

THE HISTORY
OF
PROTESTANTISM .

BY THE

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ILLUSTRATED.

"PROTESTANTISM, THE SACRED CAUSE OF GOD'S LIGHT AND TRUTH AGAINST THE DEVIL'S FALSITY AND DARKNESS."—*Carlyle.*

[Volume I.]

CASSELL, PETTER, GALPIN & Co.:

LONDON. PARIS & NEW YORK.

[1878AD.]

BOOK SIXTH.

FROM THE LEIPSIK DISPUTATION TO THE DIET AT WORMS, 1521.

CHAPTER I.

PROTESTANTISM AND IMPERIALISM; OR, THE MONK AND THE MONARCH.

Dangers of Luther—Doubtful Aid—Death of Maximilian—Candidates for the Empire—Character of Charles of Spain—His Dominions—The Empire Offered to Frederick of Saxony—Declined—Charles of Spain Chosen—Wittenberg—Luther's Labours—His Appeal to the People of Germany—His Picture of Germany under the Papacy—Reforms Called for—Impression produced by his Appeal.

AMONG the actors that now begin to crowd the stage there are two who tower conspicuously above the others, and fix the gaze of all eyes, well-nigh exclusively, upon themselves. With the one we are already familiar, for he has been some time before us, the other is only on the point of appearing. They come from the opposite poles of society to mingle in this great drama. The one actor first saw the light in a miner's cottage, the cradle of the other was placed in the palace of an ancient race of kings. The one wears a frock of serge, the other is clad in an imperial mantle. The careers of these two men are not more different in their beginning than they are fated to be in their ending. Emerging from a cell the one is to mount a throne, where he is to sit and govern men, not by the force of the sword, but by the power of the Word. The other, thrown into collision with a power he can neither see nor comprehend, is doomed to descend through one humiliation after another, till at last from a throne, the greatest then in the world, he comes to end his days in a cloister. But all this is yet behind a veil.

Meanwhile the bulkier, but in reality weaker power, seems vastly to overtop the stronger. The Reformation is utterly dwarfed in presence of a colossal Imperialism. If Protestantism has come forth from the Ruler of the world, and if it has been sent on the benign errand of opening the eyes and loosing the fetters of long-enlaved nations, one would have thought that its way would be prepared, and its task made easy, by some signal weakening of its antagonist. On the contrary, it is at this moment that Imperialism develops into sevenfold strength. It is clear the great Ruler seeks no easy victory. He permits dangers to multiply, difficulties to thicken, and the hand of the adversary to be made strong. But by how much the fight is terrible, and the victory all but hopeless, by so much are the proofs resplendent that the power which, without earthly weapon, can scatter the forces of Imperialism, and raise up a world which a combined spiritual and secular despotism has trodden into the dust, is Divine. It is the clash and struggle of these two powers

that we are now to contemplate. But first let us glance at the situation of Luther.

Luther's friends were falling away, or growing timid. Even Staupitz was hesitating, now that the goal to which the movement tended was more distinctly visible. In the coldness or the absence of these friends, other allies hastened to proffer him their somewhat doubtful aid. Drawn to his side rather by hatred of Papal tyranny than by appreciation of Gospel liberty and purity, their alliance somewhat embarrassed the Reformer. It was the Teutonic quite as much as the Reformed element—a noble product when the two are blended—that now stirred the German barons, and made their hands grasp their sword-hilts when told that Luther's life was in danger; that men with pistols under their cloak were dogging him; that Serra Longa was writing to the Elector Frederick, "Let not Luther find an asylum in the States of your highness; let him be rejected of all and stoned in the face of heaven;" that Miltitz, the Papal legate, who had not forgiven his discomfiture, was plotting to snare him by inviting him to another interview at Traves; and that Eck had gone to Rome to find a balm for his wounded pride, by getting forged in the Vatican the bolt that was to crush the man whom his scholastic subtlety had not been able to vanquish at Leipsic.

There seemed cause for the apprehensions that now began to haunt his friends. "If God do not help us," exclaimed Melanchthon, as he listened to the ominous sounds of tempest, and lifted his eye to a sky every hour growing blacker, "If God do not help us, we shall all perish." Even Luther himself was made at times to know, by the momentary depression and alarm into which he was permitted to sink, that if he was calm, and strong, and courageous, it was God that made him so. One of the most powerful knights of Franconia, Sylvester of Schaumburg, sent his son all the way to Wittenberg with a letter to Luther, saying, "If the electors, princes,, magistrates fail you, come to me. God willing, I shall soon have collected more than a hundred gentlemen, and with their help I shall be able to protect you from every danger."¹

