Luther's future distinction. "My

bachelor," said he, "take heart, you shall not die of this sickness; God will make you one who will comfort many others; on those whom he loves he lays the holy cross, and they who bear it patiently learn wisdom." Luther heard, in the words of the aged priest, God calling him back from the grave. He recovered, as had been foretold, and from that hour he carried within him an impression that for some special purpose had his life been prolonged.

After an interval of two years he became Master of Arts or Doctor of Philosophy. The laureation of the first scholar at Erfurt University, then the most renowned in Germany, was no unimportant event, and it was celebrated by a torch-light procession. Luther saw that he already held no mean place in the public estimation, and might aspire to the highest honors of the State. As the readiest road to these, he devoted himself, in conformity with his father's wishes, to the bar, and began to give public lectures on the physics and ethics of Aristotle. The old book seems in danger of being forgotten, and the Reformer of Christendom of being lost in the wealthy lawyer or

the learned judge.

But God visited and tried him. Two incidents that now befell him brought back those feelings and convictions of sin which were beginning to be effaced amid the excitements of his laureation and the fascinations of Aristotle. Again he stood as it were on the brink of the eternal world. One morning he was told that his friend Alexius had been overtaken by a sudden and violent death. The intelligence stunned Luther. His companion had fallen as it were by his side. Conscience, first quickened by the old Bible, again awoke.

Soon after this, he paid a visit to his parents at Mansfeld. He was returning to Erfurt, and was now near the city gate, when suddenly black clouds gathered overhead, and it began to thunder and lighten in an awful manner. A bolt fell at his feet. Some accounts say that he was thrown down. The Great Judge, he thought, had descended in this cloud, and he lay momentarily expecting death. In his terror he vowed that should God spare him he would devote his life to His service. The lightning

ceased, the thunders rolled past, and Luther, rising from the ground and pursuing his journey with solemn steps, soon entered the gates of Erfurt.

The vow must be fulfilled. To serve God was to wear a monk's hood – so did the age understand it, and so too did Luther. To one so fitted to enjoy the delights of friendship, so able to win the honors of life – nay, with these honors all but already grasped – a terrible wrench it must be to tear himself from the world and enter a monastery – a living grave. But his vow was irrevocable. The greater the sacrifice, the more the merit. He must pacify his conscience; and as yet he knew not of the more excellent way. Once more he will see his friends, and then – He prepares a frugal supper; he calls together his acquaintances; he regales them with music; he converses with apparent gaiety. And now the feast is at an end, and the party has broken up. Luther walks straight to the Augustinian Convent, on the 17th of August, 1505. He knocks at the gate; the door is opened, and he enters.

To Luther, groaning under sin, and seeking

deliverance by the works of the law, that monastery – so quiet, so holy, so near to heaven, as he thought – seemed a very Paradise. Soon as he had crossed its threshold the world would be shut out; sin, too, would be shut out; and that sore trouble of soul which he was enduring would be at an end. At this closed door the "Avenger" would be stayed. So thought Luther as he crossed its threshold. There is a city of refuge to which the sinner may flee when death and hell are on his track, but it is not that into which Luther had now entered.

Chapter 3

Luther's Life in the Convent

WHEN his friends and townsmen learned on the morrow that Luther had taken the cowl, they were struck with stupefaction. That one with such an affluence of all the finer intellectual and social qualities, and to whom his townsmen had already assigned the highest post that genius can fill, should become a monk, seemed a national loss. His friends, and many members of the university, assembled at the gates of the monastery, and waited there two whole days, in the hope of seeing Luther, and persuading him to retrace the foolish step which a fit of caprice or a moment's enthusiasm had led him to take. The gate remained closed; Luther came not forth, though the wishes and entreaties of his friends were not unknown to him. What to him were all the rewards of genius, all the high posts which the world could offer? The one thing with him was how he might save his soul. Till a month had elapsed Luther saw no one.

When the tidings reached Mansfeld, the surprise, disappointment, and rage of Luther's father were great. He had toiled night and day to be able to educate his son; he had seen him win one academical honor after another; already in imagination he saw him discharging the highest duties and wearing the highest dignities of the State. In a moment all these hopes had been swept away; all had ended in a monk's hood and cowl. John Luther declared that nothing of his should his son ever inherit, and according to some accounts he set out to Erfurt, and obtaining an interview with his son at the convent gate, asked him sharply, "How can a son do right in disobeying the counsel of his parents?"

On an after-occasion, when telling his father of the impression made upon his mind by the thunderstorm, and that it was as if a voice from heaven had called him to be a monk, "Take care," was John Luther's reply, "lest you have been imposed upon by an illusion of the devil."

On entering the convent Luther changed his

name to Augustine. But in the convent life he did not find that rest and peace to enjoy which he had fled thither. He was still seeking life, not from Christ, but from monastic holiness, and had he found rest in the convent he would have missed the eternal rest. It was not long till he was made to feel that he had carried his great burden with him into the monastery, that the apprehensions of wrath which haunted him in the world had followed him hither; that, in fact, the convent bars had shut him in with them; for here his conscience began to thunder more loudly than ever, and his inward torments grew every day more insupportable. Whither shall Luther now flee? He knows no holier place on earth than the cell, and if not here, where shall he find a shadow from this great heat, a rock of shelter from this terrible blast? God was preparing him for being the Reformer of Christendom, and the first lesson it was needful to teach him was what a heavy burden is unpardoned guilt, and what a terrible tormentor is an awakened conscience, and how impossible it is to find relief from these by works of self-righteousness. From this same burden Luther was to be the instrument

of delivering Christendom, and he himself, first of all, must be made to feel how awful is its weight.

But let us see what sort of life it is that Luther leads in the monastery of the Augustines: a very different life indeed from that which he had led in the university!

The monks, ignorant, lazy, and fond only of good cheer, were incapable of appreciating the character or sympathizing with the tastes of their new brother. That one of the most distinguished doctors of the university should enroll himself in their fraternity was indeed an honor; but did not his fame throw themselves into the shade? Besides, what good would his studies do their monastery? They would replenish neither its wine-cellar nor its larder. His brethren found a spiteful pleasure in putting upon him the meanest offices of the establishment. Luther unrepiningly complied. The brilliant scholar of the university had to perform the duties of porter, "to open and shut the gates, to wind up the clock, to sweep the church, and to clean out the cells." Nor was that the worst; when

these tasks were finished, instead of being permitted to retire to his studies, "Come, come!" would the monks say, "saccum per hackum – get ready your wallet: away through the town, and get us something to eat." The book had to be thrown aside for the bag. "It is not by studying," would the friars say, "but by begging bread, corn, eggs, fish, meat and money, that a monk renders himself useful to the cloister." Luther could not but feel the harshness and humiliation of this: the pain must have been exquisite in proportion as his intellect was cultivated, and his tastes refined. But having become a monk, he resolved to go through with it, for how otherwise could he acquire the humility and sanctity he had assumed the habit to learn, and by which he was to earn peace now, and life hereafter? No, he must not draw back, or shirk either the labor or the shame of holy monkhood. Accordingly, traversing the streets, wallet on back the same through which he had strode so often as an honored doctor – or knocking at the door of some former acquaintance or friend, and begging an alms, might now be seen the monk Augustine.

In this kind of drudgery was the day passed. At night, when the other monks were drowned in sleep, or in the good things which brother Martin had assisted in begging for them, and when he too, worn out with his many tasks, ought to have laid himself down to rest, instead of seeking his couch he trimmed his lamp, and opening the patristic and scholastic divines, he continued reading them till far into the night. St. Augustine was his especial favorite. In the writings of the Bishop of Hippo there is more of God's free grace, in contrast with the deep corruption of man, to himself incurable, than in any other of the Fathers; and Luther was beginning to feel that the doctrines of Augustine had their echo in his own experience. Among the scholastic theologians, Gerson and Occam, whom we have already mentioned as opponents of the Pope's temporal power, were the writers to whom he most frequently turned.

But though he set great store on Augustine, there was another book which he prized yet more. This was God's own Word, a copy of which he lighted on in the monastery. Oh! how welcome to

Luther, in this dry and parched land, this well of water, whereat he that drinketh, as said the great Teacher, "shall never thirst." This Bible he could not take with him to his cell and there read and study it, for it was chained in the chapel of the convent; but he could and did go to it, and sometimes he spent whole days in meditation upon a single verse or word. It was now that he betook him to the study of the original tongues, that being able to read the Scriptures in the languages in which they were at first written, he might see deeper into their meaning. Reuchlin's Hebrew Lexicon had recently appeared, and with this and other helps he made rapid progress in the knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek. In the ardor of this pursuit he would forget for weeks together to repeat the daily prayers. His conscience would smite him for transgressing the rules of his order, and he would neither eat nor sleep till the omitted services had been performed, and all arrears discharged. It once happened that for seven weeks he scarcely closed his eyes.

The communicative and jovial student was now

changed into the taciturn solitary. The person as well as the manners of Luther had undergone a transformation. What with the drudgery of the day, the studies of the night, the meager meals he allowed himself – "a little bread and a small herring were often his only food" – the fasts and macerations he practiced, he was more like a corpse than a living man. The fire within was still consuming him. He fell sometimes on the floor of his cell in sheer weakness. "One morning, the door of his cell not being opened as usual, the brethren became alarmed. They knocked: there was no reply. The door was burst in, and poor Fra Martin was found stretched on the ground in a state of ecstasy, scarcely breathing, well-nigh dead. A monk took his flute, and gently playing upon it one of the airs that Luther loved, brought him gradually back to himself." The likelihood at that moment was that instead of living to do battle with the Pope, and pull down the pillars of his kingdom, a quiet grave, somewhere in the precincts of the monastery, would ere long be the only memorial remaining to testify that such a one as Martin Luther had ever existed.

It was indeed a bitter cup that Luther was now drinking, but it could by no means pass from him. He must drink yet deeper, he must drain it to its dregs. Those works which he did in such bondage of spirit were the price with which he thought to buy pardon. The poor monk came again and again with this goodly sum to the door of heaven, only to find it closed. Was it not enough? "I shall make it more," thought Luther. He goes back, resumes his sweat of soul, and in a little returns with a richer price in his hand. He is again rejected. Alas, the poor monk! What shall he do? He can think but of longer fasts, of severer penances, of more numerous prayers. He returns a third time. Surely he will now be admitted? Alas, no! the sum is yet too small; the door is still shut; justice demands a still larger price. He returns again and again, and always with a bigger sum in his hand; but the door is not opened. God is teaching him that heaven is not to be bought by any sum, however great: that eternal life is the free gift of God. "I was indeed a pious monk," wrote he to Duke George of Saxony, at a future period of his life, "and followed the

rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. Of this all the friars who have known me can testify. If I had continued much longer I should have carried my mortifications even to death, by means of my watchings, prayers, readings, and other labors."

But the hour was not yet come when Luther was to enjoy peace. Christ and the redemption He had wrought were not yet revealed to him, and till these had been made known Luther was to find no rest. His anguish continued, nay, increased, and his aspect was now enough to have moved to pity his bitterest enemy. Like a shadow he glided from cell to cell of his monastery; his eyes sunk, his bones protruding, his figure bowed down to the earth; on his brow the shadows of those fierce tempests that were raging in his soul; his tears watering the stony floor, and his bitter cries and deep groans echoing through the long galleries of the convent, a mystery and a terror to the other monks. He tried to disburden his soul to his confessor, an aged monk.

He had had no experience of such a case before; it was beyond his skill; the wound was too deep for him to heal. "'Save me in thy righteousness' – what does that mean?" asked Luther. "I can see how God can condemn me in his righteousness, but how can he save me in his righteousness?" But that question his father confessor could not answer.

It was well that Luther neither despaired nor abandoned the pursuit as hopeless. He persevered in reading Augustine, and yet more in studying the chained Bible; and it cannot be but that some rays must have broken in through his darkness. Why was it that he could not obtain peace? This question he could not but put to himself – "What rule of my order have I neglected – or if in aught I have come short, have not penance and tears wiped out the fault? And yet my conscience tells me that my sin is not pardoned. Why is this? Are these rules after all only the empirical devices of man? Is there no holiness in those works which I am toiling to perform, and those mortifications to which I am submitting? Is it a change of garment only or a change of heart that I need?" Into this train the

monk's thoughts could scarce avoid falling. And meanwhile he persevered in the use of those means which have the promise connected with them – "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If thou criest after wisdom, if thou liftest up thy voice for understanding, then shalt thou find the fear of the Lord, and understand the knowledge of thy God." It is not Luther alone whose cries we hear. Christendom is groaning in Luther, and travailing in pain to be delivered. The cry of those many captives, in all the lands of Christendom, lying in fetters, goes up in the cry of this captive, and has entered into the ears of the Great Ruler: already a deliverer is on the road. As Luther, hour by hour, is sinking in the abyss, nearer, hour by hour, are heard the approaching footsteps of the man who is to aid him in breaking the bars of his own and the world's prison.

Chapter 4

Luther the Monk Becomes Luther the Reformer

AS in the darkest night a star will at times look forth, all the lovelier that it shines out amidst the clouds of tempest, so there appeared at intervals, during the long and dark night of Christendom, a few men of eminent piety in the Church of Rome. Taught of the Spirit, they trusted not in the Church, but in Christ alone, for salvation; and amid the darkness that surrounded them they saw the light, and followed it. One of these men was John Staupitz.

Staupitz was Vicar-General of the Augustines of Germany. He knew the way of salvation, having learned it from the study of Augustine and the Bible. He saw and acknowledged the errors and vices of the age, and deplored the devastation they were inflicting on the Church. The purity of his own life condemned the corruptions around him,

but he lacked the courage to be the Reformer of Christendom. Nevertheless, God honored him by making him signally serviceable to the man who was destined to be that Reformer.

It chanced to the Vicar-General to be at this time on a tour of visitation among the convents of the Augustinians in Germany, and the path he had traced for himself led him to that very monastery within whose walls the sore struggle we have described was going on. Staupitz came to Erfurt. His eye, trained to read the faces on which it fell, lighted on the young monk. The first glance awoke his interest in him. He marked the brow on which he thought he could see the shadow of some great sorrow, the eye that spoke of the anguish within, the frame worn to almost a skeleton by the wrestlings of the spirit; the whole man so meek, so chastened, so bowed down; and yet about him withal an air of resolution not yet altogether vanquished, and of strength not yet wholly dried up. Staupitz himself had tasted the cup of which Luther was now drinking. He had been in trouble of soul, although, to use the language of the Bible,

he had but "run with the footmen," while Luther was contending "with horses." His own experience enabled him to guess at the inner history of the monk who now stood before him.

The Vicar-General called the monk to him, spoke words of kindness – accents now become strange to Luther, for the inmates of his monastery could account for his conflicts only by believing him possessed of the Evil One – and by degrees he won his confidence. Luther felt that there was a mysterious influence in the words of Staupitz, which penetrated his soul, and was already exerting a soothing and mitigating effect upon his trouble. In the Vicar-General the monk met the first man who really understood his case.

They conversed together in the secrecy of the monastic cell. Luther laid open his whole soul; he concealed nothing from the Vicar-General. He told him all his temptations, all his horrible thoughts – his vows a thousand times repeated and as often broken; how he shrank from the sight of his own vileness, and how he trembled when he thought of

the holiness of God. It was not the sweet promise of mercy, but the fiery threatening of the law, on which he dwelt. "Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

The wise Staupitz saw how it was. The monk was standing in the presence of the Great Judge without a days-man. He was dwelling with Devouring Fire; he was transacting with God just as he would have done if no cross had ever been set up on Calvary, and no "place for repentance." "Why do you torture yourself with these thoughts? Look at the wounds of Christ," said Staupitz, anxious to turn away the monk's eye from his own wounds – his stripes, macerations, fastings – by which he hoped to move God to pity. "Look at the blood Christ shed for you," continued his skillful counselor; "it is there the grace of God will appear to you." "I cannot and dare not come to God," replied Luther, in effect, "till I am a better man; I have not yet repented sufficiently." "A better man!" would the Vicar-General say in effect; "Christ came to save not good men, but sinners. Love God, and you will have repented; there is no real

repentance that does not begin in the love of God; and there is no love to God that does not take its rise in all apprehension of that mercy which offers to sinners freedom from sin through the blood of Christ." "Faith in the mercies of God! This is the star that goeth before the face of Repentance, the pillar of fire that guideth her in the night of her sorrows, and giveth her light," and showeth her the way to the throne of God.

These were wise words, and "the words of the wise are as nails, and as goads fastened in a sure place by the master of assemblies." So was it with the words of the Vicar-General; a light from heaven accompanied them, and shone into the understanding of Luther. He felt that a healing balm had touched his wound, that a refreshing oil had been poured upon his bruised spirit. Before leaving him, the Vicar-General made him the present of a Bible, which Luther received with unbounded joy; and most sacredly did he obey the parting injunction of Staupitz: "Let the study of the Scriptures be your favorite occupation."

But the change in Luther was not yet complete. It is hard to enter into life – to cast out of the heart that distrust and fear of God with which sin has filled it, and take in the grand yet true idea of God's infinite love, and absolutely free and boundless mercy.

Luther's faith was as yet but as a grain of mustard-seed. After Staupitz had taken leave of him he again turned his eye from the Savior to himself; the clouds of despondency and fear that instant gathered; and his old conflicts, though not with the same violence, were renewed. He fell ill, and in his sore sickness he lay at the gates of death. It pleased God on this bed, and by a very humble instrument, to complete the change which the Vicar-General had commenced. An aged brother-monk who, as Luther afterwards said, was doubtless a true Christian though he wore "the cowl of damnation," came to his bedside, and began to recite with much simplicity and earnestness the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Luther repeated after him in feeble accents, "I believe in the forgiveness of

sins." "Nay," said the monk, "you are to believe not merely in the forgiveness of David's sins, and of Peter's sins; you must believe in the forgiveness of your own sins." The decisive words had been spoken. A ray of light had penetrated the darkness that encompassed Luther. He saw it all: the whole Gospel in a single phrase, the forgiveness of sins – not the payment, but the forgiveness.

In that hour the principle of Popery in Luther's soul fell. He no longer looked to himself and to the Church for salvation. He saw that God had freely forgiven him in His Son Jesus Christ. His prison doors stood open. He was in a new world. God had loosed his sackcloth and girded him with gladness. The healing of his spirit brought health to his body; and in a little while he rose from that bed of sickness, which had so nearly been to him the bed of death. The gates of destruction were, in God's marvelous mercy, changed into the gates of Paradise.

The battle which Luther fought in this cell was in reality a more sublime one than that which he

afterwards had to fight before the Diet of the Empire at Worms. Here there is no crowd looking on, no dramatic lights fall upon the scene, the conflict passes in the obscurity of a cell; but all the elements of the morally sublime are present. At Worms, Luther stood before the powers and principalities of earth, who could but kill the body, and had no more that they could do. Here he meets the powers and principalities of darkness, and engages in a struggle, the issue of which is to him eternal life or eternal death. And he triumphs! This cell was the cradle of a new life to Luther, and a new life to Christendom. But before it could be the cradle of a new life it had first to become a grave. Luther had here to struggle not only to tears and groans: he had to struggle unto death. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." So did the Spirit of God inspire Paul to announce what is a universal law. In every case death must precede a new life. The new life of the Church at the beginning of the Christian era came from a grave, the sepulcher of Christ. Before we ourselves can put on immortality we must die and be buried. In this cell at Erfurt died Martin Luther

the monk, and in this cell was born Martin Luther the Christian, and the birth of Luther the Christian was the birth of the Reformation in Germany.

Let us pause here, and notice how the Reformation rehearsed itself first of all in the cell at Erfurt, and in the soul of Luther, before coming forth to display its power on the public stage of Germany and of Christendom. The finger of God touched the human conscience, and the mightiest of all forces awoke. The Reformation's birth-place was not the cabinet of kings, nor the closet of philosophers and scholars: it had its beginnings in the depths of the spiritual world – in the inextinguishable needs and longings of the human soul, quickened, after a long sleep, by divinely ordained instrumentalities.

For ages the soul of man had "groaned, being burdened." That burden was the consciousness of sin. The method taken to be rid of that burden was not the forgiveness, but the payment of sin. A Church arose which, although retaining "the forgiveness of sins" as an article in her creed, had

discarded it from her practice; or rather, she had substituted her own "forgiveness of sins" for God's.

The Gospel came to men in the beginning preaching a free pardon. To offer forgiveness on any other terms would have been to close heaven while professing to open it. But the Church of Rome turned the eyes of men from the salvation of the Gospel, to a salvation of which she assumed to be the exclusive and privileged owner. That on which the Gospel had put no price, knowing that to put upon it the smallest price was wholly to withhold it, the Church put a very great price. Salvation was made a marketable commodity; it was put up for sale, and whoever wished to possess it had to pay the price which the Church had put upon it. Some paid the price in good works, some paid it in austerities and penances, and some in money. Each paid in the coin that most suited his taste, or convenience, or ability; but all had to pay. Christendom, in process of time, was covered with a vast apparatus for carrying on this spiritual traffic. An order of men was established, through whose hands exclusively this ghostly merchandise

passed. Over and above the great central emporium of this traffic, which was opened on the Seven Hills, hundreds and thousands of inferior marts were established all over Christendom. Cloisters and convents arose for those who chose to pay in penances; temples and churches were built for those who chose to pay in prayers and masses; and privileged shrines and confessional-boxes for those who preferred paying in money. One half of Christendom reveled in sin because they were wealthy, and the other half groaned under self-inflicted mortifications because they were poor. When at length the principle of a salvation purchased from the Church had come to its full height, it fell.

But Christendom did not deliver itself on the principle of payment. It was not by remaining the bondsman of the Church, and toiling in its service of penances and works of merit, that it wrought out its emancipation. It found that this road would never lead to liberty. Its burden, age after age, was growing but the heavier. Its case had become hopeless, when the sound of the old Gospel, like

the silver trumpets of the Day of Jubilee, broke upon its ear: it listened: it cast off the yoke of ceremonies: it turned from man's pardon to God's; from the Church to Christ; from the penance of the cell to the sacrifice of the Cross. Its emancipation was accomplished.

Chapter 5

Luther as Priest, Professor, and Preacher

LUTHER had been two years in the monastery, when on Sunday, 2nd May, 1507, he was ordained to the priesthood. The act was performed by Jerome, Bishop of Brandenburg. John Luther, his father, was present, attended by twenty horsemen, Martin's old comrades, and bringing to his son a present of twenty guilders. The earliest letter extant of Luther is one of invitation to John Braun, Vicar of Eisenach. It gives a fine picture of the feelings with which Luther entered upon his new office. "Since the glorious God," said he, "holy in all his works, has deigned to exalt me, who am a wretched man and every way an unworthy sinner, so eminently, and to call me to his sublime ministry by his sole and most liberal mercy, may I be grateful for the magnificence of such Divine goodness (as far at least as dust and ashes may) and duly discharge the office committed to me."

In the Protestant Churches, the office into which ordination admits one is that of ministry; in the Church of Rome, in which Luther received ordination, it is that of priesthood. The Bishop of Brandenburg, when he ordained Luther, placed the chalice in his hand, accompanying the action with the words, "Receive thou the power of sacrificing for the quick and the dead." It is one of the fundamental tenets of Protestantism that to offer sacrifice is the prerogative of Christ alone, and that, since the coming of this "one Priest," and the offering of His "one sacrifice," sacrificing priesthood is for ever abolished. Luther did not see this then; but the recollection of the words addressed to him by the bishop appalled him in after years. "If the earth did not open and swallow us both up," said he, "it was owing to the great patience and long-suffering of the Lord."

Luther passed another year in his cell, and left it in haste at last, as Joseph his prison, being summoned to fill a wider sphere. The University of Wittemberg was founded in 1502 by Frederick the

Wise, Elector of Saxony. He wished, as he said in its charter, to make it the light of his kingdom. He little dreamed what a fulfillment awaited his wish. The elector was looking round him for fit men for its chairs. Staupitz, whose sagacity and honorable character gave him great weight with Frederick, recommended the Augustinian monk at Erfurt. The electoral invitation was immediately dispatched to Luther, and accepted by him. And now we behold him, disciplined by God, rich in the experience of himself, and illumined with the knowledge of the Gospel, bidding the monastery a final adieu, though not as yet the cowl, and going forth to teach in the newly-founded University of Wittemberg.

The department assigned to Luther was "dialectics and physics" – in other words, the scholastic philosophy. There was a day – it had not long gone by – when Luther reveled in this philosophy, and deemed it the perfection of all wisdom. He had since tasted the "old wine" of the apostles, and had lost all relish for the "new wine" of the schoolmen. Much he longed to unseal the fountains of the Water of Life to his students.

Nevertheless, he set about doing the work prescribed to him, and his labors in this ungenial field were of great use, in the way of completing his own preparation for combating and overthrowing the Aristotelian philosophy – one of the idols of the age.

Soon "philosophy" was exchanged for "theology," as the department of the new professor. It was now that Luther was in his right place. He opened the New Testament; he selected for exposition the Epistle to the Romans – that book which shines like a glorious constellation in the firmament of the Bible, gathering as it does into one group all the great themes of revelation.

Passing from the cell to the class-room with the open Bible in his hand, the professor spoke as no teacher had spoken for ages in Christendom. It was no rhetorician, showing what a master of his art he was; it was no dialectician, proud to display the dexterity of his logic, or the cunning of his sophistry; it was no philosopher, expounding with an air of superior wisdom the latest invention of the

schools; Luther spoke like one who had come from another sphere. And he had indeed been carried upwards, or, to speak with greater accuracy, he had, more truly than the great poet of the Inferno, gone down into Hades, and at the cost of tears, and groans, and agonies of soul he had learned what he was now communicating so freely to others. Herein lay the secret of Luther's power. The youths crowded round him; their numbers increased day by day; professors and rectors sat at his feet; the fame of the university went forth to other lands, and students flocked from foreign countries to hear the wisdom of the Wittenberg professor. The living waters shut up so long were again let loose, and were flowing among the habitations of men, and promised to convert the dry and parched wilderness which Christendom had become into the garden of the Lord.

"This monk," said Dr. Mallerstadt, the rector of the university, himself a man of great learning and fame, "will reform the whole Church. He builds on the prophets and apostles, which neither Scotist nor Thomist can overthrow."

Staupitz watched the career of the young professor with peculiar and lively satisfaction. He was even now planning a yet wider usefulness for him. Why, thought Staupitz, should Luther confine his light within the walls of the university? Around him in Wittemberg, and in all the towns of Germany, are multitudes who are as sheep without a shepherd, seeking to satisfy their hunger with the husks on which the monks feed them; why not minister to these men also the Bread of Life? The Vicar-General proposed to Luther that he should preach in public. He shrank back from so august an office – so weighty a responsibility. "In less than six months," said Luther, "I shall be in my grave." But Staupitz knew the monk better than he knew himself; he continued to urge his proposal, and at last Luther consented. We have followed him from the cell to the professor's chair, now we are to follow him from the chair to the pulpit.

Luther opened his public ministry in no proud cathedral, but in one of the humblest sanctuaries in all Germany. In the center of the public square

stood an old wooden church, thirty feet long and twenty broad. Far from magnificent in even its best days, it was now sorely decayed. Tottering to its fall, it needed to be propped up on all sides. In this chapel was a pulpit of boards raised three feet over the level of the floor. This was the place assigned to the young preacher. In this shed, and from this rude pulpit, was the Gospel proclaimed to the common people for the first time after the silence of centuries.

"This building," says 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."

If his learning and subtlety fitted Luther to shine in the university, not less did his powers of popular eloquence enable him to command the

attention of his countrymen. Before his day the pulpit had sunk ineffably low. At that time not a secular priest in all Italy ever entered a pulpit. Preaching was wholly abandoned to the Mendicant friars. These persons knew neither human nor Divine knowledge. To retain their hearers they were under the necessity of amusing them. This was not difficult, for the audience was as little critical as the preacher was fastidious. Gibes – the coarser, the more effective; legends and tales – the more wonderful and incredible, the more attentively listened to; the lives and miracles of the saints were the staple of the sermons of the age. Dante has immortalized these productions, and the truth of his descriptions is attested by the representations of such scenes which have come clown to us in the sculpture-work of the cathedrals. But the preacher who now appeared in the humble pulpit of the wooden chapel of Wittemberg spoke with authority, and not as the friars. His animated face, his kindling eye, his thrilling tones – above all, the majesty of the truths which he announced – captivated the hearts and awed the consciences of his hearers. He proclaimed pardon and heaven, not

as indirect gifts through priests, but as direct from God. Men wondered at these tidings – so new, so strange, and yet so refreshing and welcome. It was evident, to use the language of Melancthon, that "his words had their birth-place not on his lips, but in his soul."

His fame as a preacher grew. From the surrounding cities came crowds to hear him. The timbers of the old edifice creaked under the multitude of listeners. It was far too small to accommodate the numbers that flocked to it.

The Town Council of Wittemberg now elected him to be their preacher, and gave him the use of the parish church. On one occasion the Elector Frederick was among his hearers, and expressed his admiration of the simplicity and force of his language, and the copiousness and weight of his matter. In presence of this larger audience his eloquence burst forth in new power. Still wider shone the light, and more numerous every day were the eyes that turned towards the spot where it was rising. The Reformation was now fairly launched

on its path. God had bidden it go onwards, and man would be unable to stop it. Popes and emperors and mighty armies would throw themselves upon it; scaffolds and stakes would be raised to oppose it: over all would it march in triumph, and at last ascend the throne of the world. Emerging from this lowly shed in the square of Wittemberg, as emerges the sun from the mists of earth, it would rise ever higher and shine ever brighter, till at length Truth, like a glorious noon, would shed its beams from pole to pole.

Chapter 6

Luther's Journey to Rome

IT was necessary that Luther should pause a little while in the midst of his labors. He had been working for some time under high pressure, and neither mind nor body would long have endured the strain. It is in seasons of rest and reflection that the soul realizes its growth and makes a new start. Besides, Luther needed one lesson more in order to his full training as the future Reformer, and that lesson he could receive only in a foreign land. In his cell at Erfurt he had been shown the sinfulness of his own heart, and his helplessness as a lost sinner. This must be the foundation of his training. At Rome he must be shown the vileness of that Church which he still regarded as the Church of Christ and the abode of holiness.

As often happens, a very trivial matter led to what resulted in the highest consequences both to Luther himself and to Christendom. A quarrel broke out between seven monasteries of the

Augustines and their Vicar-General. It was agreed to submit the matter to the Pope, and the sagacity and eloquence of Luther recommended him as the fittest person to undertake the task. This was in the year 1510, or, according to others, 1512. We now behold the young monk setting out for the metropolis of Christendom. We may well believe that his pulse beat quicker as every step brought him nearer the Eternal City, illustrious as the abode of the Caesars; still more illustrious as the abode of the Popes. To Luther, Rome was a type of the Holy of Holies. There stood the throne of God's Vicar. There resided the Oracle of Infallibility. There dwelt the consecrated priests and ministers of the Lord. Thither went up, year by year, armies of devout pilgrims, and tribes of holy anchorites and monks, to pay their vows in her temples, and prostrate themselves at the footstool of the apostles. Luther's heart swelled with no common emotion when he thought that his feet would stand within the gates of this thrice-holy city.

Alas, what a terrible disenchantment awaited the monk at the end of his journey; or rather, what

a happy emancipation from an enfeebling and noxious illusion! For so long as this spell was upon him, Luther must remain the captive of that power which had imprisoned truth and enchained the nations. An arm with a fetter upon it was not the arm to strike such blows as would emancipate Christendom. He must see Rome, not as his dreams had painted her, but as her own corruptions had made her. And he must go thither to see her with his own eyes, for he would not have believed her deformity although another had told him; and the more profound the idolatrous reverence with which he approaches her, the more resolute his purpose, when he shall have re-crossed her threshold, to leave of that tyrannical and impious power not one stone upon another.

Luther crossed the Alps and descended on the fertile plains of Lombardy. Those magnificent highways which now conduct the traveler with so much ease and pleasure through the snows and rocks that form the northern wall of Italy did not then exist, and Luther would scale this rampart by narrow, rugged, and dangerous tracks. The

sublimity that met his eye and regaled him on his journey had, doubtless, an elevating and expanding effect upon his mind, and mingled something of Italian ideality with his Teutonic robustness. To him, as to others, what a charm in the rapid transition from the homeliness of the German plains, and the ruggedness of the Alps, to the brilliant sky, the voluptuous air, and the earth teeming with flowers and fruits, which met his gaze when he had accomplished his descent! Weary with his journey, he entered a monastery situated on the banks of the Po, to refresh himself a few days. The splendor of the establishment struck him with wonder. Its yearly revenue, amounting to the enormous sum of thirty-six thousand ducats, was all expended in feeding, clothing, and lodging the monks. The apartments were sumptuous in the extreme. They were lined with marble, adorned with paintings, and filled with rich furniture. Equally luxurious and delicate was the clothing of the monks.

Silks and velvet mostly formed their attire; and every day they sat down at a table loaded with

exquisite and skillfully cooked dishes. The monk who, in his native Germany, had inhabited a bare cell, and whose day's provision was at times only a herring and a small piece of bread, was astonished, but said nothing.

Friday came, and on Friday the Church has forbidden the faithful to taste flesh. The table of the monks groaned under the same abundance as before. As on other days, so on this there were dishes of meat. Luther could no longer refrain. "On this day," said Luther, "such things may not be eaten. The Pope has forbidden them." The monks opened their eyes in astonishment on the rude German. Verily, thought they, his boldness is great. It did not spoil their appetite, but they began to be apprehensive that the German might report their manner of life at head-quarters, and they consulted together how this danger might be obviated. The porter, a humane man, dropped a hint to Luther of the risk he would incur should he make a longer stay. Profiting by the friendly counsel to depart hence while health served him, he took leave, with as little delay as possible, of the monastery and all

in it.

Again setting forth, and traveling on foot, he came to Bologna, "the throne of the Roman law." In this city Luther fell ill, and his sickness was so sore that it threatened to be unto death. To sickness was added the melancholy natural to one who is to find his grave in a foreign land. The Judgment Seat was in view, and alarm filled his soul at the prospect of appearing before God. In short, the old anguish and terror, though in moderated force, returned. As he waited for death he thought he heard a voice crying to him and saying, "The just shall live by faith." It seemed as if the voice spoke to him from heaven, so vivid was the impression it made. This was the second time this passage of Scripture had been borne into his mind, as if one had spoken it to him. In his chair at Wittemberg, while lecturing from the Epistle to the Romans, he had come to these same words, "The just shall live by faith." They laid hold upon him so that he was forced to pause and ponder over them. What do they mean? What can they mean but that the just have a new life, and that this new life springs from

faith? But faith on whom, and on what? On whom but on Christ, and on what but the righteousness of Christ wrought out in the poor sinner's behalf? If that be so, pardon and eternal life are not of works but of faith: they are the free gift of God to the sinner for Christ's sake.

So had Luther reasoned when these words first arrested him, and so did he again reason in his sick-chamber at Bologna. They were a needful admonition, approaching as he now was a city where endless rites and ceremonies had been invented to enable men to live by works. His sickness and anguish threw him back upon the first elements of life, and the one only source of holiness. He was taught that this holiness is restricted to no soil, to no system, to no rite; it springs up in the heart where faith dwells. Its source was not at Rome, but in the Bible; its bestower was not the Pope, but the Holy Spirit.

"The just shall live by faith." As he stood at the gates of death a light seemed, at these words, to spring up around him. He arose from his bed

healed in body as in soul. He resumed his journey. He traversed the Apennines, experiencing doubtless, after his sickness, the restorative power of their healthful breezes, and the fragrance of their dells gay with the blossoms of early summer. The chain crossed, he descended into that delicious valley where Florence, watered by the Arno, and embosomed by olive and cypress groves, reposes under a sky where light lends beauty to every object on which it falls. Here Luther made his next resting-place.

The "Etrurian Athens," as Florence has been named, was then in its first glory. Its many sumptuous edifices were of recent erection, and their pristine freshness and beauty were still upon them. Already Brunelleschi had hung his dome – the largest in the world – in mid-air; already Giotto had raised his Campanile, making it, by its great height, its elegant form, and the richness of its variously-colored marbles, the characteristic feature of the city. Already the Baptistry had been built, with its bronze doors which Michael Angelo declared to be "worthy of being the gates of

Paradise." Besides these, other monuments and works of art adorned the city where the future Reformer was now making a brief sojourn. To these creations of genius Luther could not be indifferent, familiar as he had hitherto been with only the comparatively homely architecture of a Northern land. In Germany and England wood was then not unfrequently employed in the construction of dwellings, whereas the Italians built with marble.

Other things were linked with the Etrurian capital, which Luther was scholar enough to appreciate. Florence was the cradle of the Renaissance. The house of Medici had risen to eminence in the previous century.

Cosmo, the founder of the family, had amassed immense riches in commerce. Passionately fond of letters and arts, he freely expended his wealth in the munificent patronage of scholars and artists. Lovers of letters from every land were welcomed by him and by his son Lorenzo in his superb villa on the sides of Fiesole, and were entertained with

princely hospitality. Scholars from the East, learned men from England and the north of Europe, here met the philosophers and poets of Italy; and as they walked on the terraces, or gathered in groups in the alcoves of the gardens – the city, the Arno, and the olive and cypress-clad vale beneath them – they would prolong their discourse on the new learning and the renovated age which literature was bringing with it, till the shadows fell, and dusk concealed the domes of Florence at their feet, and brought out the stars in the calm azure overhead. Thus the city of the Medici became the center of that intellectual and literary revival which was then radiating over Europe, and which heralded a day of more blessed light than any that philosophy and letters have ever shed. Alas, that to Italy, where this light first broke, the morning should so soon have been turned into the shadow of death! But Florence had very recently been the scene of events which could not be unknown to Luther, and which must have touched a deeper chord in his bosom than any its noble edifices and literary glory could possibly awaken. Just fourteen years (1498) before Luther visited this city, Savonarola had been

burned on the Piazza della Gran' Ducca, for denouncing the corruptions of the Church, upholding the supreme authority of Scripture, and teaching that men are to be saved, not by good works, but by the expiatory sufferings of Christ. These were the very truths Luther had learned in his cell; their light had broken upon him from the page of the Bible; the Spirit, with the iron pen of anguish, had written them on his heart; he had preached them to listening crowds in his wooden chapel at Wittemberg; and on this spot, already marked by a statue of Neptune, had a brother-monk been burned alive for doing the very same thing in Italy which he had done in Saxony. The martyrdom of Savonarola he could not but regard as at once of good and of evil augury. It cheered him, doubtless, to think that in this far-distant land another, by the study of the same book, had come to the same conclusion at which he himself had arrived respecting the way of life, and had been enabled to witness for the truth unto blood. This showed him that the Spirit of God was acting in this land also, that the light was breaking out at various points, and that the day he waited for was not far distant.

But the stake of Savonarola might be differently interpreted; it might be construed into a prognostic of many other stakes to be planted hereafter. The death of the Florentine confessor showed that the ancient hatred of the darkness to the light was as bitter as ever, and that the darkness would not abdicate ,without a terrible struggle. It was no peaceful scene on which Truth was about to step, and it was not amid the plaudits of the multitude that her progress was to be accomplished. On the contrary, tempest and battle would hang upon her path; every step of advance would be won over frightful opposition; she must suffer and bleed before she could reign. These were among the lessons which Luther learned on the spot to which doubtless he often came to muse and pray.

How many disciples had Savonarola left behind him in the city in which he had poured out his blood? This, doubtless, was another point of anxious inquiry to Luther; but the answer was not encouraging. The zeal of the Florentines had

cooled. It was hard to enter into life as Savonarola had entered into it – the gate was too narrow and the road too thorny. They praised him, but they could not imitate him. Florence was not to be the cradle of an evangelical Renaissance. Its climate was voluptuous and its Church was accommodating: so its citizens, who, when the voice of their great preacher stirred them, seemed to be not far from the kingdom of heaven, drew back when brought face to face with the stake, and crouched down beneath the twofold burden of sensuality and superstition.

So far Luther had failed to discover that sanctity which before beginning his journey he had pictured to himself, as springing spontaneously as it were out of this holy soil. The farther he penetrated into this land of Italy, the more was he shocked at the irreverence and impiety which characterized all ranks, especially the "religious." The relaxation of morals was universal. Pride, avarice, luxury, abominable vices, and frightful crimes defiled the land; and, to crown all, "sacred things" were the subjects of contempt and

mockery. It seemed as if the genial climate which nourished the fruits of the earth into a luxuriance unknown to his Northern home, nourished with a like luxuriance the appetites of the body and passions of the soul. He sighed for the comparative temperance, frugality, simplicity, and piety of his fatherland.

But he was now near Rome, and Rome, said he to himself, will make amends for all. In that holy city Christianity will be seen in the spotless beauty of her apostolic youth. In that city there are no monks bravely appareled in silks and velvets; there are no conventual cells with a luxurious array of couches and damasks, and curious furniture inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl, while their walls are aglow with marbles, paintings, and gilding. There are no priests who tarry by the wine-cup, or sit on fast-days at boards smoking with dishes of meat and venison. The sound of the viol, the lute, and the harp is never heard in the monasteries of Rome: there ascend only the accents of devotion: matins greet the day, and even-song speeds its departure. Into that holy city there entereth nothing

that defileth. Eager to mingle in the devout society of the place to which he was hastening, and there forget the sights which had pained him on the way thither, he quitted Florence, and set out on the last stage of his journey.

We see him on his way. He is descending the southern slopes of the mountains on which Viterbo is seated. At every short distance he strains his eyes, if haply he may descry on the bosom of the plain that spreads itself out at his feet, some signs of her who once was "Queen of the Nations." On his right, laving the shore of Latium, is the blue Mediterranean; on his left is the triple-topped Soracte and the "purple Apennine" – white towns hanging on its crest, and olive-woods and forests of pine clothing its sides – running on in a magnificent wall of craggy peaks, till it fades from the eye in the southern horizon. Luther is now traversing the storied Campagna di Roma.

The man who crosses this plain at the present day finds it herbless, silent, and desolate. The multitude of men which it once nourished have

perished from its bosom. The numerous and populous towns, that in its better days crowned every conical height that dots its surface, are now buried in its soil: its olive-woods and orange-groves have been swept away, and thistles, wiry grass, and reeds have come in their room. Its roads, once crowded with armies, ambassadors, and proconsuls, are now deserted and all but untrodden. Broken columns protruding through the soil, stacks of brick-work with the marble peeled off, substructions of temples and tombs, now become the lair of the fox or the lurking-place of the brigand, and similar memorials are almost all that remain to testify to the flourishing cultivation, and the many magnificent structures, that once adorned this great plain.

But in the days of Luther the Campagna di Roma had not become the blighted, treeless, devastated expanse it is now. Doubtless many memorials of decay met his eye as he passed along. War had left some frightful scars upon the plain: the indolence and ignorance of its inhabitants had operated with even worse effect: but still in the

sixteenth century it had not become so deserted of man, and so forsaken of its cities, as it is at this day. The land still continued to enjoy what has now all but ceased upon it, seed-time and harvest. Besides, it was the beginning of summer when Luther visited it, and seen under the light of an Italian sun, and with the young verdure clothing its surface, the scene would be by no means an unpleasant one. But one object mainly engrossed his thoughts: he was drawing nigh to the metropolis of Christendom. The heights of Monte Mario, adjoining the Vatican – for the cupola of St. Peter's was not yet built – would be the first to catch his eye; the long ragged line formed by the buildings and towers of the city would next come into view. Luther had had his first sight of her whom no one ever yet saw for the first time without emotion, though it might not be so fervent, nor of the same character exactly, as that which thrilled Luther at this moment. Falling on his knees, he exclaimed, "Holy Rome, I salute thee!"