Francis of Sickingen, one of those knights who united the love of letters to that of arms, whom Melanchthon styled "a peerless ornament of German knighthood," offered Luther the asylum of his castle. "My services, my goods, and my body, all that I possess are at your disposal," wrote he. Ulrich of Hütten, who was renowned for his verses not less than for his deeds of valour, also offered himself as a champion of the Reformer. His mode of warfare, however, differed from Luther's. Ulrich was for falling on Rome with the sword; Luther sought to subdue her by the weapon of the Truth. "It is with swords and with bows," wrote Ulrich, "with javelins and bombs that

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 27, p. 111.

we must crush the fury of the devil.” “I will not have recourse to arms and bloodshed in defence of the Gospel,” said Luther, shrinking back from the proposal. “It was by the Word that the Church was founded, and by the Word also it shall be re-established.” And, lastly, the prince of scholars in that age, Erasmus, stood forward in defence of the monk of Wittenberg. He did not hesitate to affirm that the outcry which had been raised against Luther, and the disturbance which his doctrines had created, were owing solely to those whose interests, being bound up with the darkness, dreaded the new day that was rising on the world¹—a truth palpable and trite to us, but not so to the men of the early part of the sixteenth century.

When the danger was at its height, the Emperor Maximilian died (January 12th, 1519).² This prince was conspicuous only for his good-nature and easy policy, but under him the Empire had enjoyed a long and profound peace. An obsequious subject of Rome, the Reformed movement was every day becoming more the object of his dislike, and had he lived he would have insisted on the elector’s banishing Luther, which would have thrown him into the hands of his mortal enemies. By the death of Maximilian at this crisis, the storm that seemed ready to burst passed over for the time. Till a new emperor should be elected, Frederick of Saxony, according to an established rule, became regent. This sudden shifting of the scenes placed the Reformer and the Reformation under the protection of the man who for the time presided over the Empire.

Negotiations and intrigues were now set on foot for the election of a new emperor. These became a rampart around the Reformed movement. The Pope, who wished to carry a particular candidate, found it necessary, in order to gain his object, to conciliate the Elector Frederick, whose position as regent, and whose character for wisdom, gave him a potential voice in the electoral college. This led to a clearing of the sky in the quarter of Rome.

There were two candidates in the field—Charles I. of Spain, and Francis I. of France. Henry VIII. of England, finding the prize which he eagerly coveted beyond his reach, had retired from the contest. The claims of the two rivals were very equally balanced. Francis was gallant, chivalrous, and energetic, but he did not sustain his enterprises by a perseverance equal to the ardour with which he had commenced them. Of intellectual tastes, and a lover of the new learning, wise men and scholars, warriors and statesmen, mingled in his court, and discoursed together at his table. He was only twenty-six, yet he had already reaped glory on the field of war. “This prince,” says Müller, “was the most accomplished knight of that era in which a Bayard was the ornament of chivalry, and one of the most enlightened and

¹ Sleidan, bk. i., p. 21.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

amiable men of the polished age of the Medici.”¹ Neither Francis nor his courtiers were forgetful that Charlemagne had worn the diadem, and its restoration to the Kings of France would dispel the idea that was becoming common, that the imperial crown, though nominally elective, was really hereditary, and had now been permanently vested in the house of Austria.

Charles was seven years younger than his rival, and his disposition and talents gave high promise. Although only nineteen he had been trained in affairs, for which he had discovered both inclination and aptitude. The Spanish and German blood mingled in his veins, and his genius combined the qualities of both races. He possessed the perseverance of the Germans, the subtlety of the Italians, and the taciturnity of the Spaniards. His birth-place was Ghent. Whatever prestige riches, extent of dominion, and military strength could give the Empire, Charles would bring to it. His hereditary kingdom, inherited through Ferdinand and Isabella, was Spain. Than Spain there was no more flourishing or powerful monarchy at that day in Christendom. To this magnificent domain, the seat of so many opulent towns, around which was spread an assemblage of corn-bearing plains, wooded sierras, and vegas, on which the fruits of Asia mingled in rich luxuriance with those of Europe, were added the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, Flanders and the rich domains of Burgundy; and now the death of his grandfather, the Emperor Maximilian, had put him in possession of the States of Austria. Nor was this all; the discovery of Columbus had placed a new continent under his sway; and how large its limit, or how ample the wealth that might flow from it, Charles could not, at that hour, so much as conjecture. So wide were the realms over which this young prince reigned. Scarcely had the sun set on their western frontier when the morning had dawned on their eastern.