Chapter 7

Luther in Rome

AFTER many a weary league, Luther's feet stand at last within the gates of Rome. What now are his feelings? Is it a Paradise or a Pandemonium in which he is arrived?

The enchantment continued for some little while. Luther tried hard to realize the dreams which had lightened his toilsome journey. Here he was breathing holier air, so he strove to persuade himself; here he was mingling with a righteous people; while the Nazarites of the Lord were every moment passing by in their long robes, and the chimes pealed forth all day long, and, not silent even by night, told of the prayers and praises that were continually ascending in the temples of the metropolis of Christendom.

The first things that struck Luther were the physical decay and ruin of the place. Noble palaces and glorious monuments rose on every side of him,

but, strangely enough, mingled with these were heaps of rubbish and piles of ruins. These were the remains of the once imperial glory of the city – the spoils of war, the creations of genius, the labors of art which had beautified it in its palmy days. They showed him what Rome had been under her pagan consuls and emperors, and they enabled him to judge how much she owed to her Popes.

Luther gazed with veneration on these defaced and mutilated remains, associated as they were in his mind with the immortal names of the great men whose deeds had thrilled him, and whose writings had instructed him in his native land. Here, too, thought Luther, the martyrs had died; on the floor of this stupendous ruin, the Coliseum, had they contended with the lions; on this spot, where now stands the sumptuous temple of St. Peter, and where the Vicar of Christ has erected his throne, were they used "as torches to illumine the darkness of the night." Over this city, too, Paul's feet had walked, and to this city had that letter been sent, and here had it first been opened and read, in which occur the words that had been the means of

imparting to him a new life – "The just shall live by faith."

The first weeks which Luther passed in Rome were occupied in visiting the holy places, and saying mass at the altars of the more holy of its churches. For, although Luther was converted in heart, and rested on the one Mediator, his knowledge was imperfect, and the darkness of his mind still remained in part. The law of life in the soul may not be able all at once to develop into an outward course of liberty, and the ideas may be reformed while the old acts and habits of legal belief may for a time survive. It was not easy for Luther or for Christendom to find its way out of a night of twelve centuries. Even to this hour that night remains brooding over a full half of Europe.

If it was the physical deformities of Rome – the scars which war or barbarism had inflicted – that formed the first stumbling-blocks to Luther, it was not long till he began to see that these outward blemishes were as nothing to the hideous moral and spiritual corruptions that existed beneath the

surface. The luxury, lewdness, and impiety that shocked him in the first Italian towns he had entered, and which had attended him in every step of his journey since crossing the Alps, were all repeated in Rome on a scale of seven-fold magnitude. His practice of saying mass at all the more favored churches brought him into daily contact with the priests; he saw them behind the scenes; he heard their talk, and he could not conceal from himself – though the discovery unspeakably shocked and pained him – that these men were simply playing a part, and that in private they held in contempt and treated with mockery the very rites which in public they celebrated with so great a show of devotion. If he was shocked at their profane levity, they on their part were no less astonished at his solemn credulity, and jeered him as a dull German, who had not genius enough to be a skeptic, nor cunning enough to be a hypocrite – a fossilized specimen, in short, of a fanaticism common enough in the twelfth century, but which it amazed them to find still existing in the sixteenth.

One day Luther was saying mass in one of the churches of Rome with his accustomed solemnity. While he had been saying one mass, the priests at the neighboring altars had sung seven. "Make haste, and send Our Lady back her Son:" such was the horrible scoff with which they reproved his delay, as they accounted it. To them "Lady and Son" were worth only the money they brought. But these were the common priests. Surely, thought he, faith and piety still linger among the dignitaries of the Church! How mistaken was even this belief, Luther was soon to discover. One day he chanced to find himself at table with some prelates. Taking the German to be a man of the same easy faith with themselves, they lifted the veil a little too freely. They openly expressed their disbelief in the mysteries of their Church, and shamelessly boasted of their cleverness in deceiving and befooling the people. Instead of the words, "Hoc est meum corpus," etc. – the words at the utterance of which the bread is changed, as the Church of Rome teaches, into the flesh and blood of Christ – these prelates, as they themselves told him, were accustomed to say, "Panis es, et panis manebis,"

etc. – Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain – and then, said they, we elevate the Host, and the people bow down and worship.

Luther was literally horrified: it was as if an abyss had suddenly yawned beneath him. But the horror was salutary; it opened his eyes. Plainly he must renounce belief in Christianity or in Rome. His struggles at Erfurt had but too surely deepened his faith in the first to permit him to cast it off: it was the last, therefore, that must be let go; but as yet it was not Rome in her doctrines and rites, but Rome in her clergy, from which Luther turned away.

Instead of a city of prayers and alms, of contrite hearts and holy lives, Rome was full of mocking hypocrisy, defiant skepticism, jeering impiety, and shameless revelry. Borgia had lately closed his infamous Pontificate, and the warlike Julius II. was now reigning. A powerful police patrolled the city every night. They were empowered to deal summary justice on offenders, and those whom they caught were hanged at the next post or thrown

into the Tiber. But all the vigilance of the patrol could not secure the peace and safety of the streets. Robberies and murders were of nightly occurrence. "If there be a hell," said Luther, "Rome is built over it."

And yet it was at Rome, in the midst of all this darkness, that the light shone fully into the mind of the Reformer, and that the great leading idea, that on which his own life was based, and on which he based the whole of that Reformation which God honored him to accomplish – the doctrine of justification by faith alone – rose upon him in its full-orbed splendor. We naturally ask, How did this come about? What was there in this city of Popish observances to reveal the reformed faith? Luther was desirous of improving every hour of his stay in Rome, where religious acts done on its holy soil, and at its privileged altars and shrines, had a tenfold degree of merit; accordingly he busied himself in multiplying these, that he might nourish his piety, and return a holier man than he came; for as yet he saw but dimly the sole agency of faith in the justification of the sinner.

One day he went, under the influence of these feelings, to the Church of the Lateran. There is the Scala Sancta, or Holy Stairs, which tradition says Christ descended on retiring from the hall of judgment, where Pilate had passed sentence upon him. These stairs are of marble, and the work of conveying them from Jerusalem to Rome was reported to have been undertaken and executed by the angels, who have so often rendered similar services to the Church – Our Lady's House at Loretto for example. The stairs so transported were enshrined in the Palace of the Lateran, and every one who climbs them on his knees merits an indulgence of fifteen years for each ascent. Luther, who doubted neither the legend touching the stairs, nor the merit attached by the bulls of the Popes to the act of climbing them, went thither one day to engage in this holy act. He was climbing the steps in the appointed way, on his knees namely, earning at every step a year's indulgence, when he was startled by a sudden voice, which seemed as if it spoke from heaven, and said, "The just shall live by faith." Luther started to his feet in amazement.

This was the third time these same words had been conveyed into his mind with such emphasis, that it was as if a voice of thunder had uttered them. It seemed louder than before, and he grasped more fully the great truth which it announced. What folly, thought he, to seek an indulgence from the Church, which can last me but a few years, when God sends me in his Word an indulgence that will last me for ever! How idle to toil at these performances, when God is willing to acquit me of all my sins not as so much wages for so much service, but freely, in the way of believing upon his Son! "The just shall live by faith."

From this time the doctrine of justification by faith alone – in other words, salvation by free grace – stood out before Luther as the one great comprehensive doctrine of revelation. He held that it was by departing from this doctrine that the Church had fallen into bondage, and had come to groan under penances and works of self-righteousness. In no other way, he believed, could the Church find her way back to truth and liberty than by returning to this doctrine. This was the

road to true reformation. This great article of Christianity was in a sense its fundamental article, and henceforward Luther began to proclaim it as eminently the Gospel – the whole Gospel in a single phrase. With relics, with privileged altars, with Pilate's Stairs, he would have no more to do; this one sentence, "The just shall live by faith," had more efficacy in it a thousand times over than all the holy treasures that Rome contained. It was the key that unlocked the closed gates of Paradise; it was the star that went before his face, and led him to the throne of a Savior, there to find a free salvation. It needed but to re-kindle that old light in the skies of the Church, and a day, clear as that of apostolic times, would again shine upon her. This was what Luther now proposed doing.

The words in which Luther recorded this purpose are very characteristic. "I, Doctor Martin Luther," writes he, "unworthy herald of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, confess this article, that faith alone without works justifies before God; and I declare that it shall stand and remain for ever, in despite of the Emperor of the Romans, the Emperor

of the Turks, the Emperor of the Tartars, the Emperor of the Persians; in spite of the Pope and all the cardinals, with the bishops, priests, monks, and nuns; in spite of kings, princes, and nobles; and in spite of all the world, and of the devils themselves; and that if they endeavor to fight against this truth they will draw the fires of hell upon their own heads. This is the true and holy Gospel, and the declaration of me, Doctor Martin Luther, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. We hold fast to it in the name of God. Amen." This was what Luther learned at Rome. Verily, he believed, it was worth his long and toilsome journey thither to learn this one truth. Out of it were to come the life that would revive Christendom, the light that would illuminate it, and the holiness that would purify and adorn it. In that one doctrine lay folded the whole Reformation. "I would not have missed my journey to Rome," said Luther afterwards, "for a hundred thousand florins."

When he turned his back on Rome, he turned his face toward the Bible. The Bible henceforward

was to be to Luther the true city of God.

Chapter 8

Tetzel Preaches Indulgences

LUTHER'S stay in Rome did not extend over two weeks, but in that short time he had learned lessons not to be forgotten all his life long. The grace he had looked to find at Rome he had indeed found there, but in the Word of God, not in the throne of the Pope. The latter was a fountain that had ceased to send forth the Water of Life; so, turning from this empty cistern, he went back to Wittemberg and the study of the Scriptures.

The year of his return was 1512. It was yet five years to the breaking out of the Reformation in Germany. These years were spent by Luther in the arduous labors of preacher, professor, and confessor at Wittemberg. A few months after his return he received the degree of Doctor in Divinity, and this was not without its influence upon the mind of the Reformer. On that occasion Luther took an oath upon the Bible to study, propagate, and defend the faith contained in the Holy

Scriptures. He looked upon himself henceforward as the sworn knight of the reformed faith. Taking farewell of philosophy, from which in truth he was glad to escape, he turned to the Bible as his life-work. A more assiduous student of it than ever, his acquaintance with it daily grew, his insight into its meaning continually deepened, and thus a beginning was made in Wittemberg and the neighboring parts of Germany, by the evangelical light which he diffused in his sermons, of that great work for which God had destined him. He had as yet no thought of separating himself from the Roman Church, in which, as he believed, there resided some sort of infallibility. These were the last links of his bondage, and Rome herself was at that moment unwittingly concocting measures to break them, and set free the arm that was to deal the blow from which she should never wholly rise.

We must again turn our eyes upon Rome. The warlike Julius II., who held the tiara at the time of Luther's visit, was now dead, and Leo X. occupied the Vatican. Leo was of the family of the Medici, and he brought to the Papal chair all the tastes and

passions which distinguished the Medicean chiefs of the Florentine republic. He was refined in manners, but sensual and voluptuous in heart, he patronized the fine arts, affected a taste for letters, and delighted in pomps and shows. His court was perhaps the most brilliant in Europe. No elegance, no amusement, no pleasure was forbidden admission into it. The fact that it was an ecclesiastical court was permitted to be no restraint upon its ample freedom. It was the chosen home of art, of painting, of music, of revels, and of masquerades.

The Pontiff was not in the least burdened with religious beliefs and convictions. To have such was the fashion of neither his house nor his age. His office as Pontiff, it is true, connected him with "a gigantic fable" which had come down from early times; but to have exploded that fable would have been to dissolve the chair in which he sat, and the throne that brought him so much magnificence and power. Leo was, therefore, content to vent his skepticism in the well-known sneer, "What a profitable affair this fable of Christ has been to us!"

To this had it come! Christianity was now worked solely as a source of profit to the Popes.

Leo, combining, as we have said, the love of art with that of pleasure, conceived the idea of beautifying Rome. His family had adorned Florence with the noblest edifices. Its glory was spoken of in all countries, and men came from afar to gaze upon its monuments. Leo would do for the Eternal City what his ancestors had done for the capital of Etruria. War, and the slovenliness or penury of the Popes had permitted the Church of St. Peter to fall into disrepair. He would clear away the ruinous fabric, and replace it with a pile more glorious than any that Christendom contained. But to execute such a project millions would be needed. Where were they to come from? The shows or entertainments with which Leo had gratified the vanity of his courtiers, and amused the indolence of the Romans, had emptied his exchequer. But the magnificent conception must not be permitted to fall through from want of money. If the earthly treasury of the Pope was empty, his spiritual treasury was full; and there was wealth enough

there to rear a temple that would eclipse all existing structures, and be worthy of being the metropolitan church of Christendom. In short, it was resolved to open a special sale of indulgences in all the countries of Europe. This traffic would enrich all parties. From the Seven Hills would flow a river of spiritual blessing. To Rome would flow back a river of gold.

Arrangements were made for opening this great market (1517). The license to sell in the different countries of Europe was disposed of to the highest bidder, and the price was paid beforehand to the Pontiff. The indulgences in Germany were farmed out to Albert, Archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg. The archbishop was in Germany what Leo X. was in Rome. He loved to see himself surrounded with a brilliant court; he denied himself no pleasure; was profuse in entertainments; never went abroad without a long retinue of servants; and, as a consequence, was greatly in want of money. Besides, he owed to the Pope for his pall – some said, 26,000, others, 30,000 florins. There could be no harm in diverting

a little of the wealth that was about to flow to Rome, into channels that might profit himself. The bargain was struck, and the archbishop sought out a suitable person to perambulate Germany, and preach up the indulgences. He found a man every way suited to his purpose. This was a Dominican monk, named John Diezel, or Tetzel, the son of a goldsmith of Leipsic. He had filled the odious office of inquisitor, and having added thereto a huckstering trade in indulgences, he had acquired a large experience in that sort of business. He had been convicted of a shameful crime at Innspruck, and sentenced to be put into a sack and drowned; but powerful intercession being made for him, he was reprieved, and lived to help unconsciously in the overthrow of the system that had nourished him.

Tetzel lacked no quality necessary for success in his scandalous occupation. He had the voice of a town-crier, and the eloquence of a mountebank. This latter quality enabled him to paint in the most glowing colors the marvelous virtues of the wares which he offered for sale. The resources of his

invention, the power of his effrontery, and the efficacy of his indulgences were all alike limitless.

This man made a progress through Germany. The line of the procession as it moved from place to place might be traced at a distance by the great red cross, which was carried by Tetzels himself, and on which were suspended the arms of the Pope. In front of the procession, on a velvet cushion, was borne the Pontiff's bull of grace; in the rear came the mules laden with bales of pardons, to be given, not to those who had penitence in the heart, but to those who had money in the hand.

When the procession approached a town it was announced to the inhabitants that "The Grace of God and of the Holy Father was at their gates." The welcome accorded was commonly such as the extraordinary honor was fitted to draw forth. The gates were opened, and the tall red cross, with all the spiritual riches of which it was the sign, passed in, followed by a long and imposing array of the ecclesiastical and civic authorities, the religious orders, the various trades, and the whole population

of the place, which had come out to welcome the great pardon-monger. The procession advanced amid the beating of drums, the waving of flags, the blaze of tapers, and the pealing of bells.

When he entered a city, Tetzal and his company went straight to the cathedral. The crowd pressed in and filled the church. The cross was set up in front of the high altar, a strong iron box was put down beside it, in which the money received for pardons was deposited, and Tetzal, in the garb of the Dominicans, mounting the pulpit began to set forth with stentorian voice the incomparable merit of his wares. He bade the people think what it was that had come to them. Never before in their times, nor in the times of their fathers, had there been a day of privilege like this. Never before had the gates of Paradise been opened so widely. "Press in now: come and buy while the market lasts," shouted the Dominican; "should that cross be taken down the market will close, heaven will depart, and then you will begin to knock, and to bewail your folly in neglecting to avail yourselves of blessings which shall then have gone beyond your reach." So

in effect did Tetzel harangue the crowd. But his own words have a plainness and rigor which no paraphrase can convey. Let us cull a few specimens from his orations.

"Indulgences are the most precious and the most noble of God's gifts," said Tetzel. Then pointing to the red cross, which stood full in view of the multitude, he would exclaim, "This cross has as much efficacy as the very cross of Christ." "Come, and I will give you letters all properly sealed, by which even the sins which you intend to commit may be pardoned." "I would not change my privileges for those of St. Peter in heaven, for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the apostle did by his sermons." The Dominican knew how to extol his own office as well as the pardons he was so desirous to bestow on those who had money to buy. "But more than this," said Tetzel, for he had not as yet disclosed the whole wonderful virtues of his merchandise, "indulgences avail not only for the living but for the dead." So had Boniface VIII. enacted two centuries before; and Tetzel goes on to the particular application of the

dogma. "Priest, noble, merchant, wife, youth, maiden, do you not hear your parents and your other friends who are dead, and who cry from the bottom of the abyss: 'We are suffering horrible torments! A trifling alms would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not'?"

These words, shouted in a voice of thunder by the monk, made the hearers shudder.

"At the very instant," continues Tetzels, "that the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies liberated to heaven. Now you can ransom so many souls, stiff-necked and thoughtless man; with twelve groats you can deliver your father from purgatory, and you are ungrateful enough not to save him! I shall be justified in the Day of Judgment; but you – you will be punished so much the more severely for having neglected so great salvation. I declare to you, though you have but a single coat, you ought to strip it off and sell it, in order to obtain this grace... The Lord our God no longer reigns, he has resigned all power to the Pope."

No argument was spared by the monk which could prevail with the people to receive his pardons; in other words, to fill his iron box. From the fires of purgatory – dreadful realities to men of that age, for even Luther as yet believed in such a place – Tetzl would pass to the ruinous condition of St. Peter's, and draw an affecting picture of the exposure to the rain and hail of the bodies of the two apostles, Peter and Paul, and the other martyrs buried within its precincts. Pausing, he would launch a sudden anathema at all who despised the grace which the Pope and himself were offering to men; and then, changing to a more meek and pious strain, he would wind up with a quotation from Scripture, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you that many prophets have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things that ye hear, and have not heard them." And having made an end, the monk would rush down the pulpit stairs and throw a piece of money into the box, which, as if the rattle of the coin were infectious, was sure to be followed by a torrent of pieces.

All round the church were erected confessional stalls. The shrift was a short one, as if intended only to afford another opportunity to the penancer of impressing anew upon the penitent the importance of the indulgences. From confession the person passed to the counter behind which stood Tetzel. He sharply scrutinized all who approached him, that he might guess at their rank in life, and apportion accordingly the sum to be exacted. From kings and princes twenty-five ducats were demanded for an ordinary indulgence; from abbots and barons, ten; from those who had an income of five hundred florins, six; and from those who had only two hundred, one. For particular sins there was a special schedule of prices. Polygamy cost six ducats; church robbery and perjury, nine; murder, eight; and witchcraft, two. Samson, who carried on the same trade in Switzerland as Tetzel in Germany, charged for parricide or fratricide one ducat. The same hand that gave the pardon could not receive the money. The penitent himself must drop it into the box. There were three keys for the box. Tetzel kept one, another was in the possession

of the cashier of the house of Fugger in Augsburg, the agent of the Archbishop and Elector of Mainz, who farmed the indulgences; the third was in the keeping of the civil authority. From time to time the box was opened in presence of a notary-public, and its contents counted and registered.

The form in which the pardon was given was that of a letter of absolution. These letters ran in the following terms: —

"May our Lord Jesus Christ have pity on thee, N. N., and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion. And I, by virtue of the apostolic power which has been confided to me, do absolve thee from all ecclesiastical censures, judgments, and penalties which thou mayest have merited, and from all excesses, sins, and crimes which thou mayest have committed, however great or enormous they may be, and for whatsoever cause, even though they had been reserved to our most Holy Father the Pope and the Apostolic See. I efface all attainders of unfitness and all marks of infamy thou mayest have drawn on thee on this

occasion; I remit the punishment thou shouldest have had to endure in purgatory; I make thee anew a participator in the Sacraments of the Church; I incorporate thee afresh in the communion of the saints; and I reinstate thee in the innocence and purity in which thou wast at the hour of thy baptism; so that, at the hour of thy death, the gate through which is the entrance to the place of torments and punishments shall be closed against thee, and that which leads to the Paradise of joy shall be open. And shouldest thou be spared long, this grace shall remain immutable to the time of thy last end. In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

"Brother John Tetzel, Commissioner, has signed it with his own hand."

Day by day great crowds repaired to this market, where for a little earthly gold men might buy all the blessings of heaven. Tetzel and his indulgences became the one topic of talk in Germany. The matter was discussed in all circles, from the palace and the university to the market-

place and the wayside inn. The more sensible portion of the nation were shocked at the affair. That a little money should atone for the guilt and efface the stain of the most enormous crimes, was contrary to the natural justice of mankind. That the vilest characters should be placed on a level with the virtuous and the orderly, seemed a blow at the foundation of morals – an unhinging of society. The Papal key, instead of unlocking the fountains of grace and holiness, had opened the flood-gates of impiety and vice, and men trembled at the deluge of licentiousness which seemed ready to rush in and overflow the land. Those who had some knowledge of the Word of God viewed the matter in even a worse light. They knew that the pardon of sin was the sole prerogative of God: that he had delegated that power to no mortal, and that those who gathered round the red cross of Tetzels and bought his pardons were cheated of their money and their souls at the same time. Christianity, instead of a source of purity, appeared to be a fountain of pollution; and, from being the guardian and nurse of virtue, seemed to have become the patron and promoter of all ungodliness.

The thoughts of others took another direction. They looked at the "power of the keys" under the new light shed upon it by the indulgences, and began to doubt the legitimacy of that which was now being so flagrantly abused. What, asked they, are we to think of the Pope as a man of humanity and mercy? One day a miner of Schneeberg met a seller of indulgences. "Is it true," he asked, "that we can, by throwing a penny into the chest, ransom a soul from purgatory?" "It is so," replied the indulgence-vendor. "Ah, then," resumed the miner, "what a merciless man the Pope must be, since for want of a wretched penny he leaves a poor soul crying in the flames so long!" Luther embodied in his Theses on Indulgences what was a very general sentiment, when he asked, "Why does not the Pope deliver at once all the souls from purgatory by a holy charity and on account of their great wretchedness, since he delivers so many from love of perishable money and of the Cathedral of St. Peter?" It was all very well to have a fine building at Rome, thought the people of Germany, but to open the gates of that doleful prison in which so

many miserable beings live in flames, and for once make purgatory tenantless, would be a nobler monument of the grace and munificence of the Pope, than the most sumptuous temple that he can by any possibility rear in the Eternal City.

Meanwhile Friar John Tetzel and Pope Leo X. went on laboring with all their might, though wholly unwittingly and unintentionally, to pave the way for Luther. If anything could have deepened the impression produced by the scandals of Tetzel's trade, it was the scandals of his life. He was expending, day by day, and all day long, much breath in the Church's service, extolling the merit of her indulgences, and when night came he much needed refreshment: and he took it to his heart's content. "The collectors led a disorderly life," says Sarpi; "they squandered in taverns, gambling-houses, and places of ill-fame all that the people had saved from their necessities."

As regards Leo X., when the stream of gold from the countries beyond the Alps began to flow, his joy was great. He had not, like the Emperor

Charles, a "Mexico" beyond the Atlantic, but he had a "Mexico" in the credulity of Christendom, and he saw neither limit nor end to the wealth it might yield him. Never again would he have cause to bewail an empty treasury. Men would never cease to sin, and so long as they continued to sin they would need pardon; and where could they go for pardon if not to the Church – in other words, to himself? He only, of all men on the earth, held the key. He might say with an ancient monarch, "Mine hand hath found as a nest the riches of the nations, and as one gathereth eggs so have I gathered all the earth." Thus Leo went on from day to day, building St. Peter's, but pulling down the Papacy.

Chapter 9

The "Theses"

THE great red cross, the stentorian voice of Tetzels, and the frequent chink of money in his iron chest, had compelled the nations of Germany to think. Rome had come too near these nations. While she remained at a distance, separated from them by the Alps, the Teutonic peoples had bowed down in worship before her; but when she presented herself as a hawker of spiritual wares for earthly pelf, when she stood before them in the person of the monk who had so narrowly escaped being tied up in a sack and flung into the river Inn, for his own sins, before he took to pardoning the sins of others, the spell was broken. But as yet the German nations only thought; they had not given utterance to their thoughts. A few murmurs might be heard, but no powerful voice had yet spoken.

Meanwhile, Tetzels, traveling from town to town, eating of the best at the hostelries, and paying his bills in drafts on Paradise; pressing

carriers and others into his service for the transport of his merchandise, and recompensing them for the labor of themselves and their mules by letters of indulgence, approached within four miles of Luther. He little suspected how dangerous the ground on which he was now treading! The Elector Frederick, shocked at this man's trade, and yet more at the scandals of his life, had forbidden him to enter Saxony; but he came as near to it as he durst; and now at Juterbock, a small town on the Saxon frontier, Tetzel set up his red cross, and opened his market. Wittemberg was only an hour and a half's walk distant, and thousands flocked from it to Juterbock, to do business with the pardon-monger. When Luther first heard of Tetzel, which was only a little while before, he said, "By the help of God, I will make a hole in his drum:" he might have added, "and in that of his master, Leo X." Tetzel was now almost within ear-shot of the Reformer.

Luther, who acted as confessor as well as preacher, soon discovered the moral havoc which Tetzel's pardons were working. For we must bear

in mind that Luther still believed in the Church, and in obedience to her commands exacted confession and penance on the part of his flock, though only as preparatives, and not as the price, of that free salvation which he taught, comes through the merit of Christ, and is appropriated by faith alone. One day, as he sat in the confessional, some citizens of Wittenberg came before him, and confessed having committed thefts, adulteries, and other heinous sins. "You must abandon your evil courses," said Luther, "otherwise I cannot absolve you." To his surprise and grief, they replied that they had no thought of leaving off their sins; that this was not in the least necessary, inasmuch as these sins were already pardoned, and they themselves secured against the punishment of them. The deluded people would thereupon pull out the indulgence papers of Tetzel, and show them in testimony of their innocence. Luther could only tell them that these papers were worthless, that they must repent, and be forgiven of God, otherwise they should perish everlastingly.

Denied absolution, and sore at losing both their

money and their hope of heaven, these persons hastened back to Tetzel, and informed him that a monk in Wittemberg was making light of his indulgences, and was warning the people against them as deceptions. Tetzel literally foamed with rage, and bellowing more loudly than ever, poured out a torrent of anathemas against the man who had dared to speak disparagingly of the pardons of the Pope. To energetic words, Tetzel added significant acts. Kindling a fire in the market-place of Juterbock, he gave a sign of what would be done to the man who should obstruct his holy work. The Pope, he said, had given him authority to commit all such heretics to the flames.

Nothing terrified by Tetzel's angry words, or by the fire that blazed so harmlessly in the market-place of Juterbock, Luther became yet more strenuous in his opposition. He condemned the indulgences in his place in the university. He wrote to the Prince Archbishop of Mainz, praying him to interpose his authority and stop a proceeding that was a scandal to religion and a snare to the souls of men. He little knew that he was addressing the very

man who had farmed these indulgences. He even believed the Pope to be ignorant, if not of the indulgences, of the frightful excesses that attended the sale of them. From the pulpit, with all affection but with all fidelity, he warned his flock not to take part in so great a wickedness. God, he said, demands a satisfaction for sin, but not from the sinner; Christ has made satisfaction for the sinner, and God pardons him freely. Offenses against herself the Church can pardon, but not offenses against God. Tetzel's indulgences cannot open the door of Paradise, and they who believe in them believe in a lie, and unless they repent shall die in their sins.

In this Luther differed more widely from his Church than he was then aware of. She holds with Tetzel rather than with Luther. She not merely remits ecclesiastical censures, she pardons sin, and lifts off the wrath of God from the soul.

We have here a narrow stage but a great conflict. From the pulpit at Wittemberg is preached a free salvation. At Juterbock stands the red cross,

where heaven is sold for money. Within a radius of a few miles is fought the same battle which is soon to cover the face of Christendom. The two systems – salvation by Christ and salvation by Rome – are here brought face to face; the one helps sharply to define the other, not in their doctrines only, but in their issues, the holiness which the one demands and the licentiousness which the other sanctions, that men may mark the contrast between the two, and make their choice between the Gospel of Wittemberg and the indulgence-market of Juterbock. Already Protestantism has obtained a territorial foothold, where it is unfurling its banner and enlisting disciples.

Tetzel went on with the sale of his indulgences, and Luther felt himself driven to more decisive measures. The Elector Frederick had lately built the castle-church of Wittemberg, and had spared neither labor nor money in collecting relics to enrich and beautify it. These relics, in their settings of gold and precious stones, the priests were accustomed to show to the people on the festival of All Saints, the 1st of November; and crowds came

to Wittemberg to nourish their piety by the sight of the precious objects, and earn the indulgence offered to all who should visit the church on that day. The eve of the festival (October 31st) was now come. The street of Wittemberg was thronged with pilgrims. At the hour of noon, Luther, who had given no hint to any one of what he purposed, sallied forth, and joined the stream that was flowing to the castle-church, which stood close by the eastern gate. Pressing through the crowd, and drawing forth a paper, he proceeds to nail it upon the door of the church. The strokes of his hammer draw the crowd around him, and they begin eagerly to read. What is on the paper? It contains ninety-five "Theses" or propositions on the doctrine of indulgences. We select the following as comprehensive of the spirit and scope of the whole:

5. The Pope is unable and desires not to remit any other penalty than that which he has imposed of his own good pleasure, or conformably to the canons – that is, to the Papal ordinances.

6. The Pope cannot remit any condemnation, but can only declare and confirm the remission that God himself has given, except only in cases that belong to him. If he does otherwise, the condemnation continues the same.

8. The laws of ecclesiastical penance can be imposed only on the living, and in no wise respect 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 in the Church at large, is possessed by every bishop and every curate in his own particular diocese and parish.

32. Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go to perdition along with those who teach them so.

37. Every true Christian, dead or living, is a partaker of all the blessings of Christ, or of the Church, by the gift of God, and without any letter of indulgence.

38. Yet we must not despise the Pope's distributive and pardoning power, for his pardon is a declaration of God's pardon.

49. We should teach Christians that the Pope's indulgence is good if we put no confidence in it, but that nothing is more hurtful if it diminishes our piety.

50. We should teach Christians that if the Pope knew of the extortions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather the Mother Church of St. Peter were burned and reduced to ashes, than see it built up with the skin, the flesh, and the bones of his flock.

51. We should teach Christians that the Pope (as it is his duty) would distribute his own money to the poor, whom the indulgence-sellers are now

stripping of their last farthing, even were he compelled to sell the Mother Church of St. Peter.

52. To hope to be saved by indulgences is a lying and an empty hope, although even the commissary 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.

62. The true and precious treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.

76. The Papal pardons cannot remit even the least of venal sins as regards the guilt.

These propositions Luther undertook to defend next day in the university against all who might choose to impugn them. No one appeared.

In this paper Luther struck at more than the abuses of indulgences. Underneath was a principle subversive of the whole Papal system. In the midst of some remaining darkness – for he still reverences the Pope, believes in purgatory, and speaks of the merits of the saints – he preaches the Gospel of a free salvation. The "Theses" put God's gift in sharp antagonism to the Pope's gift. The one is free, the other has to be bought. God's pardon does not need the Pope's indorsement, but the Pope's forgiveness, unless followed by God's, is of no avail; it is a cheat, a delusion. Such is the doctrine of the "Theses." That mightiest of all prerogatives, the power of pardoning sins and so of saving men's souls, is taken from the "Church" and given back to God.

The movement is fairly launched. It is speeding on; it grows not by weeks only, but by hours and moments; but no one has yet estimated aright its power, or guessed where only it can find its goal. The hand that posted up these propositions cannot take them down. They are no longer Luther's, they are mankind's.

The news traveled rapidly. The feelings awakened were, of course, mixed, but in the main joyful. Men felt a relief – they were conscious of a burden taken from their hearts; and, though they could scarce say why, they were sure that a new day had dawned. In the homes of the people, and in the cell of many a monk even, there was joy. "While those," says Mathesius, "who had entered the convents to seek a good table, a lazy life, or consideration and honor, heaped Luther's name with revilings, those monks who lived in prayer, fasting, and mortification, gave thanks to God as soon as they heard the cry of that eagle which John Huss had foretold a century before." The appearance of Luther gladdened the evening of the aged Reuchlin. He had had his own battles with the monks, and he was overjoyed when he saw an abler champion enter the lists to maintain the truth.

The verdict of Erasmus on the affair is very characteristic. The Elector of Saxony having asked him what he thought of it, the great scholar replied with his usual shrewdness, "Luther has committed

two unpardonable crimes – he has attacked the Pope's tiara, and the bellies of the monks." There were others whose fears predominated over their hopes, probably from permitting their eyes to rest almost exclusively upon the difficulties.

The historian Kranz, of Hamburg, was on his death-bed when Luther's "Theses" were brought to him. "Thou art right, brother Martin," exclaimed he on reading them, "but thou wilt not succeed. Poor monk, hie thee to thy cell, and cry, 'O God, have pity on me.'" An old priest of Hexter, in Westphalia, shook his head and exclaimed, "Dear brother Martin, if thou succeed in overthrowing this purgatory, and all these paper-dealers, truly thou art a very great gentleman." But others, lifting their eyes higher, saw the hand of God in the affair. "At last," said Dr. Fleck, prior of the monastery of Steinlausitz, who had for some time ceased to celebrate mass, "At last we have found the man we have waited for so long;" and, playing on the meaning of the word Wittemberg, he added, "All the world will go and seek wisdom on that mountain, and will find it."

We step a moment out of the domain of history, to narrate a dream which the Elector Frederick of Saxony had on the night preceding the memorable day on which Luther affixed his "Theses" to the door of the castle-church.

The elector told it the next morning to his brother, Duke John, who was then residing with him at his palace of Schweinitz, six leagues from Wittemberg. The dream is recorded by all the chroniclers of the time. Of its truth there is no doubt, however we may interpret it. We cite it here as a compendious and dramatic epitome of the affair of the "Theses," and the movement which grew out of them.

On the morning of the 31st October, 1517, the elector said to Duke John, "Brother, I must tell you a dream which I had last night, and the meaning of which I should like much to know. It is so deeply impressed on my mind, that I will never forget it, were I to live a thousand years. For I dreamed it thrice, and each time with new circumstances."

Duke John: "Is it a good or a bad dream?"

The Elector: "I know not; God knows."

Duke John: "Don't be uneasy at it; but be so good as tell it to me."

The Elector: "Having gone to bed last night, fatigued and out of spirits, I fell asleep shortly after my prayer, and slept calmly for about two hours and a half; I then awoke, and continued awake to midnight, all sorts of thoughts passing through my mind. Among other things, I thought how I was to observe the Feast of All Saints. I prayed for the poor souls in purgatory; and supplicated God to guide me, my counsels, and my people according to truth. I again fell asleep, and then dreamed that Almighty God sent me a monk, who was a true son of the Apostle Paul. All the saints accompanied him by order of God, in order to bear testimony before me, and to declare that he did not come to contrive any plot, but that all that he did was according to the will of God. They asked me to

have the goodness graciously to permit him to write something on the door of the church of the Castle of Wittemberg. This I granted through my chancellor. Thereupon the monk went to the church, and began to write in such large characters that I could read the writing at Schweinitz. The pen which he used was so large that its end reached as far as Rome, where it pierced the ears of a lion that was crouching there, and caused the triple crown upon the head of the Pope to shake. All the cardinals and princes, running hastily up, tried to prevent it from falling. You and I, brother, wished also to assist, and I stretched out my arm; – but at this moment I awoke, with my arm in the air, quite amazed, and very much enraged at the monk for not managing his pen better. I recollected myself a little; it was only a dream.

"I was still half asleep, and once more closed my eyes. The dream returned. The lion, still annoyed by the pen, began to roar with all his might, so much so that the whole city of Rome, and all the States of the Holy Empire, ran to see what the matter was. The Pope requested them to oppose

this monk, and applied particularly to me, on account of his being in my country. I again awoke, repeated the Lord's prayer, entreated God to preserve his Holiness, and once more fell asleep."

"Then I dreamed that all the princes of the Empire, and we among them, hastened to Rome, and strove, one after another, to break the pen; but the more we tried the stiffer it became, sounding as if it had been made of iron. We at length desisted. I then asked the monk (for I was sometimes at Rome, and sometimes at Wittemberg) where he got this pen, and why it was so strong. 'The pen,' replied he, 'belonged to an old goose of Bohemia, a hundred years old. I got it from one of my old schoolmasters. As to its strength, it is owing to the impossibility of depriving it of its pith or marrow; and I am quite astonished at it myself.' Suddenly I heard a loud noise – a large number of other pens had sprung out of the long pen of the monk. I awoke a third time: it was daylight."

Duke John: "Chancellor, what is your opinion? Would we had a Joseph, or a Daniel, enlightened

by God!"

Chancellor: "Your highness knows the common proverb, that the dreams of young girls, learned men, and great lords have usually some hidden meaning. The meaning of this dream, however, we shall not be able to know for some time – not till the things to which it relates have taken place. Wherefore, leave the accomplishment to God, and place it fully in his hand."

Duke John: "I am of your opinion, Chancellor; 'tis not fit for us to annoy ourselves in attempting to discover the meaning. God will overrule all for his glory."

Elector: "May our faithful God do so; yet I shall never forget, this dream. I have, indeed, thought of an interpretation, but I keep it to myself. Time, perhaps, will show if I have been a good diviner."

So passed the morning of the 31st October, 1517, in the royal castle of Schweinitz. The events

of the evening at Wittenberg we have already detailed. The elector has hardly made an end of telling his dream when the monk comes with his hammer to interpret it.

Chapter 10

Luther Attacked by Tetzel, Prierio, and Eck

THE day on which the monk of Wittemberg posted up his "Theses," occupies a distinguished place among the great days of history. It marks a new and grander starting-point in religion and liberty. The propositions of Luther preached to all Christendom that God does not sell pardon, but bestows it as a free gift on the ground of the death of his Son; the "Theses" in short were but an echo of the song sung by the angels on the plain of Bethlehem fifteen centuries before – "On earth peace: good-will to men."

The world had forgotten that song: no wonder, seeing the Book that contains it had long been hidden. Taking God to be a hard task-master, who would admit no one into heaven unless he paid a great price, Christendom had groaned for ages under penances and expiatory works of self-

righteousness. But the sound of Luther's hammer was like that of the silver trumpet on the day of Jubilee: it proclaimed the advent of the year of release – the begun opening of the doors of that great prison-house in which the human soul had sat for ages and sighed in chains.

Luther acted without plan – so he himself afterwards confessed. He obeyed an impulse that was borne in upon him; he did what he felt it to be his duty at the moment, without looking carefully or anxiously along the line of consequences to see whether the blow might not fall on greater personages than Tetzel. His arm would have been unnerved, and the hammer would have fallen from his grasp, had he been told that its strokes would not merely scare away Tetzel and break up the market at Juterbock, but would resound through Christendom, and centuries after he had gone to his grave, would be sending back their echoes in the fall of hierarchies, and in the overthrow of that throne before which Luther was still disposed to bow as the seat of the Vicar of Christ.

Luther's eye did not extend to these remote countries and times; he looked only at what was before him – the professors and students of the university; his flock in Wittemberg in danger of being ensnared; the crowd of pilgrims assembled to earn an indulgence – and to the neighboring towns and parts of Germany. These he hoped to influence.

But far beyond these modest limits was spread the fame of Luther's "Theses." They contained truth, and truth is light, and light must necessarily diffuse itself, and penetrate the darkness on every side. The "Theses" were found to be as applicable to Christendom as to Wittemberg, and as hostile to the great indulgence-market at Rome as to the little one at Juterbock. Now was seen the power of that instrumentality which God had prepared beforehand for this emergency – the printing-press. Copied with the hand, how slowly would these propositions have traveled, and how limited the number of persons who would have read them! But the printing-press, multiplying copies, sowed them like snow-flakes over Saxony. Other printing-

presses set to work, and speedily there was no country in Europe where the "Theses" of the monk of Wittemberg were not as well known as in Saxony.

The moment of their publication was singularly opportune; pilgrims from all the surrounding States were then assembled at Wittemberg. Instead of buying an indulgence they bought Luther's "Theses," not one, but many copies, and carried them in their wallets to their own homes. In a fortnight these propositions were circulated over all Germany. They were translated into Dutch, and read in Holland; they were rendered into Spanish, and studied in the cities and universities of the Iberian peninsula. In a month they had made the tour of Europe. "It seemed," to use the words of Myconius, "as if the angels had been their carriers." Copies were offered for sale in Jerusalem. In four short weeks Luther's tract had become a household book, and his name a household word in all Europe.

The "Theses" were the one topic of

conversation everywhere – in all circles, and in all sorts of places. They were discussed by the learned in the universities, and by the monks in their cells. In the market-place, in the shop, and in the tavern, men paused and talked together of the bold act and the new doctrine of the monk of Wittemberg. A copy was procured and read by Leo X. in the Vatican.

The very darkness of the age helped to extend the circulation and the knowledge of the "Theses." The man who kindles a bonfire on a mountain-top by day will have much to do to attract the eyes of even a single parish. He who kindles his signal amid the darkness of night will arouse a whole kingdom. This last was what Luther had done. He had lighted a great fire in the midst of the darkness of Christendom, and far and wide over distant realms was diffused the splendor of that light; and men, opening their eyes on the sudden illumination that was brightening the sky, hailed the new dawn.

No one was more surprised at the effects produced than Luther himself. That a sharp

discussion should spring up in the university; that the convents and colleges of Saxony should be agitated; that some of his friends should approve and others condemn, was what he had anticipated; but that all Christendom should be shaken as by an earthquake, was an issue he had never dreamed of. Yet this was what had happened. The blow he had dealt had loosened the foundations of an ancient and venerable edifice, which had received the reverence of many preceding generations, and his own reverence among the rest. It was now that he saw the full extent of the responsibility he had incurred, and the formidable character of the opposition he had provoked. His friends were silent, stunned by the suddenness and boldness of the act. He stood alone. He had thrown down the gage, and he could not now decline the battle. That battle was mustering on every side. Still he did not repent of what he had done. He was prepared to stand by the doctrine of his "Theses." He looked upward.

Tetzel by this time had broken up his encampment at Juterbock – having no more sins to

pardon and no more money to gather – and had gone to the wealthier locality of Frankfort-on-the-Oder. He had planted the red cross and the iron box on one of the more fashionable promenades of the city. Thither the rumor of the Wittemberg "Theses" followed him. He saw at a glance the mischief the monk had done him, and made a show of fight after his own fashion. Full of rage, he kindled a great fire, and as he could not burn Luther in person he burned his "Theses." This feat accomplished, he rubbed up what little theology he knew, and attempted a reply to the doctor of Wittemberg in a set of counter-propositions. They were but poor affairs. Among them were the following: –

3. "Christians should be taught that the Pope, in the plenitude of his power, is superior to the universal Church, and superior to Councils; and that entire submission is due to his decrees."

4. "Christians should be taught that the Pope alone has the right to decide in questions of Christian doctrine; that he alone, and no other, has power to explain, according to his judgment, the

sense of Holy Scripture, and to approve or condemn the words and works of others." V. "Christians should be taught that the judgment of the Pope, in things pertaining to Christian doctrine, and necessary to the salvation of mankind, can in no case err."

17. "Christians should be taught that there are many things which the Church regards as certain articles of the Catholic faith, although they are not found either in the inspired Scripture or in the earlier Fathers."