It would complete his glory, and render him without a peer on earth, should he add the imperial diadem to the many crowns he already possessed. He scattered gold profusely among the electors and princes of Germany to gain the coveted prize.² His rival Francis was liberal, but he lacked the gold-mines of Mexico and Peru which Charles had at his command. The candidates, in fact, were too powerful. Their greatness had well-nigh defeated both of them; for the Germans began to fear that to elect either of the two would be to give themselves a master. The weight of so many sceptres as those which Charles held in his hand might stifle the liberties of Germany.

The electors, on consideration, were of the mind that it would be wiser to elect one of themselves to wear the imperial crown. Their choice was given, in the first instance, neither to Francis nor to Charles; it fell unanimously on Frederick of Saxony.³ Even the Pope was with them in this matter.

¹ Müller, *Univ. Hist.*, bk. xix., sec. 1.

² Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. i., p. 83.

³ Sleidan, bk. i., p. 18.

Leo X. feared the overgrown power of Charles of Spain. If the master of so many kingdoms should be elected to the vacant dignity, the Empire might overshadow the mitre. Nor was the Pope more favourably inclined towards the King of France: he dreaded his ambition; for who could tell that the conqueror of Carignano would not carry his arms farther into Italy? On these grounds, Leo sent his earnest advice to the electors to choose Frederick of Saxony. The result was that Frederick was chosen. We behold the imperial crown offered to Luther's friend!

Will he or ought he to put on the mantle of Empire? The princes and people of Germany would have hailed with joy his assumption of the dignity. It did seem as if Providence were putting this strong sceptre into his hand, that therewith he might protect the Reformer. Frederick had, oftener than once, been painfully sensible of his lack of power. He may now be the first man in Germany, president of all its councils, generalissimo of all its armies; and may stave off from the Reformation's path, wars, scaffolds, violences of all sorts, and permit it to develop its spiritual energies, and regenerate society in peace. Ought he to have become emperor? Most historians have lauded his declination as magnanimous. We take the liberty most respectfully to differ from them. We think that Frederick, looking at the whole case, ought to have accepted the imperial crown; that the offer of it came to him at a moment and in a way that made the point of duty clear, and that his refusal was an act of weakness.

Frederick, in trying to shun the snare of ambition, fell into that of timidity. He looked at the difficulties and dangers of the mighty task, at the distractions springing up within the Empire, and the hostile armies of the Moslem on its frontier. Better, he thought, that the imperial sceptre should be placed in a stronger hand; better that Charles of Austria should grasp it. He forgot that, in the words of Luther, Christendom was threatened by a worse foe than the Turk; and so Frederick passed on the imperial diadem to one who was to become a bitter foe of the Reformation.

But, though we cannot justify Frederick in shirking the toils and perils of the task to which he was now called, we recognise in his decision the overruling of a Higher than human wisdom. If Protestantism had grown up and flourished under the protection of the Empire, would not men have said that its triumph was owing to the fact that it had one so wise as Frederick to counsel it, and one so powerful to fight for it? Was it a blessing to primitive Christianity to be taken by Constantine under the protection of the arms of the first Empire? True, oceans of blood would have been spared, had Frederick girded on the imperial sword and become the firm friend and protector of the movement. But the Reformation without martyrs, without scaffolds, without blood! We should hardly have known it. It would be the Reformation without glory and without power. Not *its* annals only, but the annals of the race would

have been immensely poorer had they lacked the sublime spectacles of faith and heroism which were exhibited by the martyrs of the sixteenth century. Not an age in the future which the glory of these sufferers will not illuminate!

Frederick of Saxony had declined what the two most powerful sovereigns in Europe were so eager to obtain. On the 28th of June, 1519, the electoral conclave, in their scarlet robes, met in the Church of St. Bartholomew, in Frankfort-on-the-Main, and proceeded to the election of the new emperor. The votes were unanimous in favour of Charles of Spain.¹ It was more than a year (October, 1520) till Charles arrived in Germany to be crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle; and meanwhile the regency was continued in the hands of Frederick, and the shield was still extended over the little company of workers at Wittenberg, who were busily engaged in laying the foundations of an empire that would long outlast that of the man on whose head the diadem of the Cæsars was about to be placed.