There is but one doctrine taught in Tetzel's "Theses" – the Pontifical supremacy, namely; and there is but one duty enjoined – absolute submission. At the feet of the Pope are to be laid the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, human reason. The man who is not prepared to make this surrender deserves to do penance in the fire which Tetzel had kindled. So thought the Pope's vendor of pardons.

The proceeding of Tetzel at Frankfort soon

came to the knowledge of the students of Wittemberg. They espoused with more warmth than was needed the cause of their professor. They bought a bundle of Tetzels "Theses" and publicly burned them. Many of the citizens were present, and gave unmistakable signs, by their laughter and hootings, of the estimation in which they held the literary and theological attainments of the renowned indulgence-monger. Luther knew nothing of the matter. The proceedings savored too much of Rome's method of answering an opponent to find favor in his eyes. When informed of it, he said that really it was superfluous to kindle a pile to consume a document, the extravagance and absurdity of which would alone have effected its extinction.

But soon abler antagonists entered the lists. The first to present himself was Sylvester Mazzolini, of Prierio. He was Master of the Sacred Palace at Rome, and discharged the office of censor. Stationed on the watch-tower of Christendom, this man had it in charge to say what books were to be circulated, and what were to be suppressed; what

doctrines Christians were to believe, and what they were not to believe. Protestant liberty, claiming freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom of printing, came at this early stage into immediate conflict with Roman despotism, which claimed absolute control over the mind, the tongue, and the pen. The monk of Wittemberg, who nails his "Theses" on the church door in the open day, encounters the Papal censor, who blots out every line that is not in agreement with the Papacy.

The controversy between Luther and Prierio, as raised by the latter, turned on "the rule of faith." Surely it was not altogether of chance that this fundamental point was debated at this early stage. It put in a clear light the two very different foundations on which Protestantism and the Papacy respectively stood.

Prierio's performance took the form of a dialogue. He laid down certain great principles touching the constitution of the Church, the authority vested in it, and the obedience due by all Christians to that authority. The universal Church

essentially, said Prierio, is a congregation for worship of all believers; virtually it is the Roman Church; representatively it is the college of cardinals; concentratively and organically it is the supreme Pontiff, who is the head of the Church, but in a different sense from Christ. Further he maintained that, as the Church universal cannot err in determining questions pertaining to faith and morals, neither can the organs through which the Church elaborates and expresses its decisions – the Councils and the supreme Pontiff – err. These principles he applied practically, thus: "Whoever does not rely 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."

It is curious to note that already, in this first exchange of arguments between Protestantism and the Papacy, the controversy was narrowed to this one great question: Whom is man to believe, God or the Church? – in other words, have we a Divine or a human foundation for our faith? The Bible is

the sole infallible authority, said the men of Wittemberg. No, said this voice from the Vatican, the sole infallible authority is the Church. The Bible is a dead letter. Not a line of it can men understand: its true sense is utterly beyond their apprehension. In the Church – that is, in the priests – is lodged the power of infallibly perceiving the true sense of Scripture, and of revealing it to Christians. Thus there are two Bibles. Here is the one a book, a dead letter; a body without living spirit or living voice; practically of no use. Here is the other, a living organization, in which dwells the Holy Spirit. The one is a written Bible: the other is a developed Bible. The one was completed and finished eighteen hundred years since: the other has been growing with the ages; it has been coming into being through the decisions of Councils, the rules of canonists, and the edicts of Popes. Councils have discussed and deliberated; interpreters and canonists have toiled; Popes have legislated, speaking as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance; and, as the product of all these minds and of all these ages, you have now the Bible – the deposit of the faith – the sole infallible authority to

which men are to listen. The written book was the original seed; but the Church – that is, the hierarchy – is the stem which has sprung from it. The Bible is now a dead husk; the living tree which has grown out of it – the fully rounded and completely developed body of doctrine, now before the world in the Church – is the only really useful and authoritative revelation of God, and the one infallible rule by which it is his will that men should walk. The Master of the Sacred Palace deposited the germ of this line of argument. Subsequent Popish polemics have more fully developed the argument, and given it the form into which we have thrown it.

Prierio's doctrine was unchallengeably orthodox at the Vatican, for the meridian of which it was calculated. At Wittemberg his tractate read like a bitter satire on the Papacy. Luther thought, or affected to think, that an enemy had written it, and had given it on purpose this extravagant loftiness, in order to throw ridicule and contempt over the prerogatives of the Papal See. He said that he recognized in this affair the hand of Ulric von

Hutten – a knight, whose manner it was to make war on Rome with the shafts of wit and raillery.

But Luther soon saw that he must admit the real authorship, and answer this attack from the foot of the Papal throne. Prierio boasted that he had spent only three days over his performance: Luther occupied only two in his reply. The doctor of Wittemberg placed the Bible of the living God over against the Bible of Prierio, as the foundation of men's faith. The fundamental position taken in his answer was expressed in the words of Holy Writ: "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." Prierio had centered all the faith, obedience, and hopes of men in the Pope: Luther places them on that Rock which is Christ. Thus, with every day, and with each new antagonist, the true nature of the controversy, and the momentous issues which it had raised, were coming more clearly and broadly into view.

Prierio, who deemed it impossible that a Master

of the Sacred Palace could be vanquished by a German monk, wrote a reply. This second performance was even more indiscreet than his first. The Pope's prerogative he aimed at exalting to even a higher pitch than before; and he was so ill-advised as to found it on that very extraordinary part of the canon law which forbids any one to stop the Pope, or to admit the possibility of his erring, though he should be found on the high road to perdition, and dragging the whole world after him. The Pope, finding that Sylvester's replies were formidable only to the Papacy, enjoined silence upon the too zealous champion of Peter's See. As regarded Leo himself, he took the matter more coolly than the master of his palace. There had been noisy monks in all ages, he reflected; the Papacy had not therefore fallen. Moreover, it was but a feeble echo of the strife that reached him in the midst of his statues, gardens, courtiers, and courtesans. He even praised the genius of brother Martin; for Leo could pardon a little truth, it spoken wittily and gracefully. Then, thinking that he had bestowed too much praise on the Germans, he hinted that the wine-cup may have quickened

the wit of the monk, and that his pen would be found less vigorous when the fumes of the liquor had subsided, as they would soon do.

Scarcely had Prierio been disposed of, when another combatant started up. This was Hochstraten, an inquisitor at Cologne. This disputant belonged to an order unhappily more familiar with the torch than with the pen; and it was not long till Hochstraten showed that his fingers, unused to the one, itched to grasp the other. He lost his temper at the very outset, and called for a scaffold. If, replied Luther, nothing daunted by this threat, it is the faggot that is to decide the controversy, the sooner I am burned the better, otherwise the monks may have cause to rue it.

Yet another opponent! The first antagonist of Luther came from the Roman Curia; the second from monachism; he who now appears, the third, is the representative of the schools. This was Dr. Eck, professor of scholastic theology at Ingolstadt. He rose up in the fullness of his erudition and of his

fame, to extinguish the monk of Wittemberg, although he had but recently contracted a friendship with him, cemented by an interchange of letters. Though a scholar, the professor of Ingolstadt did not account it beneath him to employ abuse, and resort to insinuation. "It is the Bohemian poison which you are circulating," said he to Luther, hoping to awaken against him the old prejudice which still animated the Germans against Huss and the Reformers of Bohemia. So far as Eck condescended to argue, his weapons, taken from the Aristotelian armory, were adapted for a scholastic tournament only; they were useless in a real battle, like that in which he now engaged. They were speedily shivered in his hand. "Would you not hold it impudence," asked Luther, meeting Dr. Eck on his own ground, "in one to maintain, as a part of the philosophy of Aristotle, what one found it impossible to prove Aristotle had ever taught? You grant it. It is the most impudent of all impudence to affirm that to be a part of Christianity which Christ never taught."

The doctor of Ingolstadt sank into silence. One

after another the opponents of the Reformer retire from Luther's presence discomfited. First, the Master of the Sacred Palace advances against the monk, confident of crushing him by the weight of the Pope's authority. "The Pope is but a man, and may err," says Luther, as with quiet touch he demolishes the mock infallibility: "God is truth, and cannot err." Next comes the Inquisitor, with his hints that there is such an institution as the "Holy Office" for convincing those whom nothing else can. Luther laughs these threats to scorn. Last of all appears the doctor, clad in the armor of the schools, who shares the fate of his predecessors. The secret of Luther's strength they do not know, but it is clear that all their efforts to overcome it can but advertise men that Roman infallibility is a quicksand, and that the hopes of the human heart can repose in safety nowhere, save on the Eternal Rock.

Chapter 11

Luther's Journey to Augsburg

THE eyes of the Pope and the adherents of the Papacy now began to open to the real importance of the movement inaugurated at Wittemberg. They had regarded it slightly, almost contemptuously, as but a quarrel amongst that quarrelsome generation the monks, which had broken out in a remote province of their dominions, and which would speedily subside and leave Rome unshaken. But, so far from dying out, the movement was every day deepening its seat and widening its sphere; it was allying itself with great spiritual and moral forces; it was engendering new thoughts in the minds of men; already a phalanx of disciples, created and continually multiplied by its own energies, stood around it, and, unless speedily checked, the movement would work, they began to fear, the downfall of their system.

Every day Luther was making a new advance. His words were winged arrows, his sermons were

lightning-flashes, they shed a blaze all around: there was an energy in his faith which set on fire the souls of men, and he had a wonderful power to evoke sympathy, and to win confidence. The common people especially loved and respected him. Many cheered him on because he opposed the Pope, but not a few because he dealt out to them that Bread for which their souls had long hungered.

His "Theses" had been mistaken or misrepresented by ignorant or prejudiced persons; he resolved to explain them in clearer language. He now published what he styled his "Resolutions," in which, with admirable moderation and firmness, he softens the harder and lights up the darker parts of his "Theses," but retracts nothing of their teaching.

In this new publication he maintains that every true penitent possesses God's forgiveness, and has no need to buy an indulgence; that the stock of merit from which indulgences are dispensed is a pure chimera, existing only in the brain of the indulgence-monger; that the power of the Pope goes no farther than to enable him to declare the

pardon which God has already bestowed, and that the rule of faith is the Holy Scriptures. These statements were the well-marked stages the movement had already attained. The last especially, the sole infallible authority of the Bible, was a reformation in itself — a seed from which must spring a new system. Rome, at this crisis, had need to be decided and prompt; she strangely vacillated and blundered. Leo X. was a skeptic, and skepticism is fatal to earnestness and rigor. The Emperor Maximilian was more alive to the danger that impended over the Papal See than Leo. He was nearer the cradle of the movement, and beheld with dismay the spread of the Lutheran doctrines in his own dominions. He wrote energetically, if mayhap he might rouse the Pope, who was slumbering in his palace, careless of everything save his literary and artistic treasures, while this tempest was gathering over him. The Diet of the Empire was at that moment (1518) sitting at Augsburg. The emperor sought to inflame the members, of the Diet by pronouncing a furious philippic against Luther, including the patrons and defenders whom the Reformer had found among the powerful. The

Electoral Frederick of Saxony was especially meant. It helped to augment the chagrin of the emperor, that mainly through the influence of Frederick he had been thwarted in carrying a project through the Diet, on which he was much set as tending to the aggrandizement of his dynasty — the election of his grandson, the future Charles V., to succeed him in the Empire. But if Frederick herein did the emperor a disfavor, he won for himself greater consideration at the court of the Pope, for there were few things that Leo X. dreaded more than the union of half the scepters of Europe in one hand. Meanwhile the energetic letter of Maximilian was not without effect, and it was resolved to lay vigorous hold upon the Wittenberg movement. On the 7th August, 1518, Luther was summoned to answer at Rome, within sixty days, to the charges preferred against him. To have gone to Rome would have been to march into his grave. But the peril of staying was scarcely less than the peril of going. He would be condemned as contumacious, and the Pope would follow up the excommunication by striking him, if not with his own hand, with that of the emperor. The powers of

earth, headed by the King of the Seven Hills, were rising up against Luther. He had no visible defense — no acknowledged protector. There seemed no escape for the unbefriended monk.

The University of Wittemberg, of which Luther was the soul, made earnest intercession for him at the court of the Vatican, dwelling with special emphasis upon the unsuspected character of his doctrine, and the blameless manners of his life, not reflecting, apparently, how little weight either plea would carry in the quarter where it was urged. A more powerful intercessor was found for Luther in the Elector Frederick, who pleaded that it was a right of the Germans to have all ecclesiastical questions decided upon their own soil, and urged in accordance therewith that some fit person should be deputed to hear the cause in Germany, mentioning at the same time his brother-elect, the Archbishop of Treves, as one every way qualified to discharge this office. The peril was passed more easily than could have been anticipated. The Pope remembered that Frederick of Saxony had done him a service at the Diet of Augsburg, and he

thought it not improbable that he might need his good offices in the future. And, further, his legate-a-latere, now in Germany, was desirous to have the adjudication of Luther's case, never doubting that he should be able to extinguish heresy in Germany, and that the glory of such a work would compensate for his mortification at the Diet of Augsburg, where, having failed to engage the princes in a war against the Turk, he was consequently without a pretext for levying a tax upon their kingdoms. The result was that the Pope issued a brief, on the 23rd of August, empowering his legate, Cardinal de Vio, to summon Luther before him, and pronounce judgment in his case. Leo, while appearing to oblige both Frederick and the cardinal, did not show all his hand. This transference of the cause to Germany was but another way, the Pope hoped, of bringing Luther to Rome.

Thomas de Vio, Cardinal St. Sixti, but better known as Cardinal Cajetan, cited the doctor of Wittemberg to appear before him at Augsburg. The man before whom Luther was now about to appear

was born (1469) at Gaeta, a frontier town of the Neapolitan kingdom, to which events in the personal history of a subsequent Pope (Pius IX.) long afterwards gave some little notoriety. He belonged to the Dominican order, and was, moreover, a warm admirer and a zealous defender of the scholastic philosophy. The cardinal's manners were suave to a degree, but his spirit was stern. Beneath a polished, courtly, and amiable exterior, there lurked the Dominican. His talents, his learning, and his fame for sanctity made him one of the most distinguished members of the Sacred College. His master, the Pope, reposed great confidence in him, and he merited it; for De Vie was a sincere believer in all the dogmas of the Church, even in the gross forms into which they now began to develop; and no one placed the Papal prerogatives higher, or was prepared to do stouter battle for them, than he. Cardinal Cajetan took his place on the judgment-seat with much pomp, for he held firmly by the maxim that legates are above kings; but he sat there, not to investigate Luther's cause, but, to receive his unqualified and unconditional submission. The cause, as we shall

afterwards see, was already decided in the highest quarter. The legate's instructions were brief but precise, and were to this effect: that he should compel the monk to retract; and, failing this, that he should shut him up in safe custody till the Pope should be pleased to send for him. This was as much as to say, "Send him in chains to Rome."

We must pause here, and relate an episode which took place just as Luther was on the point of setting out for Augsburg, and which, from a small beginning, grew into most fruitful consequences to the Reformation, and to Luther personally. A very few days before Luther's departure to appear before the cardinal, Philip Melancthon arrived at Wittemberg, to fill the Greek chair in its university. He was appointed to this post by the Elector Frederick, having been strongly recommended by the famous Reuchlin. His fame had preceded him, and his arrival was awaited with no little expectations by the Wittemberg professors. But when he appeared amongst them, his exceedingly youthful appearance, his small figure, his shy manners, and diffident air, but ill corresponded

with their preconceptions of him. They looked for nothing great from their young professor of Greek. But they did not know as yet the treasure they had found; and little especially did Luther dream what this modest, shrinking young man was to be to him in after-days.

In a day or two the new professor delivered his inaugural lecture, and then it was seen what a great soul was contained in that small body. He poured forth, in elegant Latinry, a stream of deep, philosophical, yet luminous thought, which delighted all who listened, and won their hearts, as well as compelled the homage of their intellects. Melancthon displayed in his address a knowledge so full, and a judgment so sound and ripened, combined with an eloquence of such grace and power, that all felt that he would make for himself a great name, and extend the fame of their university. This young scholar was destined to do all this, and a great deal more.

We must devote a few sentences to his previous life — he was now only twenty-one. Melancthon

was the son of a master armourer in Bretten in the Palatinate. His birth took place on February 14th, 1497. His father, a pious and worthy man, died when he was eleven years of age, and his education was cared for by his maternal grandfather. His disposition was as gentle as his genius was beautiful, and from his earliest years the clearness and strength of his understanding made the acquisition of knowledge not only easy to him, but an absolute pleasure. His training was conducted first under a tutor, next at the public school of Pforzheim, and lastly at the University of Heidelberg, where he took his bachelor's degree at fourteen. It was about this time that he changed his name from the German Schwartzerd to the Greek Melancthon. The celebrated Reuchlin was a relation of his family, and charmed with his genius, and his fondness for the Greek tongue, he presented him with a Greek grammar and a Bible: two books which were to be the study of his life.

Luther now stood on the threshold of his stormy career. He needed a companion, and God placed Melancthon by his side. These two were the

complement the one of the other; united, they formed a complete Reformer. In the one we behold a singular assemblage of all the lovelier qualities, in the other an equally singular combination of all the stronger. The gentleness, the timidity, the perspicacity of Melancthon were the companion graces of the strength, the courage, the passionate energy of Luther. It doubled the working powers of each for both to draw in the same yoke. Genius alone would have knit them into friendship, but they found a yet more sacred bond in their love of the Gospel. From the day that the two met at Wittemberg there was a new light in the heart of Luther, a new force in the movement of the Reformation.

As at the beginning of Christianity, so was it now as regards the choice of instruments by whom the work of reforming, as before of planting, the Church, was to be done. From no academy of Greek philosophy, from no theater of Roman eloquence, from no school of Jewish learning were the first preachers of the Gospel taken. These bottles were too full of the old wine of human

science to receive the new wine of heavenly wisdom. To the hardy and unlettered fishermen of Galilee was the call addressed, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

All the leading Reformers, without exception, were of lowly birth. Luther first saw the light in a miner's cottage; Calvin was the grandson of a cooper in Picardy; Knox was the son of a plain burgess of a Scottish provincial town; Zwingli was born in a shepherd's hut in the Alps; and Melancthon was reared in the workshop of an armourer. Such is God's method. It is a law of the Divine working to accomplish mighty results by weak instruments. In this way God glorifies himself, and afterwards glorifies his servants.

We return to the scenes which we recently left. Luther departed, amid the trembling of his friends, to appear before the Legate of Rome. He might be waylaid on the road, or his journey might end in a Roman dungeon. Luther himself did not share these apprehensions. He set out with intrepid heart. It was a long way to Augsburg, and it had all to be

gone on foot, for whatever the conflict had brought the monk, it had not brought him wealth. The Elector Frederick, however, gave him money for his journey, but not a safe-conduct. This last, he said, was unnecessary. The fate of John Huss, which many called to mind, did not justify his confidence.

On September 28th, our traveler reached Weimar, and lodged in the convent of the Barefooted friars. A young inmate of the monastery, who had already received Luther's doctrine into his heart, sat gazing upon him, but durst not speak to him. This was Myconius. The Cordeliers were not favorably disposed to their guest's opinions, and yet one of their number, John Kestner, the purveyor, believing that Luther was going to his death, could not help expressing his sympathy. "Dear brother," he said, "in Augsburg you will meet with Italians, who are learned men, but more likely to burn you than to answer you." "Pray to God, and to his dear Son Jesus Christ," replied Luther, "whose cause it is, to uphold it for me." Luther here met the elector, who was returning

from Augsburg, and at his request preached before the court on St. Michael's day, but said not a word, as was remarked, in praise of the saint.

From Weimar, Luther pursued his way, still on foot, to Nuremberg. Here he was welcomed by warm friends. Among these were the illustrious painter and sculptor, Albert Durer, Wenceslaus Link, monk and preacher, and others. Nuremberg had formerly enjoyed an enriching trade; it was still famous for the skill of its artists; nor were letters neglected, and the independence of mind thus engendered had led to the early reception of Luther's doctrines within it. Many came to see him, but when they found that he was traveling without a safe-conduct, they could not conceal their fears that he would never return from Augsburg. They tried to dissuade him from going farther, but to these counsels Luther refused to listen. No thoughts of danger could alter his purpose or shake his courage. "Even at Augsburg," wrote he, "in the midst of his enemies, Christ reigns. May Christ live, may Luther die: may the God of my salvation be exalted."

There was one favor, however, which Luther did not disdain to accept at the hands of his friends in Nuremberg. His frock, not the newest or freshest when he started from Wittemberg, by the time he reached the banks of the Pegnitz bore but too plain marks of his long journey, and his friends judged that it was not fit to appear in before the legate. They therefore attired him in a frock belonging to his friend Link. On foot, and in a borrowed cloak, he went on his way to appear before a prince of the Church, but the serge of Luther was more sublime than the purple and fine linen of De Vio.

Link and another friend accompanied him, and on the evening of October 7th they entered the gates of Augburg, and took up their abode at the Augustine monastery. On the morrow he sent Link to notify his arrival to the cardinal.

Had Luther come a few weeks earlier he would have found Augsburg crowded with princes and counts, among whom would have been found some willing to defend him; but now all had taken their

departure, the Diet being at an end, and no one remained save the Roman Legate, whose secret purpose it was that Luther should unconditionally submit, or otherwise never depart alive out of those gates within which, to De Vio's delight, he had now entered.

Chapter 12

Luther's Appearance Before Cardinal Cajetan

A LITTLE melodrama preceded the serious part of the business. Early on the day after Luther's arrival, an Italian courtier, Urban of Serra Longa — a creature of the cardinal's, though he took care not to say so — presented himself at the door of the monastery where Luther lodged. He made unbounded professions of friendship for the doctor of Wittemberg, and had come, he said, to give him a piece of advice before appearing in the presence of De Vio. A greater contrast it is impossible to imagine than that between the smiling, bowing, and voluble Italian, and the bluff but honest German.