The year that elapsed between the election and the coronation of Charles was one of busy and prosperous labour at Wittenberg. A great light shone in the midst of the little band there gathered together, namely, the Word of God. The voice from the Seven Hills fell upon their ear unheeded; all doctrines and practices were tried by the Bible alone. Every day Luther took a step forward. New proofs of the falsehood and corruption of the Roman system continually crowded in upon him. It was now that the treatise of Laurentius Valla fell in his way, which satisfied him that the donation of Constantine to the Pope was a fiction. This strengthened the conclusion at which he had already arrived touching the Roman primacy, even that foundation it had none save the ambition of Popes and the credulity of the people. It was now that he read the writings of John Huss, and, to his surprise, he found in them the doctrine of Paul—that which it had cost himself such agonies to learn—respecting the free justification of sinners. “We have all,” he exclaimed, half in wonder, half in joy, “Paul, Augustine, and myself, been Hussites without knowing it!”² and he added, with deep seriousness, “God will surely visit it upon the world that the truth was preached to it a century ago, and burned!” It was now that he proclaimed the great truth that the Sacrament will profit no man without faith, and that it is folly to believe that it will operate spiritual effects of itself and altogether independently of the disposition of the recipient. The Romanists stormed at him because he taught that the Sacrament ought to be administered in both kinds, not able to perceive the deeper principle of Luther, which razed the *opus operatum* with all attendant thereon. They were defending the outworks: the Reformer, with a giant’s strength,

¹ After the election the ambassadors of Charles offered a large sum of money to the Elector Frederick; he not only refused it, but commanded all about him to take not a farthing. (Sleidan, bk. i., p. 18.)

² *L. Epp.*, ii., p. 452.

was levelling the citadel. It was amazing what activity and vigour of mind Luther at this period displayed. Month after month, rather week by week, he launched treatise on treatise. These productions of his pen, "like sparks from under the hammer, each brighter than that which preceded it," added fresh force to the conflagration that was blazing on all sides. His enemies attacked him: they but drew upon themselves heavier blows. It was, too, during this year of marvellously varied labour, that he published his Commentary upon the Galatians, "his own epistle" as he termed it. In that treatise he gave a clearer and fuller exposition than he had yet done of what with him was the great cardinal truth, even justification through faith alone. But he showed that such a justification neither makes void the law, inasmuch as it proceeds on the ground of a righteousness that fulfils the law, nor leads to licentiousness, inasmuch as the faith that takes hold of righteousness for justification, operates in the heart to its renewal, and a renewed heart is the fountain of every holy virtue and of every good work.

It was now, too, that Luther published his famous appeal to the emperor, the princes, and the people of Germany, on the Reformation of Christianity.¹ This was the most graphic, courageous, eloquent, and spirit-stirring production which had yet issued from his pen. It may be truly said of it that its words were battles. The sensation it produced was immense. It was the trumpet that summoned the German nation to the great conflict. "The time for silence," said Luther, "is past, and the time to speak is come." And verily he did speak.

In this manifesto Luther first of all draws a most masterly picture of the Roman tyranny. Rome had achieved a three-fold conquest. She had triumphed over all ranks and classes of men; she had triumphed over all the rights and interests of human society; she had enslaved kings; she had enslaved Councils; she had enslaved the people. She had effected a serfdom complete and universal.

By her dogma of Pontifical supremacy she had enslaved kings, princes, and magistrates. She had exalted the spiritual above the temporal in order that all rulers, and all tribunals and causes, might be subject to her own sole absolute and irresponsible will, and that, unchallenged and unpunished by the civil power, she might pursue her career of usurpation and oppression.

Has she not, Luther asked, placed the throne of her Pope above the throne of kings, so that no one dare call him to account? The Pontiff enlists armies, makes war on kings, and spills their subjects' blood; nay, he challenges for the persons of his priests immunity from civil control, thus fatally deranging the order of the world, and reducing authority into prostration and contempt.

By her dogma of spiritual supremacy Rome had vanquished Councils. The Bishop of Rome claimed to be chief and ruler over all bishops. In him

¹ Sleidan, bk. i., p. 31.

was centred the whole authority of the Church, so that let him promulgate the most manifestly erroneous dogma, or commit the most flagrant wickedness, no Council had the power to reprove or depose him. Councils were nothing, the Pope was all. The Spiritual supremacy made him the Church: the Temporal, the World.

By her assumed sole and infallible right of interpreting Holy Scripture, Rome had enslaved the people. She had put out their eyes; she had bound them in chains of darkness, that she might make them bow down to any god she was pleased to set up, and compel them to follow whither she was pleased to lead—into temporal bondage, into eternal perdition.

Behold the victory which Rome has achieved! She stands with her foot upon kings, upon bishops, upon peoples! All has she trodden into the dust.

These, to use Luther's metaphor, were the three walls behind which Rome had entrenched herself.¹ Is she threatened with the temporal power? She is above it. Is it proposed to cite her before a Council? She only has the right to convoke one. Is she attacked from the Bible? She only has the power of interpreting it. Rome has made herself supreme over the throne, over the Church, over the Word of God itself! Such was the gulf in which Germany and Christendom were sunk. The Reformer called on all ranks in his nation to combine for their emancipation from a vassalage so disgraceful and so ruinous.