The advice of Urban was expressed in a single word — "Submit. Surely he had not come this long way to break a lance with the cardinal: of course he had not. He spoke, he presumed, to a wise man."

Luther hinted that the matter was not so plain as his adviser took it to be. "Oh," continued the Italian, with a profusion of politeness., "I understand: you have posted up 'Theses;' you have preached sermons, you have sworn oaths; but three syllables, just six letters, will do the business — Revoco."

"If I am convinced out of the Sacred Scriptures," rejoined Luther, "that I have erred, I shall be but too glad to retract."

The Italian Urban opened his eyes somewhat widely when he heard the monk appeal to a Book which had long ceased to be read or believed in at the metropolis of Christendom. But surely, he thought, Luther will not be so fanatical as to persist in putting the authority of the Bible in opposition to that of the Pope; and so the courtier continued.

"The Pope," he said, "can by a single nod change or suppress articles of faith, and surely you must feel yourself safe when you have the Pope on your side, more especially when emolument,

position, and life might all lie on your coming to the same conclusion with his Holiness." He exhorted him not to lose a moment in tearing down his "Theses" and recalling his oaths.

Urban of Serra Longa had overshot the mark. Luther found it necessary to tell him yet more plainly that the thing was impossible, unless the cardinal should convince him by arguments drawn from the Word of God that he had taught false doctrine.

That a single monk, nay, that a whole army of monks should stand up to contest a matter with Rome, appeared to the supple Italian an astounding prodigy. The thing was incomprehensible to him. The doctor of Wittemberg appeared to the courtier a man bent on his own ruin. "What!" continued the Italian, "do you imagine that any princes or lords will protect you against the Holy See? What support can you have? Where will you remain?"

"I shall still have heaven," answered Luther. Luther saw through this man's disguise, despite his

craft, and his protestations of regard, and perceived him to be an emissary of the legate, sent to sound and it might be to entrap him. He therefore became more reserved, and dismissed his loquacious visitor with the assurance that he would show all humility when he appeared before the cardinal, and would retract what was proved to be erroneous. Thereupon Urban, promising to return and conduct him into the legate's presence, went back to the man from whom he had come, to tell him how he had failed in his errand.

Augsburg was one of the chief cities of the Empire, and Luther was encouraged by finding that even here his doctrines had made considerable way. Many of the more honorable councilors of the city waited upon him, invited him to their tables, inquired into his matters; and when they learned that he had come to Augsburg without a safe-conduct, they could not help expressing their astonishment at his boldness — "a gentle name," said Luther, "for rashness." These friends with one accord entreated him on no account to venture into the legate's presence without a safe-conduct, and

they undertook to procure one for him from the emperor, who was still in the neighborhood hunting. Luther deemed it prudent to follow their advice; they knew De Vio better than he did, and their testimony regarding him was not assuring. Accordingly, when Urban returned to conduct him to the audience of the cardinal, Luther had to inform him that he must first obtain a safe-conduct. The Italian affected to ridicule the idea of such a thing; it was useless; it would spoil all; the legate was gentleness itself. "Come," he urged, "come, and let us have the matter settled off-hand; one little word will do it," he repeated, imagining that he had found a spell before which all difficulties must give way; "one little word — Revoco." But Luther was immovable: "Whenever I have a safe-conduct I shall appear." The grimacing Italian was compelled to put up with his repulse, and, biting his finger, he returned to tell the legate that his mission had sped even worse the second than the first time.

At length a safe-conduct was obtained, and the 11th of October was fixed for Luther's appearance

before De Vio. Dr. Link, of Nuremberg, and some other friends, accompanied him to the palace of the legate. On his entrance the Italian courtiers crowded round him, eager to have "a peep at the Erostratus who had kindled such a conflagration." Many pressed in after him to the hall of audience, to be the witnesses of his submission, for however courageous at Wittemberg, they never doubted that the monk would be pliant enough when he stood before the Roman purple.

The customary ceremonies over, a pause ensued. The monk and the cardinal looked at each other in silence: Luther because, having been cited, he expected Cajetan to speak first; and the cardinal because he deemed it impossible that Luther would appear in his presence with any other intention than that of retracting. He was to find that in this he was mistaken.

It was a moment of supreme interest. The new age now stood face to face with the old. Never before had the two come into such close contact. There sat the old, arrayed in the purple and other

insignia of an ancient and venerable authority: there stood the new, in a severe simplicity, as befitted a power which had come to abolish an age of ceremony and form, and bring in one of spirit and life. Behind the one was seen a long vista of receding centuries, with their traditions, their edicts, and their Popes. Behind the other came a future, which was as yet a "sealed book," for the opening of which all men now waited — some in terror, others in hope; but all in awe, no one knowing what that future might bring, and the boldest not daring to imagine even the half of what it was destined to bring — the laws it was to change; the thrones and altars it was to cast down; the kingdoms it was to overturn, breaking in pieces the strong, and lifting up the weak to dominion and glory. No wonder that these two powers, when brought for the first time into the immediate presence of each other, paused before opening a conflict from which issues so vast were to spring.

Finding that the legate still kept silence, Luther spoke: "Most worthy Father, in obedience to the summons of his Papal Holiness, and in compliance

with the orders of my gracious Lord the Elector of Saxony, I appear before you as a submissive and dutiful son of the Holy Christian Church, and acknowledge that I have published the propositions and theses ascribed to me. I am ready to listen most obediently to my accusation, and if I have erred, to submit to instruction in the truth." These words were the first utterance of the Reformation before a bar where in after-times its voice was to be often heard.

De Vio thought this an auspicious commencement. A submission was not far off. So, putting on a very gracious air, and speaking with condescending kindness, he said that he had only three things to ask of his dear son: first, that he would retract his errors; secondly, that he would abstain in future from promulgating his opinions; and thirdly, that he would avoid whatever might tend to disturb the peace of the Church. The proposal, with a little more circumlocution, was precisely that which his emissary had already presented — "Retract."

Luther craved that the Papal brief might be read, in virtue of which the legate had full powers to treat of this matter.

The courtiers opened their eyes in astonishment at the monk's boldness; but the cardinal, concealing his anger, intimated with a wave of his hand that this request could not be granted.

"Then," replied Luther, "deign, most reverend Father, to point out to me wherein I have erred." The courtiers were still more astonished, but Cajetan remained unruffled. The legate took up the "Theses" of Luther: "Observe," said he, "in the seventh proposition you deny that the Sacrament can profit one unless he has faith; and in your fifty-eighth proposition you deny that the merits of Christ form part of that treasure from which the Pope grants indulgences to the faithful."

These both were heinous errors in the estimation of Rome. The power of regenerating men by the opus operatum — that is, the simple giving of the Sacrament to them, irrespective

altogether of the disposition of the recipient — is a mighty power, and invests her clergy with boundless influence. If, by the mere performance or the non-performance of a certain act, they can save men or can destroy men, there is no limit to the obedience they may exact, and no limit to the wealth that will flow in upon them. And so of indulgences. If the Pope has a treasury of infinite merit on which he can draw for the pardon of men's sins, all will come to him, and will pay him his price, how high soever he may choose to fix it. But explode these two dogmas; prove to men that without faith, which is the gift not of the Pope but of God, the Sacrament is utterly without efficacy — an empty sign, conferring neither grace now nor meetness for heaven hereafter — and that the Pope's treasury of inexhaustible merits is a pure fiction; and who after that will bestow a penny in buying Sacraments which contain no grace, and purchasing pardons which convey no forgiveness?

This was precisely what Luther had done. His "Theses" had broken the spell which opened to Rome the wealth of Europe. She saw at a glance

the whole extent of the damage: her markets forsaken, her wares unsaleable, and the streams of gold which had flowed to her from all countries dried up. Cardinal Cajetan, therefore, obeying instructions from head-quarters, put his finger upon those two most damaging points of the "Theses," and demanded of Luther an unconditional retractation of them. "You must revoke both these errors," said De Vio, "and embrace the true doctrine of the Church."

"That the man who receives the holy Sacrament must have faith in the grace offered him," said Luther, "is a truth I never can and never will revoke."

"Whether you will or no," returned the legate, getting angry, "I must have your recantation this very day, or for this one error I shall condemn all your propositions."

"But," replied the professor of Wittemberg, with equal decision, though with great courteousness, "I demand proof from Scripture that

I am wrong; it is on Scripture that my views rest."

But no proof from Scripture could the Reformer get. The cardinal could only repeat the common-places of Rome, re-affirm the doctrine of the opus operatum, and quote one of the Extravagants of Clement VI. Luther, indignant at seeing what stress the legate laid on a Papal decree, exclaimed, "I cannot admit any such constitution in proof of matters so weighty as those in debate. These interpretations put Scripture to the torture." "Do you not know," rejoined De Vio, "that the Pope has authority and power over these things?" "Save Scripture," said Luther eagerly.

"Scripture!" said the cardinal derisively, "the Pope is above Scripture, and above Councils. Know you not that he has condemned and punished the Council of Basle?" "But," responded Luther, "the University of Paris has appealed." "And the Parisian gentlemen," said De Vio, "will pay the penalty."

Luther saw plainly that at this rate they would

never arrive at a settlement of the matter. The legate sat in state, treating the man before him with affected condescension, but real contempt. When Luther quoted Scripture in proof of his doctrine, the only answer he received from the cardinal was a shrug of his shoulders, or a derisive laugh. The legate, despite his promise to reason the matter out on the foundation of the Word of God, would not, or perhaps could not, meet Luther on that ground. He kept exclusively by the decretals and the schoolmen. Glad, perhaps, to escape for the present from a controversy which was not so manageable as he had hoped to find it, he offered to give the doctor of Wittemberg a day for deliberation, but intimated at the same time that he would accept of nothing but a retractation. So ended the first interview.

On returning to his convent his delight was great to find his valued friend Staupitz, the Vicar-General of the Augustines, who had followed him to Augsburg, in the hope of being serviceable to him at this crisis. On the morning when Luther returned to his second interview with the cardinal,

the Vicar-General and four imperial councilors accompanied him, along with many other friends, a notary, and witnesses. After the customary obeisance, Luther read a paper, protesting that he honored and followed the Holy Roman Church; that he submitted himself to the judgment and determination of that Church; that he was ready here present to answer in writing whatever objection the legate of the Pope might produce against him; and, moreover, that he was willing to submit his "Theses" to the judgment of the Imperial Universities of Basle, Fribourg, and Louvain, and, if these were not enough, of Paris — from of old ever the most Christian, and in theology ever the most flourishing university.

The legate evidently had some difficulty in knowing what to reply to these reasonable and manly proposals. He tried to conceal his embarrassment under an affected pity for the monk. "Leave off," he said, in accents of great mildness, "these senseless counsels, and return to your sound mind. Retract, my son, retract." Luther once more appealed to the authority of Scripture,

but De Vio becoming somewhat ruffled, the conference ended, after Staupitz had craved and obtained leave for Luther to put his views in writing.

At the third and last interview, the doctor of Wittemberg read a full statement of his views on all the points which had been under consideration. He maintained all his former positions, largely fortifying them by quotations from Augustine and other early Fathers, but more especially from Holy Writ. The cardinal could not help, even on the judgment-seat, displaying his irritation and chagrin. Drawing himself up in his robes, he received the "declaration" with a look of contempt, and pronounced it "mere words," "a long phylactery;" but said that he would send the paper to Rome. Meanwhile the legate threatened him with the penalties enacted by the Pope unless he retracted. He offered Luther, somewhat earnestly, a safe-conduct, if he would go to Rome and there be judged. The Reformer knew what this meant. It was a safe-conduct to a dungeon somewhere in the precincts of the Vatican. The proffered favor was

declined, much to the annoyance of De Vio, who thought, no doubt, that this was the best way of terminating an affair which had tarnished the Roman purple, but lent eclat to the monk's serge.

This was a great crisis in the history of Protestantism, and we breathe more freely when we find it safely passed. Luther had not yet sounded the Papal dogmas to the bottom. He had not as yet those clear and well-defined views to which fuller investigation conducted him. He still believed the office of Pope to be of Divine appointment, and while condemning the errors of the man, was disposed to bow to the authority of his office.

There was risk of concessions which would have hampered him in his future course, or have totally wrecked his cause. From this he was saved, partly by his loyalty to his own convictions, partly also by the perception on the part of the theologians of Rome that the element of "faith," on which Luther so strenuously insisted, constituted an essential and eternal difference between his

system and theirs. It substituted a Divine for a human agency, the operation of the Holy Spirit for the opus operatum. On such a point there could be no reconciliation on the basis of mutual concession, and this led them to insist on absolute and unconditional retraction. Luther used to say that he "did not learn all his divinity at once, but was constrained to sink deeper and deeper. The Pope said, 'Although Christ be the Head of the Church, yet notwithstanding there must be a visible and corporeal head of the Church on earth.' With this I could have been well content, in case he had but taught the Gospel purely and clearly, and had not brought forward human inventions and lies instead thereof."

So ended the first conflict between the old and the new powers. The victory remained with the latter. This was no small gain. Besides, the two men had been able to take each the measure of the other.

Luther had looked through and through Cajetan. He was astonished to find how weak a

polemic and how flimsy a theologian was the champion to whom Rome had committed her battle. "One may guess from this," wrote Luther to Spalatin, "what is the calibre of those of ten times or a hundred times lower rank." The Reformer went forth ever after to meet Rome's mighty men with less anxiety touching the issue. But the cardinal had formed no contemptuous opinion of the monk, although he could find none but contemptuous epithets in which to speak of him. "I will have no more disputing with that beast," said he, when Staupitz pressed him to debate the matter once more with the doctor of Wittemberg, "for he has deep eyes and wonderful speculation in his head."

Chapter 13

Luther's Return to Wittenberg and Labours There

Two days had passed since the legate had bidden Luther "be gone, and see his face no more, unless he changed his mind." After leaving the cardinal's presence, Luther wrote him a letter (October 16th) in which, although he retracted nothing, he expressed great respect and submission. The cardinal returned no answer to this. What did his silence mean? "It bodes no good," said Luther's friends; "he is concocting some plot with the emperor; we must be beforehand with him."

In fact, Cajetan did not need to consult the emperor or any one else. He had received instructions from his master at Rome in view of the possible miscarriage of his mission. If he delayed to put these instructions in force, it was because he thought he had snared his victim: the walls of

Augsburg had shut him in.

The trap was not quite so sure as the cardinal deemed it. Mounted on a horse, provided for him by his friends, a trusty guide by his side, Luther is traversing before dawn the silent streets of Augsburg. He is escaping from the cardinal. He approaches a small gate in the city walls. A friendly hand opens it, and he passes out into the open country. This was on the morning of the fourth day (October 20th) after his last interview.

Behind him is the sleeping city, before him is the champaign country, just beginning to be visible in the early daybreak. In what direction shall he turn his horse's head? He stands a moment uncertain. The French ambassador had mentioned his name with favor at the late Diet; may he not expect protection in his master's dominions? His hand is on his bridle-rein to direct his flight to France. But no; he turns northward. It was Wittemberg, not Paris, that was destined to be the center of the new movement.

The two travelers rode away at what speed they could. Luther was but little accustomed to the saddle, the horse he rode was a hard trotter, and so overcome by fatigue was he, that when he arrived at the end of his first stage, unable to stand upright, he lay down upon the straw in the stable of the hostelry where he was to pass the night. On arriving at Nuremberg, he read for the first time the directions forwarded from Rome to De Vio, touching the way in which himself and his cause were to be disposed of. These showed him that he had left Augsburg not a moment too soon, and that during his stay there a sword had all the while been hanging above his head.

The Papal brief — in the hands of the legate when he sat down on the judgment-seat — enjoined him to compel Luther to retract. From Rome, then, had come the one word *Revoco*, which Serra Longa first, and Cajetan next, dictated as that which Luther was contritely to utter. If he could be brought to retract, and to beg forgiveness for the disturbance he had made, and the scandal he had caused to the hierarchy, the legate was empowered

to "receive him into the unity of our Holy Mother the Church." But if the monk should prove obstinate, De Vio was to use summary and sharp measures to have the business ended. He was to seize the person of Luther, and keep him in safe custody, that he might be sent to Rome. To effect this, should it be necessary, the legate was to demand the aid of the emperor, of the princes of Germany, and of all the communities and potentates ecclesiastical and secular. If, notwithstanding, Luther should escape, he was to proscribe him in every part of Germany, and lay under interdict all those princes, communities, universities, and potentates, with their cities, towns, countries, and villages, which should offer him an asylum, or in any way befriend him.

Even before the summons to appear before De Vio had been put into Luther's hands, his cause had been adjudged and himself condemned as a heretic in a Papal court, that of Jerome, Bishop of Ascoli. Of this Luther knew nothing when he set out for Augsburg. When he learned it he exclaimed, "Is this the style and fashion of the Roman court,

which in the same day summons, exhorts, accuses, judges, condemns, and declares a man guilty, who is so far from Rome, and who knows nothing of all these things?" The danger was passed before he knew its full extent; but when he saw it he gave thanks with his whole soul to God for his escape. The angel of the Lord had encamped round about him and delivered him.

Like the Parthian, Luther discharged his arrows as he fled. He did not leave Augsburg without leaving behind him something that would speak for him when he was gone; and not in Augsburg only, but in all Christendom. He penned an appeal to Rome. In that document he recapitulated the arguments with which he had combated indulgences, and characterized the cardinal's procedure as unreasonable, in insisting on a retractation without deigning to show him wherein he had erred. He had not yet renounced the authority of the Pope: he still revered the chair of Peter, though disgraced by mal-administrations, and therefore he closed his appeal in the following terms: — "I appeal from the Most Holy Father the

Pope, ill-informed, to the Most Holy Father the Pope Leo X., by the grace of God to be better-informed."

This appeal was to be handed to the legate only when the writer was at a safe distance. But the question was, who should bell the cat. De Vio was in no mood to be approached with such a document. The cardinal burned with a sense of the disaster which had befallen himself and the cause of Rome, in Luther's flight. He, and all the men of craft, his advisers, had been outwitted by the German! He had failed to compel the retraction of the monk; his person was now beyond his reach; and he carried with him the prestige of victory; Rome had been foiled in this her first passage of arms with the new faith; the cardinal, who hoped to rehabilitate himself as a diplomatist, had come out of the affair as a bungler: what would they say of him at Rome? The more he reflected, the greater appeared to him the mischief that would grow out of this matter. He had secretly exulted when told that Luther was in Augsburg; but better the monk had never entered its gates, than that he should

come hither to defy Rome in the person of her legate, and go away, not only unharmed, but even triumphing. The cardinal was filled with indignation, shame, and rage.

Meanwhile Luther was every day placing a greater distance between himself and the legate. The rumor spread through Germany that the monk had held his own before the cardinal, and the inhabitants of the villages and towns in his route turned out to congratulate him on his victory. Their joy was the greater inasmuch as their hopes had been but faint that he should ever return. Germany had triumphed in Luther. Proud Italy, who sent her dogmas and edicts across the Alps, to be swallowed without examination, and who followed them by her tax-gatherers, had received a check. That haughty and oppressive Power had begun to fall, and the dawn of deliverance had broke for the Northern nations.

Luther re-entered Wittemberg on the day (October 30th, 1518) preceding the anniversary of that on which he had posted up his "Theses." The

1st of November was All Saints' Day. There came this year no crowd of pilgrims to Wittemberg to visit the relics and purchase indulgences. So much for the blow Luther had struck: the trade of Rome in these parts had well-nigh been ruined; it was manifest that the doctrines of the Reformer were spreading.

But if the crowd of pilgrims that annually resorted to Wittemberg was all but extinct, that of students had greatly increased. With the growing renown of Luther grew the fame of the university, and the Elector Frederick saw with joy the prosperity of a seminary in which he took so deep an interest. This helped to draw him to the side of the Reformer. Luther resumed, with heart and soul, his labors in his chair. He strove to forget what Rome might be hatching; he knew that trouble was not far off; but meanwhile he went on with his work, being all the more anxious to make the best use of the interval of quiet, the more he felt that it would be short.

It was short indeed. On November the 19th

Frederick of Saxony received a letter from Cardinal Cajetan, giving his version of the interviews at Augsburg, and imploring the elector no longer to sully the fame of his name and the glory of his house by protecting a heretic, whom the tribunals of Rome were prosecuting, and of whom and of whose affairs he had now and for ever washed his hands. The result of this application was the more to be dreaded inasmuch as Frederick was as yet ignorant of the reformed doctrine. But he well merited the epithet bestowed on him of "Wise;" in all things he acted with consideration and candor, and he might be expected to do so in this. The elector had no sooner received the legate's letter than, desirous of hearing both sides, he sent it to Luther. The latter gave Frederick his account of the affair, dwelling on Cajetan's promise, which he had not kept, to convince him out of Scripture; the unreasonableness of his demand, that he should retract, and the gross and manifest perversion of those passages from Sacred Writ on which, in his letter to the elector, Cajetan had professed to ground his cause; and all with such clearness, force, and obvious truth, that Frederick resolved

not to abandon Luther. He knew his virtues, though he did not understand his doctrines, and he knew the grievances that Germany groaned under from Italian pride and Papal greed. The reply of Frederick to De Vio was in reality the same with that of Luther — "Prove the errors which you allege" — a reply which deepened the mortification and crowned the misfortunes of the cardinal.

To the unhappy De Vio, and the cause which he represented, one calamity followed another in rapid succession. The day following that on which the Elector Frederick dispatched his letter to the legate, Luther's narrative of the Augsburg interview, which he had been some time carefully preparing, issued from the press. The elector had requested Luther to withhold it for a little while, and the Reformer was firmly purposed to do so. But the eagerness of the public and the cupidity of the printers overreached his caution. The printing-house was besieged by a crowd of all ranks and ages, clamoring for copies. The sheets were handed out wet from the press, and as each sheet was

produced a dozen hands were stretched out to clutch it. The author was the last person to see his own production. In a few days the pamphlet was spread far and near.