To rouse his countrymen, and all in Christendom in whose breasts there yet remained any love of truth or any wish for liberty, he brought the picture yet closer to the Germans, not trusting to any general portraiture, however striking. Entering into details, he pointed out the ghastly havoc the Papal oppression had inflicted upon their common country.

Rome, he said, had ruined Italy; for the decay of that fine land, completed in our day, was already far advanced in Luther's. And now, the vampire Papacy having sucked the blood of its own country, a locust swarm from the Vatican had alighted on Germany. The Fatherland, the Reformer told the Germans, was being gnawed to the very bones. Annats, palliums, commendams, administrations, indulgences, reversions, incorporations, reserves—such were a few, and but a few, of the contrivances by which the priests managed to convey the wealth of Germany to Rome. Was it a wonder that princes, cathedrals, and people were poor? The wonder was, with such a cormorant swarm preying upon them, that anything was left. All went into the Roman sack which had no bottom. Here was robbery surpassing that of thieves and highwaymen, who expiated their offences on the gibbet. Here were the tyranny and destruction of the gates of hell, seeing it was the destruction of soul and body, the ruin of both Church and State. Talk of the

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 28, p. 112.

devastation of the Turk, and of raising armies to resist him! there is no Turk in all the world like the Roman Turk.

The instant remedies which he urged were the same with those which his great predecessor, Wicliffe, a full hundred and fifty years before, had recommended to the English people, and happily had prevailed upon the Parliament to so far adopt. The Gospel alone, which he was labouring to restore, could go to the root of these evils, but they were of a kind to be corrected in part by the temporal power. Every prince and State, he said, should forbid their subjects giving annats to Rome. Kings and nobles ought to resist the Pontiff as the greatest foe of their own prerogatives, and the worst enemy of the independence and prosperity of their kingdoms. Instead of enforcing the bulls of the Pope, they ought to throw his ban, seal, and briefs into the Rhine or the Elbe. Archbishops and bishops should be forbidden, by imperial decree, to receive their dignities from Rome. All causes should be tried within the kingdom, and all persons made amenable to the country's tribunals. Festivals should cease, as but affording occasions for idleness and all kinds of vicious indulgences, and the Sabbath should be the only day on which men ought to abstain from working. No more cloisters ought to be built for mendicant friars, whose begging expeditions had never turned to good, and never would; the law of clerical celibacy should be repealed, and liberty given to priests to marry like other men; and, in fine, the Pope, leaving kings and princes to govern their own realms, should confine himself to prayer and the preaching of the Word. "Hearest thou, O Pope, not all holy, but all sinful? Who gave thee power to lift thyself above God and break His laws? The wicked Satan lies through thy throat.—O my Lord Christ, hasten Thy last day, and destroy the devil's nest at Rome. There sits 'the man of sin,' of whom Paul speaks, 'the son of perdition.'"

Luther well understood what a great orator¹ since has termed "the expulsive power of a new emotion." Truth he ever employed as the only effectual instrumentality for expelling error. Accordingly, underneath Rome's system of human merit and salvation by works, he placed the doctrine of man's inability and God's free grace. This it was that shook into ruin the Papal fabric of human merit. By the same method of attack did Luther demolish the Roman kingdom of bondage. He penetrated the fiction on which it was reared. Rome takes a man, shaves his head, anoints him with oil, gives him the Sacrament of orders, and so infuses into him a mysterious virtue. The whole class of men so dealt with form a sacerdotal order, distinct from and higher than laymen, and are the divinely appointed rulers of the world.

This falsehood, with the grievous and ancient tyranny of which it was the corner-stone, Luther overthrew by proclaiming the antagonistic truth. All

¹ Dr. Chalmers.

really Christian men, said he, are priests. Had not the Apostle Peter, addressing all believers, said, “Ye are a royal priesthood”? It is not the shearing of the head, or the wearing of a peculiar garment, that makes a man a priest. It is faith that makes men priests, faith that unites them to Christ, and that gives them the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whereby they become filled with all holy grace and heavenly power. This inward anointing—this oil, better than any that ever came from the horn of bishop or Pope—gives them not the name only, but the nature, the purity, the power of priests; and this anointing have all they received who are believers on Christ.

Thus did Luther not only dislodge the falsehood, he filled its place with a glorious truth, lest, if left vacant, the error should creep back. The fictitious priesthood of Rome—a priesthood which lay in oils and vestments, and into which men were introduced by scissors and the arts of necromancy—departed, and the true priesthood came in its room. Men opened their eyes upon their glorious enfranchisement. They were no longer the vassals of a sacerdotal oligarchy, the bondsmen of shavelings; they saw themselves to be the members of an illustrious brotherhood, whose Divine Head was in heaven.