Luther had become not the doctor of Wittemberg only, but of all Germany. The whole nation, not less than the youth in the university, had been drawn into the study of theology. Through the printing-press Luther's voice reached every hearth and every individual in the Fatherland. It was a new life that men were breathing; it was a new world that was opening to their eyes; it was a new influence, unfelt for ages, that was stirring their souls; the ancient yoke was being broken and cast away. In the university especially the theology of the Holy Scriptures was being studied with an ardor and a perseverance to which we can find in later times no parallel. Professors and students, kindled with the enthusiasm of Luther, if they could not keep pace with, strove to follow him as closely as possible. "Our university," wrote Luther, "glows with industry like an ant-hill."

With each new day came a new batch of students, till the halls of the university and the accommodation at Wittenberg overflowed. Not from Germany only, but from far countries, came these youths to receive here the seed of a reformed life, and to bear it thence and scatter it over regions remote.

Great attention was given to the study of Hebrew and Greek, "the two languages which, like porters, sit at the entrance of the Bible, holding the keys." From the university the passion for theological study passed to the court. The elector's secretary, Spalatin, in his correspondence with Luther, was perpetually asking and receiving expositions of Scripture, and it was believed that behind the secretary's shadow sat the elector himself, quietly but earnestly prosecuting that line of inquiry which was ultimately to place him by the side of Luther.

Meanwhile the plot was thickening. The tidings of Cajetan's "victory," as he himself phrased it, had reached Rome; but the news of that "victory"

caused only consternation. The cannon of St. Angelo, which have proclaimed so many triumphs before and since, forbore to proclaim this one. There were gloomy looks and anxious deliberations in the halls of the Vatican. Rome must repair the disaster that had befallen her; but here, too, fatality attended her steps. She could have done nothing better to serve the cause of Luther than the course she took to oppose it. Serra Longa had blundered, De Vio had blundered, and now Leo X. blunders worst of all. It seemed as if the master wished to obliterate the mistakes of his servants by his own greater mistakes.

On November 9 the Pontiff issued a new decretal, in which he sanctioned afresh the doctrine of indulgences, and virtually confirmed all that Tetzel first and Cardinal Cajetan next had taught on the head of the Church's power to pardon sin. The edict ran as follows: — "That the Roman Church, the mother of all Churches, had handed down by tradition that the Roman Pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, by the power of the keys — that is, by removing the guilt and punishment due

for actual sins by indulgence — can for reasonable causes grant to the faithful of Christ, whether in this life or in purgatory, indulgences out of the superabundance of the merits of Christ and the saints; can confer the indulgence by absolution, or transfer it by suffrage. And all those who have acquired indulgences, whether alive or dead, are released from so much temporal punishment for their actual sins as is the equivalent of the acquired indulgence. This doctrine is to be held and preached by all, under penalty of excommunication, from which only the Pope can absolve, save at the point of death." This bull was sent to Cajetan, who was then living at Linz, in Upper Austria, whence copies were despatched by him to all the bishops of Germany, with injunctions to have it published.

The weight that belonged to the utterance of Peter's successor would, the Pope believed, overwhelm and silence the monk of Wittemberg; and, the conscience of Christendom set at rest, men would return to their former quiescence under the scepter of the Vatican. He little understood the age

on which he was entering, and the state of public feeling and sentiment north of the Alps. The age was past when men would bow down implicitly before sheets of parchment and bits of lead. Wherein, men asked, does the Pope's teaching on indulgences differ from Tetzel's, unless in the greater decency of its language? The doctrine is the same, only in the one case it is written in the best Latin they are now masters of at Rome, whereas in the other it is proclaimed with stentorian voice in the coarsest Saxon. But plain it is that the Pope as really as Tetzel brings the money-chest to our doors, and expects that we shall fill it. He vaunts his treasure of merits, but it is as the chapman vaunts his wares, that we may buy; and the more we sin, the richer will they be at Rome. Money — money — money, is the beginning, middle, and end of this new decretal. It was in this fashion that the Germans spoke of the edict of November 9, which was to bolster up Cajetan and extinguish Luther. The Pope had exonerated Tetzel, but it was at the expense of taking the whole of this immense scandal upon himself and his system. The chief priest of Christendom presented himself before the

world holding the bag with as covetous a grip as any friar of them all.

In another way the decree of the Pope helped to overthrow the system it was meant to uphold. It compelled Luther to go deeper than he had yet ventured to do in his investigations into the Papacy. He now looked at its foundations. The doctrine of indulgences in its sacrilegious and blasphemous form he had believed to be the doctrine of Tetzel only; now he saw it to be the doctrine of Leo of Rome as well. Leo had endorsed Tetzel's and Cajetan's interpretation of the matter. The conclusion to which Luther's studies were tending is indicated in a letter which he wrote about this time to his friend Wenceslaus Link at Nuremberg: "The conviction is daily growing upon me," says he, "that the Pope is Antichrist." And when Spalatin inquired what he thought of war against the Turk — "Let us begin," he replied, "with the Turk at home; it is fruitless to fight carnal wars and be overcome in spiritual wars."

The conclusion was in due time reached. The

Reformer drew up another appeal, and on Sunday, the 28th of November, he read it aloud in Corpus Christi Chapel, in the presence of a notary and witnesses. "I appeal," he said, "from the Pontiff, as a man liable to error, sin, falsehood, vanity, and other human infirmities — not above Scripture, but under Scripture — to a future Council to be legitimately convened in a safe place, so that a proctor deputed by me may have safe access." This appeal marks a new stage in Luther's enlightenment. The Pope is, in fact, abjured: Luther no longer appeals from Leo ill-informed to Leo well-informed, but from the Papal authority itself to that of a General Council, from the head of the Church to the Church herself.

So closed the year 1518. The sky overhead was thick with tempest. The cloud grew blacker and bigger every day. The Reformer had written the appeal read in Corpus Christi Chapel on the 28th of November, as the Israelites ate their last supper in Egypt, "his robe tucked up and his loins girded, ready to depart," though whither he knew not. He only knew that he could go nowhere where God

would not be his "shield, and exceeding great reward." The Papal anathemas he knew were being prepared at Rome; they were not, improbably, at this moment on their way to Germany. Not because he feared for himself, but because he did not wish to compromise the Elector Frederick, he held himself ready at a day's notice to quit Saxony. His thoughts turned often to France. The air seemed clearer there, and the doctors of the Sorbonne spoke their thoughts with a freedom unknown to other countries; and had Luther been actually compelled to flee, most probably he would have gone to that country. And now the die was cast as it seemed. The elector sent a message to him, intimating his wishes that he should quit his dominions. He will obey, but before going forth he will solace himself, most probably for the last time, in the company of his friends. While seated with them at supper, a messenger arrives from the elector. Frederick wishes to know why Luther delays his departure. What a pang does this message send to his heart!

What a sense of sadness and desolation does he

now experience! On earth he has no protector. There is not for him refuge below the skies. The beloved friends assembled round him — Jonas, Pomeranus, Carlstadt, Amsdorf, the jurist Schurff, and, dearest of all, Melancthon — are drowned in grief, almost in despair, as they behold the light of their university on the point of being quenched, and the great movement which promises a new life to the world on the brink of overthrow. So sudden an overcasting of the day they had not looked for. They waited for light, and behold darkness! No prince in all Christendom, no, not even their own wise and magnanimous elector, dare give an asylum to the man who in the cause of righteousness has stood up against Rome. It was a bitter cup that Luther was now drinking. He must go forth. His enemy, he knew, would pursue him from land to land, and would never cease to dog his steps till she had overtaken and crushed him. But it was not this that troubled him. His soul, the only thing of value about him, he had committed to One who was able to keep it; and as for his body, it was at the disposal of Rome, to rot in her dungeons, to hang on her gibbets, to be reduced to ashes in her

fires, just as she might will. He would have gone singing to the stake, but to go forth and leave his country in darkness, this it was that pierced him to the heart, and drew from him a flood of bitter tears.

Chapter 14

Miltitz — Carlstadt — Dr. Eck

WE left Luther dispirited to the last degree. A terrible storm seemed to be gathering over him, and over the work which he had been honored to begin, and so far auspiciously to advance. He had incurred the displeasure of a foe who had at command all the powers of Europe. Maximilian, Emperor of Germany, seemed even more intent on crushing the monk of Wittemberg, and stamping out the movement, than Leo himself was. Letter after letter did he dispatch to Rome chiding the delays of the Vatican, and urging it to toy no longer with a movement which threatened to breed serious trouble to the chair of Peter. The Pope could not close his ear to appeals so urgent, coming from a quarter so powerful. The Elector Frederick, Luther's earthly defender, was standing aloof. Wittemberg could no longer be the home of the Reformer. He had taken farewell of his congregation; he had spoken his parting words to the youth who had gathered round him from all the

provinces of Germany, and from distant countries; he had bidden adieu to his weeping friends, and now he stood, staff in hand, ready to go forth he knew not whither, when all at once the whole face of affairs was unexpectedly changed.

Rome was not yet prepared to proceed to extremities. She had not fully fathomed the depth of the movement. Scarce an age was there in the past, but some rebellious priest had threatened his sovereign lord, but all such attempts against the Pontiff had been in vain. The Wittemberg movement would, like a tempest, exhaust itself, and the waves would dash harmlessly against the rock of the Church. True, the attempts of Leo to compose the Wittemberg troubles had so far been without result, or rather had made the matter worse; but, like the conjurer in the tale, Rome had not one only, but a hundred tricks; she had diplomatists to flatter, and she had red hats to dazzle those whom it might not be convenient as yet to burn, and so she resolved on making one other trial at conciliation.

The person pitched upon to conduct the new operation was Charles Miltitz. Cajetan was too stately, too haughty, too violent; Miltitz was not likely to split on this rock. He was the chamberlain of the Pope: a Saxon by birth, but he had resided so long at Rome as to have become a proficient in Italian craft, to which he added a liking for music. The new envoy was much more of a diplomatist than a theologian. This, however, did not much matter, seeing he came not to discuss knotty points, but to lavish caresses and lay snares. As he was a German by birth, it was supposed he would know how to manage the Germans.

Miltitz's errand to Saxony was not avowed. He did not visit the elector's court on Luther's business; not at all. He was the bearer from the Pope to Frederick of the "golden rose," a token of regard which the Pope granted only to the most esteemed of his friends, and being solicitous that Frederick should believe himself of that number, and knowing that he was desirous of receiving this special mark of Papal affection, he sent Miltitz this long road, with the precious and much-coveted gift.

Being on the spot he might as well try his hand at arranging "brother Martin's" business. But no one was deceived. "The Pope's chamberlain comes," said Luther's friends to him, "laden with flattering letters and Pontifical briefs, the cords with which he hopes to bind you and carry you to Rome." "I await the will of God," replied the Reformer.

On his journey Miltitz made it his business to ascertain the state of public feeling on the question now in agitation. He was astonished to find the hold which the opinions of Luther had taken on the German mind. In all companies he entered, in the way-side taverns, in the towns, in the castles where he lodged, he found the quarrel between the monk and the Pope the topic of talk. Of every five Germans three were on the side of Luther. How different the mental state on this side the Alps from the worn-out Italian mind! This prognosticated an approaching emancipation of the young and ingenuous Teutonic intellect from its thralldom to the traditionalism of Italy. At times the Pope's chamberlain received somewhat amusing answers to his interrogatories. One day he asked the

landlady of the inn where he had put up, what her opinion was of the chair of Peter? "What can we humble folks," replied the hostess, pawkily, "know of Peter's chair? we have never seen it, and cannot tell whether it be of wood or of stone."

Miltitz reached Saxony in the end of the year 1518, but his reception at Frederick's court was not of a kind to inspire him with high hopes. The elector's ardor for the "golden rose" had cooled; its fragrance had been spoiled by the late breezes from Augsburg and Rome, and he gave orders that it should be delivered to him through one of the officers of the palace. The letters which Miltitz carried to Spalatin and Pfeffinger, the elector's councilors, though written with great fervor, did but little to thaw the coldness of these statesmen. The envoy must reserve all his strength for Luther himself, that was clear; and he did reserve it, and to such purpose that he came much nearer gaining his point than Cajetan had done. The movement was in less danger when the tempest appeared about to burst over it, than now when the clouds had rolled away, and the sun again shone out.

Miltitz was desirous above all things of having a personal interview with Luther. His wish was at last gratified, and the envoy and the monk met each other in the house of Spalatin at Altenberg. The courtier exhausted all the wiles of which he was master. He was not civil merely, he was gracious; he fawned upon Luther. Looking full into his face, he said that he expected to see an old theologian, prosing over knotty points in his chimney-corner; to his delight he saw, instead, a man in the prime of life. He flattered his pride by saying that he believed he had a larger following than the Pope himself, and he sought to disarm his fears by assuring him that, though he had an army of 20,000 men at his back, he would never be so foolish as to think of carrying off one who was so much the idol of the people. Luther knew perfectly that it was the courtier who was speaking, and that between the words of the courtier and the deeds of the envoy there might possibly be some considerable difference. But he took care not to let Miltitz know what was passing in his mind.

The envoy now proceeded to business. His touch was adroit and delicate. Tetzel, he said, had gone beyond his commission; he had done the thing scandalously, and he did not greatly wonder that Luther had been provoked to oppose him. Even the Archbishop of Mainz was not without blame, in putting the screw too tightly upon Tetzel as regarded the money part of the business. Still the doctrine of indulgences was a salutary one; from that doctrine the German people had been seduced, and they had been so by the course which he, Luther, had felt it his duty to pursue. Would he not confess that herein he had erred, and restore peace to the Church? — a matter, the envoy assured him, that lay very much upon his heart.

Luther boldly answered that the chief offender in this business was neither Tetzel nor the Archbishop of Mainz, but the Pope himself, who, while he might have given the pallium freely, had put upon it a price so exorbitant as to tempt the archbishop to employ Tetzel to get the money for him by hook or by crook. "But as for a retractation," said Luther in a very firm tone,

"never expect one from me."

A second and a third interview followed, and Miltitz, despairing of extorting from Luther a recantation, professed to be satisfied with what he could get; and he got more than might have been expected. It is evident that the arts of the envoy, his well-simulated fairness and moderation, and the indignation, not wholly feigned, which he expressed against Tetzels, had not been without their effect upon the mind of Luther. The final arrangement come to was that neither side should write or act in the question; that Luther should revoke upon proof of his errors, and that the matter should be referred to the judgment of an enlightened bishop. The umpire ultimately chosen was the Archbishop of Treves.

The issue to which the affair had been brought was one that threatened disaster to the cause. It seemed to prelude a shelving of the controversy. It was gone into for that very purpose. The "Theses" will soon be forgotten; the Tetzels scandal will fade from the public memory; Rome will observe a little

more moderation and decency in the sale of indulgences; and when the storm shall have blown over, things will revert to their old course, and Germany will again lie down in her chains. Happily, there was a Greater than Luther at the head of the movement.

Miltitz was overjoyed. This troublesome affair was now at an end; so he thought. His mistake lay in believing the movement to be confined to the bosom of a single monk. He could not see that it was a new life which had come down from the skies, and which was bringing on an awakening in the Church. Miltitz invited Luther to supper. At table, he did not conceal the alarm this matter had caused at Rome. Nothing that had fallen out these hundred years had occasioned so much uneasiness in the Vatican. The cardinals would give "ten thousand ducats" to have it settled, and the news that it was now arranged would cause unbounded joy. The repast was a most convivial one; and when it was ended, the envoy rose, took the monk of Wittemberg in his arms, and kissed him — "a Judas kiss," said Luther, writing to Staupitz, "but I

would not let him perceive that I saw through his Italian tricks."

There came now a pause in the controversy. Luther laid aside his pen, he kept silence on indulgences; he busied himself in his chair; but, fortunately for the cause at stake, this pause was of no long duration. It was his enemies that broke the truce. Had they been wise, they would have left the monk in the fetters with which Miltitz had bound him. Not knowing what they did, they loosed his cords.

This brings us to the Leipsic Disputation, an affair that made a great noise at the time, and which was followed by vast consequences to the Reformation.

Such disputations were common in that age. They were a sort of tournament in which the knights of the schools, like the knights of the Middle Ages, sought to display their prowess and win glory. They had their uses. There were then no public meetings, no platforms, no daily press; and

in their absence, these disputations between the learned came in their stead, as arenas for the ventilation of great public questions.

The man who set agoing the movement when it had stopped, thinking to extinguish it, was Doctor John Eccius or Eck. He was famed as a debater all over Europe. He was Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt; deeply read in the school-men, subtle, sophistical, a great champion of the Papacy, transcendently vain of his dialectic powers, vaunting the triumphs he had obtained on many fields, and always panting for new opportunities of displaying his skill. A fellow-laborer of Luther, Andrew Bodenstein, better known as Carlstadt, Archdeacon of the Cathedral at Wittemberg, had answered the Obelisks of Dr. Eck, taking occasion to defend the opinions of Luther. Eck answered him, and Carlstadt again replied. After expending on each other the then customary amenities of scholastic strife, it was ultimately agreed that the two combatants should meet in the city of Leipsic, and decide the controversy by oral disputation, in the presence of George, Duke of Saxony, uncle of

the Elector Frederick, and other princes and illustrious personages.

Before the day arrived for this trial of strength between Carlstadt and Eck, the latter had begun to aim at higher game. To vanquish Carlstadt would bring him but little fame; the object of Eck's ambition was to break a lance with the monk of Wittemberg, "the little monk who had suddenly grown into a giant." Accordingly, he published thirteen Theses, in which he plainly impugned the opinions of Luther.

This violation of the truce on the Roman side set Luther free; and, nothing loth, he requested permission from Duke George to come to Leipsic and take up the challenge which Eck had thrown down to him. The duke, who feared for the public peace, should two such combatants wrestle a fall on his territories, refused the request. Ultimately, however, he gave leave to Luther to come to Leipsic as a spectator; and in this capacity did the doctor of Wittemberg appear on a scene in which he was destined to fill the most prominent place.

It affords a curious glimpse into the manners of the age, to mark the pomp with which the two parties entered Leipsic. Dr. Eck and his friends came first, arriving on the 21st of June, 1519. Seated in a chariot, arrayed in his sacerdotal garments, he made his entry into the city, at the head of a procession composed of the civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries who had come forth to do him honor. He passed proudly along through streets thronged with the citizens, who rushed from their houses to have a sight of the warrior who had unsheathed his scholastic sword on so many fields — in Pannonia, in Lombardy, in Bavaria — and who had never yet returned it into its scabbard but in victory. He was accompanied by Poliander, whom he had brought with him to be a witness of his triumph, but whom Providence designed, by the instrumentality of Luther, to bind to the chariot of the Reformation. There is a skeleton at every banquet, and Eck complains that a report was circulated in the crowd, that in the battle about to begin it would be his fortune to be beaten. The wish in this case certainly was not father to the

thought, for the priests and people of Leipsic were to a man on Eck's side.

On the 24th of June the theologians from Wittemberg made their public entry into Leipsic. Heading the procession came Carlstadt, who was to maintain the contest with Eck. Of the distinguished body of men assembled at Wittemberg, Carlstadt was perhaps the most impetuous, but the least profound. He was barely fit to sustain the part which he had chosen to act. He was enjoying the ovation of his entry when, the wheel of his carriage coming off, he suddenly rolled in the mud. The spectators who witnessed his mischance construed it into an omen of a more serious downfall awaiting him, and said that if Eck was to be beaten it was another than Carlstadt who would be the victor.

In the carriage after Carlstadt rode the Duke of Pomerania, and, one on each side of him, sat the two theologians of chief note, Luther and Melancthon. Then followed a long train of doctors-in-law, masters of arts, licentiates in theology, and surrounding their carriages came a body of 200

students bearing pikes and halberds. It was not alone the interest they took in the discussion which brought them hither; they knew that the disposition of the Leipsickers was not over-friendly, and they thought their presence might not be unneeded in guarding their professors from insult and in-jury.

On the morning of the 27th, mass was sung in the Church of St. Thomas. The princes, counts, abbots, councilors, and professors walked to the chapel in procession, marching to the sound of martial music, with banners flying, and accompanied by a guard of nearly 100 citizens, who bore halberds and other weapons. After service they returned in the same order to the ducal castle of Pleisenberg, the great room of which had been fitted up for the disputation. Duke George, the hereditary Prince John of Saxony, the Duke of Pomerania, and Prince John of Anhalt occupied separate and conspicuous seats; the less distinguished of the audience sat upon benches. At each end of the hall rose a wooden pulpit for the use of the disputants. Over that which Luther was to occupy hung a painting of St. Martin, whose

name he bore; and above that which had been assigned to Dr. Eck was a representation of St. George trampling the dragon under foot: a symbol, as the learned doctor doubtless viewed it, of the feat he was to perform in slaying with scholastic sword the dragon of the Reformation. In the middle of the hall were tables for the notaries-public, who were to take notes of the discussion.

All are in their places: there is silence in the hall. Mosellanus ascends the pulpit and delivers the introductory address. He exhorts the champions to bear themselves gallantly yet courteously; to remember that they are theologians, not duellists, and that their ambition ought to be not so much to conquer as to be conquered, so that Truth might be the only victor on the field now about to open. When the address had terminated, the organ pealed through the hall of the Pleisenberg, and the whole assembly, falling on their knees, sang the ancient hymn — *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*. Three times was this invocation solemnly repeated.

The Church now stood on the line that divided

the night from the day. The champions of the darkness and the heralds of the light were still mingled in one assembly, and still united by the tie of one ecclesiastical communion. A little while and they would be parted, never again to meet; but as yet they assemble under the same roof, they bow their heads in the same prayer, and they raise aloft their voices in the same invocation to the Holy Spirit. That prayer was to be answered. The Spirit was to descend; the dead were to draw to the dead, the living to the living, and a holy Church was to look forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners."

It was now past noon. The opening of the discussion was postponed till after dinner. Duke George had prepared a sumptuous repast for the two disputants and their friends, and they accordingly adjourned to the ducal table. At two o'clock they re-assembled in the hall where the disputation was to take place.

The battle was now joined, and it continued to be waged on this and the sixteen following days.

The questions discussed were of the very last importance: they were those that lie at the foundations of the two theologies, and that constitute an essential and eternal difference between the Roman and Protestant Churches, in their basis, their character, and their tendencies. The discussion was also of the last importance practically. It enabled the Reformers to see deeper than they had hitherto done into fundamentals. It convinced them that the contrariety between the two creeds was far greater than they had imagined, and that the diversity was not on the surface merely, not in the temporal wealth and spiritual assumptions of the hierarchy merely, not in the scandals of indulgences and the disorders of the Papal court merely, but in the very first principles upon which the Papal system is founded, and that the discussion of these principles leads unavoidably into an examination of the moral and spiritual condition of the race, and the true character of the very first event in human history.

Before sketching in outline — and an outline is all that has come down to us — this celebrated

disputation, it may not be uninteresting to see a pen-and-ink sketch, by an impartial contemporary and eye-witness, of the three men who figured the most prominently in it. The portraits are by Peter Mosellanus, Professor of Greek in the University of Leipsic, the orator who opened the proceedings.

"Martin Luther is of middle stature, and so emaciated by hard study that one might almost count his bones. He is in the rigor of life, and his voice is clear and sonorous. His learning and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures are beyond compare: he has the whole Word of God at command. In addition to this he has great store of arguments and ideas. It were, perhaps, to be wished that he had a little more judgment in arranging his materials. In conversation he is candid and courteous; there is nothing stoical or haughty about him; he has the art of accommodating himself to every individual. His address is pleasing, and replete with good-humor; he displays firmness, and is never discomposed by the menaces of his adversaries, be they what they may. One is, in a manner, to believe that in the great things which he

has done God has assisted him. He is blamed, however, for being more sarcastic in his rejoinders than becomes a theologian, especially when he announces new ideas."

"Carlstadt is of smaller stature; his complexion is dark and sallow, his voice disagreeable, his memory less retentive, and his temper more easily ruffled than Luther's. Still, however, he possesses, though in an inferior degree, the same qualities which distinguish his friend."

"Eck is tall and broad-shouldered. He has a strong and truly German voice, and such excellent lungs that he would be well heard on the stage, or would make an admirable town-crier. His accent is rather coarse than elegant, and he has none of the gracefulness so much lauded by Cicero and Quintilian. His mouth, his eyes, and his whole figure suggest the idea of a soldier or a butcher rather than a theologian. His memory is excellent, and were his intellect equal to it he would be faultless. But he is slow of comprehension, and wants judgment, without which all other gifts are

useless. Hence, when he debates, he piles up, without selection or discernment, passages from the Bible, quotations from the Fathers, and arguments of all descriptions. His assurance, moreover, is unbounded. When he finds himself in a difficulty he darts off from the matter in hand, and pounces upon another; sometimes, even, he adopts the view of his antagonist, and, changing the form of expression, most dexterously charges him with the very absurdity which he himself was defending."

Such were the three men who now stood ready to engage in battle, as sketched by one who was too thoroughly imbued with the spirit of ancient pagan literature to care about the contest farther than as it might afford him a little amusement or some pleasurable excitement. The eyes of this learned Grecian were riveted on the past. It was the scholars, heroes, and battles of antiquity that engrossed his admiration. And yet what were these but mimic conflicts compared with the tremendous struggle that was now opening, and the giants that were to wrestle in it! The wars of Greece and

Rome were but the world's nursery tales; this war, though Mosellanus knew it not, was the real drama of the race — the true conflict of the ages.

Chapter 15

The Leipsic Disputation

THE man who climbs to the summit of a mountain chain beholds the waters that gush forth from the soil rolling down the declivity, some on this side of the ridge and some on that. Very near to each other may lie the birth-places of these young rivers; but how different their courses! how dissimilar the countries which they water, and how widely apart lie the oceans, into which they ultimately pour their floods! This difference of destiny is occasioned by what would seem no great matter. The line of the mountain summit runs between their sources, and hence; though their beginnings are here, at the traveler's feet, on the same mountain-top, their endings are parted, it may be, by hundreds of miles.

We are arrived at a similar point in the history of the two great systems whose rise and course we are employed in tracing. We stand at the watershed of the two theologies. We can here clearly trace the

dividing line as it runs along, parting the primeval sources of the Protestant and the Roman theologies. These sources lie close, very close to each other, and yet the one is on this side of the line which divides truth from error, the other is on that; and hence the different and opposite course on which we behold each setting out; and so far from ever meeting, the longer they flow they are but the farther parted. The discussion at Leipsic proceeded along this line; it was, in fact, the first distinct tracing-out and settling of this line, as the essential and eternal boundary between the two theologies — between the Roman and Protestant Churches.

The form which the question took was one touching the human will. What is the moral condition of man's will? in other words, What is the moral condition of man himself? As the will is, so is the man, for the will or heart is but a term expressive of the final outcome of the man; it is the organ which concentrates all the findings of his animal, intellectual, and spiritual nature — body, mind, and soul — and sends them forth in the form of wish and act. Is man able to choose that which is

spiritually good? In other words, when sin and holiness are put before him, and he must make his choice between the two, will the findings of his whole nature, as summed up and expressed in his choice, be on the side of holiness? Dr. Eck and the Roman theologians at Leipsic maintained the affirmative, asserting that man has the power, without aid from the Spirit of God, and simply of himself, to choose what is spiritually good, and to obey God. Luther, Carlstadt, and the new theologians maintained the negative, affirming that man lost this power when he fell; that he is now morally unable to choose holiness; and that, till his nature be renewed by the Holy Spirit, he cannot love or serve God.

This question, it is necessary to remark, is not one touching the freedom of man. About this there is no dispute. It is admitted on both sides, the Popish and Protestant, that man is a free agent. Man can make a choice; there is neither physical nor intellectual constraint upon his will, and having made his choice he can act conformably to it. This constitutes man a moral and responsible agent. But

the question is one touching the moral ability of the will. Granting our freedom of choice, have we the power to choose good? Will the perceptions, bias, and desires of our nature, as summed up and expressed by the will, be on the side of holiness as holiness? They will not, says the Protestant theology, till the nature is renewed by the Holy Spirit. The will may be physically free, it may be intellectually free, and yet, by reason of the bias to sin and aversion to holiness which the Fall planted in the heart, the will is not morally free; it is dominated over by its hatred of holiness and love of sin, and will not act in the way of preferring holiness and loving God, till it be rid of the spiritual incapacity which hatred of what is good inflicts upon it. But let us return to the combatants in the arena at Leipsic. Battle has already been joined, and we find the disputants stationed beside the deepest sources of the respective theologies, only half conscious of the importance of the ground they occupy, and the far-reaching consequences of the propositions for which they are respectively to fight.

"Man's will before his conversion," says Carlstadt, "can perform no good work. Every good work comes entirely and exclusively from God, who gives to man first the will to do, and then the power of accomplishing."

Such was the proposition maintained at one end of the hall. It was a very old proposition, though it seemed new when announced in the Pleisenberg hall, having been thoroughly obscured by the schoolmen. The Reformers could plead Augustine's authority in behalf of their proposition; they could plead a yet greater authority, even that of Paul. The apostle had maintained this proposition both negatively and positively. He had described the "carnal mind" as "enmity against God;" (Romans 8:7, 8) He had spoken of the understanding as "darkness," and of men as "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." This same doctrine he had put also in the positive form.

"It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

Our Savior has laid down a great principle which amounts to this, that corrupt human nature by itself can produce nothing but what is corrupt, when he said,

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6)

And the same great principle is asserted, with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when he says, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." And were commentary needed to bring out the full meaning of this statement, we have it in the personal application which the apostle makes of it to himself.

"For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing." (Romans 7:18)

If then man's whole nature be corrupt, said the Reformer, nothing but what is corrupt can proceed from him, till he be quickened by the Spirit of God. Antecedently to the operations of the Spirit upon his understanding and heart, he lacks the moral

power of loving and obeying God, and of effecting anything that may really avail for his deliverance and salvation; and he who can do nothing for himself must owe all to God.

At the other end of the hall, occupying the pulpit over which was suspended the representation of St. George and the dragon, rose the tall portly form of Dr. Eck. With stentorian voice and animated gestures, he repudiates the doctrine which has just been put forth by Carlstadt. Eck admits that man is fallen, that his nature is corrupt, but he declines to define the extent of that corruption; he maintains that it is not universal, that his whole nature is not corrupt, that man has the power of doing some things that are spiritually good; and that, prior to the action of God's Spirit upon his mind and heart, man can do works which have a certain kind of merit, the merit of congruity even; and God rewards these good works done in the man's own strength, with grace by which he is able to do what still remains of the work of his salvation.

The combatants at the one end of the hall fight for salvation by grace — grace to the entire exclusion of human merit: salvation of God. The combatants at the other end fight for salvation by works, a salvation beginning in man's own efforts and good works, and these efforts and good works running along the whole line of operation; and though they attract to them supernatural grace, and make it their yoke-fellow as it were, yet themselves substantially and meritoriously do the work. This is salvation of man.

If rite doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature be true, if he has lost the power of choosing what is spiritually good, and doing work spiritually acceptable to God, the Protestant divines were right. If he retains this power, the Roman theologians were on the side of truth. There is no middle position.

Thus the controversy came to rage around this one point — Has the Will the power to choose and to do what is spiritually good? This, they said, was the whole controversy between Romanism and

Protestantism. All the lines of argument on both sides flowed out of, or ran up into, this one point. It was the greatest point of all in theology viewed on the side of man; and according as it was to be decided, Romanism is true and Protestantism is false, or Protestantism is true and Romanism is false.

"I acknowledge," said Eck, who felt himself hampered in this controversy by opinions favorable to the doctrine of grace which, descending from the times of Augustine, and maintained though imperfectly and inconsistently by some of the schoolmen, had lingered in the Church of Rome till now — "I acknowledge that the first impulse in man's conversion proceeds from God, and that the will of man in this instance is entirely passive."

"Then," asked Carlstadt, who thought that he had won the argument, "after this first impulse which proceeds from God, what follows on the part of man? Is it not that which Paul denominates will, and which the Fathers entitle consent?"

"Yes," answered the Chancellor of Ingolstadt, "but this consent of man comes partly from our natural will and partly from God's grace" — thus recalling what he appeared to have granted; making man a partner with God in the origination of will or first act of choice in the matter of his salvation, and so dividing with God the merit of the work.

"No," responded Carlstadt, "this consent or act of will comes entirely from God; he it is who creates it in the man."

Offended at a doctrine which so completely took away from man all cause of glorifying, Eck, feigning astonishment and anger, exclaimed, "Your doctrine converts a man into a stone or log, incapable of any action."

The apostle had expressed it better: "dead in trespasses and sins." Yet he did not regard those in that condition whom he addressed as a stone or a log, for he gave them the motives to believe, and held them guilty before God should they reject the Gospel.

A log or a stone! it was answered from Carlstadt's end of the hall. Does our doctrine make man such? does it reduce him to the level of an irrational animal? By no means. Can he not meditate and reflect, compare and choose? Can he not read and understand the statements of Scripture declaring to him in what state he is sunk, that he is "without strength," and bidding him ask the aid of the Spirit of God? If he ask, will not that Spirit be given? will not the light of truth be made to shine into his understanding? and by the instrumentality of the truth, will not his heart be renewed by the Spirit, his moral bias against holiness taken away, and he become able to love and obey God? In man's capacity to become the subject of such a change, in his possessing such a framework of powers and faculties as, when touched by the Spirit, can be set in motion in the direction of good, is there not, said the Reformers, sufficient to distinguish man from a log, a stone, or an irrational animal?

The Popish divines on this head have ignored a

distinction on which Protestant theologians have always and justly laid great stress, the distinction between the rational and the spiritual powers of man.

Is it not matter of experience, the Romanists have argued, that men of themselves — that is, by the promptings and powers of their unrenewed nature — have done good actions? Does not ancient history show us many noble, generous, and virtuous achievements accomplished by the heathen? Did they not love and die for their country? All enlightened Protestant theologians have most cheerfully granted this. Man even unrenewed by the Spirit of God may be truthful, benevolent, loving, patriotic; and by the exercise of these qualities, he may invest his own character with singular gracefulness and glory, and to a very large degree benefit his species. But the question here is one regarding a higher good, even that which the Bible denominates holiness — "without which no man can see God" — actions done conformably to the highest standard, which is the Divine law, and from the motive of the highest end,

which is the glory of God. Such actions, the Protestant theology teaches, can come only from a heart purified by faith, and quickened by the Spirit of God.

On the 4th of July, Luther stepped down into the arena. He had obtained permission to be present on condition of being simply a spectator; but, at the earnest solicitations of both sides, Duke George withdrew the restriction, and now he and Eck are about to join battle. At seven o'clock in the morning the two champions appeared in their respective pulpits, around which were grouped the friends and allies of each. Eck wore a courageous and triumphant air, claiming to have borne off the palm from Carlstadt, and it was generally allowed that he had proved himself the abler disputant. Luther appeared with a nosegay in his hand, and a face still bearing traces of the terrible storms through which he had passed. The former discussion had thinned the hall; it was too abstruse and metaphysical for the spectators to appreciate its importance. Now came mightier champions, and more palpable issues. A crowd filled the

Pleisenberg hall, and looked on while the two giants contended.

It was understood that the question of the Pope's primacy was to be discussed between Luther and Eck. The Reformer's emancipation from this as from other parts of the Romish system had been gradual. When he began the war against the indulgence-mongers, he never doubted that so soon as the matter should come to the knowledge of the Pope and the other dignitaries, they would be as forward as himself to condemn the monstrous abuse. To his astonishment, he found them throwing their shield over it, and arguing from Scripture in a way that convinced him that the men whom he had imagined as sitting in a region of serene light, were in reality immersed in darkness. This led him to investigate the basis of the Roman primacy, and soon he came to the conclusion that it had no foundation whatever in either the early Church or in the Word of God. He denied that the Pope was head of the Church by Divine right, though he was still willing to grant that he was head of the Church by human right — that is, by

the consent of the nations.

Eck opened the discussion by affirming that the Pope's supremacy was of Divine appointment. His main proof, as it is that of Romanists to this hour, was the well-known passage, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church." Luther replied, as Protestants at this day reply, that it is an unnatural interpretation of the words to make Peter the rock; that their natural and obvious sense is, that the truth Peter had just confessed — in other words Christ himself — is the rock; that Augustine and Ambrose had so interpreted the passage, and that therewith agree the express declarations of Scripture —

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;"(1 Corinthians 3:11) and that Peter himself terms Christ "the chief corner-stone, and a living stone on which we are built up a spiritual house."(1 Peter 2:4, 5, 6)

It is unnecessary to go into the details of the disputation. The line of argument, so often

traversed since that day, has become very familiar to Protestants. But we must not overlook the perspicacity and courage of the man who first opened the path, nor the wisdom which taught him to rely so confidently on the testimony of Scripture, nor the independence by which he was able to emancipate himself from the trammels of a servitude sanctioned by the submission of ages.

Luther in this disputation labored under the disadvantage of having to confront numerous quotations from the false decretals. That gigantic forgery, which forms so large a part of the basis of the Roman primacy, had not then been laid bare; nevertheless, Luther looking simply at the internal evidence, in the exercise of his intuitive sagacity, boldly pronounced the evidence produced against him from this source spurious. He even retreated to his stronghold, the early centuries of Christian history, and especially the Bible, in neither of which was proof or trace of the Pope's supremacy to be discovered. When the doctor of Ingolstadt found that despite his practiced logic, vast reading, and ready eloquence, he was winning no victory,

and that all his arts were met and repelled by the simple massive strength, knowledge of Scripture, and familiarity with the Fathers which the monk of Wittemberg displayed, he was not above a discreditable ruse. He essayed to raise a prejudice against Luther by charging him with being "a patron of the heresies of Wicliffe and Huss." The terrors of such an accusation, we in this age can but faintly realize. The doctrines of Huss and Jerome still lay under great odium in the West; and Eck hoped to overwhelm Luther by branding him with the stigma of Bohemianism. The excitement in the hall was immense when the charge was hurled against him; and Duke George and many of the audience half rose from their seats, eager to catch the reply.

Luther well knew the peril in which Eck had placed him, but he was faithful to his convictions. "The Bohemians," he said, "are schismatics; and I strongly reprobate schism: the supreme Divine right is charity and unity. But among the articles of John Huss condemned by the Council of Constance, some are plainly most Christian and

evangelical, which the universal Church cannot condemn." Eck had unwittingly done both Luther and the Reformation a service. The blow which he meant should be a mortal one had severed the last link in the Reformer's chain. Luther had formerly repudiated the primacy of the Pope, and appealed from the Pope to a Council. Now he publicly accuses a Council of having condemned what was "Christian" — in short, of having erred. It was clear that the infallible authority of Councils, as well as that of the Pope, must be given up. Henceforward Luther stands upon the authority of Scripture alone.

The gain to the Protestant movement from the Leipsic discussion was great. Duke George, frightened by the charge of Bohemianism, was henceforward its bitter enemy. There were others who were incurably prejudiced against it. But these losses were more than balanced by manifold and substantial gains. The views of Luther were henceforward clearer. The cause got a broader and firmer foot-hold. Of those who sat on the benches, many became its converts. The students especially

were attracted by Luther, and forsaking the University of Leipsic, flocked to that of Wittemberg. Some names, that afterwards were among the brightest in the ranks of the Reformers, were at this time enrolled on the evangelical side — Poliander, Cellarius, the young Prince of Anhalt, Cruciger, and last and greatest of all, Melancthon. Literature heretofore had occupied the intellect and filled the heart of this last distinguished man, but now, becoming as a little child, he bowed to the authority of the Word of God, and dedicating all his erudition to the Protestant cause, he began to expound the Gospel with that sweetness and clearness which were so peculiarly his own. Luther loved him before, but from this time he loved him more than ever. Luther and Melancthon were true yoke-fellows; they were not so much twain as one; they made up between them a perfect agent for the times and the work. How admirably has Luther hit this off! "I was born," said he, "to contend on the field of battle with factions and wicked spirits. It is my task to uproot the stock and the stem, to clear away the briars and the underwood. I am the rough workman

who has to prepare the way and smooth the road. But Philip advances quietly and softly. He tills and plants the ground; sows and waters it joyfully, according to the gifts which God has given him with so liberal a hand."

The war at Leipsic, then, was no affair of outposts merely. It raged round the very citadel of the Roman system. The first assault was directed against that which emphatically is the key of the Roman position, its deepest foundation as a theology — namely, man's independence of the grace of God. For it is on the doctrine of man's ability to begin and — with the help of a little supplemental grace, conveyed to him through the sole channel of the Sacraments — to accomplish his salvation, that Rome builds her scheme of works, with all its attendant penances, absolutions, and burdensome rites. The second blow was struck at that dogma which is the corner-stone of Rome as a hierarchy — the Pope's primacy.

The Reformers strove to overthrow both, that they might substitute — for the first, GOD, as the

sole Author of man's salvation; and for the second, CHRIST as the sole Monarch of the Church.

Luther returned from Leipsic a freer, a nobler, and a more courageous man. The fetters of Papalism had been rent. He stood erect in the liberty wherewith the Gospel makes all who receive and follow it free. He no longer bowed to Councils; he no longer did reverence to the "chair" set up at Rome, and to which the ages had listened, believing the voice that proceeded from it to be the voice of God. Luther now acknowledged no infallible guide on earth save the Bible. From this day forward there was a greater power in every word and a greater freedom in every act of the Reformer.

Once more in the midst of his friends at Wittemberg, Luther's work was resumed. Professors and students soon felt the new impetus derived from the quickened and expanded views which the Reformer had brought back with him from his encounter with Eck.

He had discarded the mighty fiction of the primacy; lifting his eyes above the throne that stood on the Seven Hills, with its triple-crowned occupant, he fixed them on that King whom God hath set upon the holy hill of Zion. In the living and risen Redeemer, to whom all power in heaven and in earth has been given, he recognized the one and only Head of the Church. This brought with it an expansion of view as regarded the Church herself. The Church in Luther's view was no longer that community over which the Pope stretches his scepter. The Church was that holy and glorious company which has been gathered out of every land by the instrumentality of the Gospel. On all the members of that company one Spirit has descended, knitting them together into one body, and building them up into a holy temple. The narrow walls of Rome, which had aforetime bounded his vision, were now fallen; and the Reformer beheld nations from afar who had never heard of the name of the Pope, and who had never borne his yoke, gathering, as the ancient seer had foretold, to the Shiloh. This was the Church to which Luther had now come, and of which he

rejoiced in being a member.

The drama is now about to widen, and new actors are about to step upon the stage. Those who form the front rank, the originating and creative spirits, the men whose words, more powerful than edicts and armies, are passing sentence of doom upon the old order of things, and bidding a new take its place, are already on the scene. We recognize them in that select band of enlightened and powerful intellects and purified souls at Wittemberg, of whom Luther was chief. But the movement must necessarily draw into itself the political and material forces of the world, either in the way of co-operation or of antagonism. These secondary agents, often mistaken for the first, were beginning to crowd upon the stage. They had condemned the movement at its beginning — the material always under-estimates the spiritual — but now they saw that it was destined to change kingdoms—to change the world. Mediaevalism took the alarm. Shall it permit its dominion quietly to pass from it? Reviving in a power and glory unknown to it since the days of Charlemagne, if

even then, it threw down the gage of battle to Protestantism. Let us attend to the new development we see taking place, at this crisis, in this old power.

Nothing more unfortunate, as it seemed, could have happened for the cause of the world's progress. All things were prognosticating a new era. The revival of ancient learning had given an impetus to the human mind. A spirit of free inquiry and a thirst for rational knowledge had been awakened; society was casting off the yoke of antiquated prejudices and terrors. The world was indulging the cheering hope that it was about to make good its escape from the Dark Ages. But, lo! the Dark Ages start up anew. They embody themselves afresh in the mighty Empire of Charles. It is a general law, traceable through all history that before their fall a rally takes place in the powers of evil.