Never was there a grander oration. Patriots and orators have, on many great and memorable occasions, addressed their fellow-men, if haply they might rouse them to overthrow the tyrants who held them in bondage. They have plied them with every argument, and appealed to every motive. They have dwelt by turns on the bitterness of servitude and the sweetness of liberty. But never did patriot or orator address his fellow-men on a greater occasion than this—rarely, if ever, on one so great. Never did orator or patriot combat so powerful an antagonist, or denounce so foul a slavery, or smite hypocrisy and falsehood with blows so terrible. And if orator never displayed more eloquence, orator never showed greater courage. This appeal was made in the face of a thousand perils. On these Luther did not bestow a single thought. He saw only his countrymen, and all the nations of Christendom, sunk in a most humiliating and ruinous thralldom, and with fearless intrepidity and Herculean force he hurled bolt on bolt, quick, rapid, and fiery, against that tyranny which was devouring the earth. The man, the cause, the moment, the audience, all were sublime.

And never was appeal more successful. Like a peal of thunder it rang from side to side of Germany. It sounded the knell of Roman domination in that land. The movement was no longer confined to Wittenberg; it was henceforward truly national. It was no longer conducted exclusively by theologians. Princes, nobles, burghers joined in it. It was seen to be no battle of creed merely; it was a struggle for liberty, religious and civil; for rights, spiritual and temporal; for the generation then living, for all the generations that were to live in the future; a struggle, in fine, for the manhood of the human race.

Luther's thoughts turned naturally to the new emperor. What part will this young potentate play in the movement? Presuming that it would be the just and magnanimous one that became so great a prince, Luther carried his appeal to the foot of the throne of Charles V. "The cause," he said, "was worthy to come before the throne of heaven, much more before an earthly potentate." Luther knew that his cause would triumph, whichever side Charles might espouse. But though neither Charles nor all the great ones of earth could stop it, or rob it of its triumph, they might delay it; they might cause the Reformation's path to be amid scaffolds and bloody fields, over armies vanquished and thrones cast down. Luther would much rather that its progress should be peaceful and its arrival at the goal speedy. Therefore he came before the throne of Charles as a suppliant; trembling, not for his cause, but for those who he foresaw would but destroy themselves by opposing it. What audience did the monk receive? The emperor never deigned the doctor of Wittenberg a reply.

CHAPTER II.

POPE LEO'S BULL.

Eck at Rome—His Activity against Luther—Procures his Condemnation—The Bull—Authorship of the Bull—Its Terms—Its Two Bearers—The Bull crosses the Alps—Luther's "Babylonish Captivity"—The Sacrament—His Extraordinary Letter to Pope Leo—Bull arrives in Wittenberg—Luther enters a Notarial Protest against it—He Burns it—Astonishment and Rage of Rome—Luther's Address to the Students.

WE have almost lost sight of Dr. Eck. We saw him, after his disputation with Luther at Leipsic, set off for Rome. What was the object of his journey? He crossed the Alps to solicit the Pope's help against the man whom he boasted having vanquished. He was preceded by Cardinal Cajetan, another "conqueror" after the fashion of Eck, and who too was so little satisfied with the victory which he so loudly vaunted that, like Eck, he had gone to Rome to seek help and find revenge.

In the metropolis of the Papacy these men encountered greater difficulties than they had reckoned on. The Roman Curia was apathetic. Its members had not yet realised the danger in its full extent. They scouted the idea that Wittenberg would conquer Rome, and that an insignificant monk could shake the Pontiffs throne. History exhibited no example of any such astounding phenomenon. Great tempests had arisen in former ages. Rebel kings, proud heresiarchs, and barbarous or heretical nations had dashed themselves against the Papal chair, but their violence had no more availed to overturn it than ocean's foam to overthrow the rock.

The affair, however, was not without its risks, to which all were not blind. It was easy for the Church to launch her ban, but the civil power must execute it. What if it should refuse? Besides there were, even in Rome itself, a few moderate men who, having a near view of the disorders of the Papal court, were not in their secret heart ill-pleased to hear Luther speak as he did. In the midst of so many adulators, might not one honest censor be tolerated? There were also men of diplomacy who said, Surely, amid the innumerable dignities and honours in the gift of the Church, something may be found to satisfy this clamorous monk. Send him a pall: give him a red hat. The members of the Curia were divided. The jurists were for citing Luther again before pronouncing sentence upon him: the theologians would brook no longer delay,¹ and pleaded for instant anathema.

The indefatigable Eck left no stone unturned to procure the condemnation of his opponent. He laboured to gain over every one he came in contact with. His eloquence raised to a white heat the zeal of the monks. He spent

¹ Polano, i., p. 9.

hours of deliberation in the Vatican. He melted even the coldness of Leo. He dwelt on the character of Luther—so obstinate and so incorrigible that all attempts at conciliation were but a waste of time. He dwelt on the urgency of the matter; while they sat in debate in the Vatican, the movement was growing by days, by moments, in Germany. To second Eck's arguments, Cajetan, so ill as to be unable to walk, was borne every day in a litter into the council-chamber.¹ The doctor of Ingolstadt found another, and, it is said, even a more potent ally. This was no other than the banker Fugger of Augsburg. He was treasurer of the indulgences, and would have made a good thing of it if Luther had not spoilt his speculation. This awoke in him a most vehement desire to crush a heresy so hurtful to the Church's interests—and his own.

Meanwhile rumours reached Luther of what was preparing for him in the halls of the Vatican, These rumours caused him no alarm; his heart was fixed; he saw a Greater than Leo. A very different scene from Rome did Wittenberg at that moment present. In the former city all was anxiety and turmoil, in the latter all was peaceful and fruitful labour. Visitors from all countries were daily arriving to see and converse with the Reformer. The halls of the university were crowded with youth—the hope of the Reformation. The fame of Melancthon was extending; he had just given his hand to Catherine Krapp, and so formed the first link between the Reformation and domestic life, infusing thereby a new sweetness into both. It was at this hour, too, that a young Swiss priest was not ashamed to own his adherence to that Gospel which Luther preached. He waited upon the *interim* Papal nuncio in Helvetia, entreating him to use his influence at head-quarters to prevent the excommunication of the doctor of Wittenberg. The name of this priest was Ulrich Zwingli. This was the first break of day visible on the Swiss mountains.

Meanwhile Eck had triumphed at Rome. On the 15th of June, 1520, the Sacred College brought their lengthened deliberations to a close by agreeing to fulminate the bull of excommunication against Luther. The elegancies or barbarisms of its style are to be shared amongst its joint concoctors, Cardinals Pucci, Ancona, and Cajetan.²

“Now,” thought the Vulcans of the Vatican, when they had forged this bolt, “now we have finished the business. There is an end of Luther and the Wittenberg heresy.” To know how haughty at this moment was Rome's spirit, we must turn to the bull itself.

“Arise, O Lord! —so ran this famous document— “arise and be Judge in Thy own cause. Remember the insults daily offered to Thee by infatuated men. Arise, O Peter! remember thy holy Roman Church, the mother of all Churches, and mistress of the faith. Arise, O Paul! for here is a new Porphyry,

¹ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 20.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 20. Sarpi, livr. i., p. 27.

who is attacking thy doctrines, and the holy Popes our predecessors! Arise, in fine, assembly of all the saints, holy Church of God, and intercede with the Almighty!”¹

The bull then goes on to condemn as scandalous, heretical, and damnable, forty-one propositions extracted from the writings of Luther. The obnoxious propositions are simple statements of Gospel truth. One of the doctrines singled out for special anathema was that which took from Rome the right of persecution, by declaring that “to burn heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Ghost.”² After the maledictory clauses of the bull, the document went on to extol the marvellous forbearance of the Holy See, as shown in its many efforts to reclaim its erring son. To heresy Luther had added contumacy. He had had the hardihood to appeal to a General Council in the face of the decretals of Pius II. and Julius II.; and he had filled up the measure of his sins by slandering the immaculate Papacy. The Papacy, nevertheless, yearned over its lost son, and “imitating the omnipotent God, who desireth not the death of a sinner,” earnestly exhorted the prodigal to return to the bosom of his mother, to bring back with him all he had led astray, and make proof of the sincerity of his penitence by reading his recantation, and committing all his books to the flames, within the space of sixty days. Failing to obey this summons, Luther and his adherents were pronounced incorrigible and accursed heretics, whom all princes and magistrates were enjoined to apprehend and send to Rome, or banish from the country in which they happened to be found. The towns where they continued to reside were laid under interdict, and every one who opposed the publication and execution of the bull was excommunicated in “the name of the Almighty God, and of the holy apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul.”³

These were haughty words; and at what a moment were they spoken! The finger of a man’s hand was even then about to appear, and to write on the wall that Rome had fulfilled her glory, had reached her zenith, and would henceforward hasten to her setting. But she knew not this. She saw only the track of light she had left behind her in her onward path athwart the ages. A thick veil hid the future with all its humiliations and defeats from her eyes.

The Pope advanced with excommunications in one hand and flatteries in the other. Immediately on the back of this terrible fulmination came a letter to the Elector Frederick from Leo X. The Pope in this communication dilated on the errors of that “son of iniquity,” Martin Luther; he was sure that Frederick cherished an abhorrence of these errors, and he proceeded to pass a glowing eulogium on the piety and orthodoxy of the elector, who he knew

¹ Sleidan, bk. ii., p. 35.

² Art. 33 of the bull condemns this proposition:—“Hæreticos comburi est contra voluntatem Spiritus.” (*Bullarium Romanum*, tom. i., p. 610; Luxemburg, 1742.)

³ Sarpi, *Hist. Cone. Trent*, livr. i., p. 28; Basle, 1738. Sleidan, bk. i., p. 35.

would not permit the blackness of heresy to sully the brightness of his own and his ancestors' fame.¹ There was a day when these compliments would have been grateful to Frederick, but he had since drunk at the well of Wittenberg, and lost his relish for the Roman cistern. The object of the letter was transparent, and the effect it produced was just the opposite of that which the Pope intended. From that day Frederick of Saxony resolved with himself that he would protect the Reformer.

Every step that Rome took in the matter was marked by infatuation. She had launched her bull, and must needs see to its being published in all the countries of Christendom. In order to this the bull was put into the hands of two nuncios, than whom it would hardly have been possible to find two men better fitted to render an odious mission yet more odious. These were Eck and Aleander.

Eck, the conqueror at Leipsic, who had left amid the laughter of the Germans, now re-crosses the Alps. He bears in his hand the bull that is to complete the ruin of his antagonist. "It is Eck's bull," said the Germans, "not the Pope's." It is the treacherous dagger of a mortal enemy, not the axe of a Roman lictor.² Onward, however, came the nuncio, proud of the bull, which he had so large a share in fabricating—the very Atlas, in his own eyes, who bore up the sinking Roman world. As he passed through the German towns, he posted up the important document, amid the coldness of the bishops, the contempt of the burghers, and the hootings of the youth of the universities. His progress was more like that of a fugitive than a conqueror. He had to hide at times from the popular fury in the nearest convent, and he closed his career by going into permanent seclusion at Coburg.

The other functionary was Aleander. To him was committed the task of bearing a copy of the bull to the Archbishop of Mainz, and of publishing it in the Rhenish towns. Aleander had been secretary to Pope Alexander VI., the infamous Borgia; and no worthier bearer could have been found of such a missive, and no happier choice could have been made of a colleague to Eck. "A worthy pair of ambassadors," said some; "both are admirably suited for this work, and perfectly matched in effrontery, impudence, and debauchery."³

The bull is slowly travelling towards Luther, and a glance at two publications which at this time (6th of October, 1520) issued from his pen, enables us to judge how far he is likely to meet it with a retractation. The Pope had exhorted him to burn all his writings: here are two additional ones which will have to be added to the heap before he applies the torch. The first is *The Babylonish Captivity of the Church*, "I denied," said Luther, owning his

¹ Sleidan, bk. i., p. 32.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 20, p. 81.

³ D'Aubigné, vol. ii., p. 135

obligations to his adversaries, “that the Papacy was of Divine origin, but I granted that it was of human right. How, after reading all the subtleties on which these gentry have set up their idol, I know that the Papacy is none other than the kingdom of Babylon, and the violence of Nimrod the mighty hunter.¹ I therefore beseech all my friends and all the booksellers to burn the books that I have written on this subject, and to substitute this one proposition in their place: *The Papacy is a general chase led by the Roman bishop to catch and destroy souls.*” These are not the words of a man who is about to present himself in the garb of a penitent at the threshold of the Roman See.

Luther next passed in review the Sacramental theory of the Church of Rome. The priest and the Sacrament—these are the twin pillars of the Papal edifice, the two saviours of the world. Luther, in his *Babylonish Captivity*, laid his hands upon both pillars, and bore them to the ground. Grace and salvation, he affirmed, are neither in the power of the priest nor in the efficacy of the Sacrament, but in the faith of the recipient. Faith lays hold on that which the Sacrament represents, signifies, and seals—even the promise of God; and the soul resting on that promise has grace and salvation. The Sacrament, on the side of God, represents the offered blessing; on the side of man, it is a help to faith which lays hold of that blessing. “Without faith in God’s promise,” said Luther, “the Sacrament is dead; it is a casket without a jewel, a scabbard without a sword.” Thus did he explode the *opus operatum*, that great mystic charm which Rome had substituted for faith, and the blessed Spirit who works in the soul by means of it. At the very moment when Rome was advancing to crush him with the bolt she had just forged, did Luther pluck from her hand that weapon of imaginary omnipotence which had enabled her to vanquish men.

Nay, more: turning to Leo himself, Luther did not hesitate to address him at this crisis in words of honest warning, and of singular courage. We refer, of course, to his well-known letter to the Pope. Some of the passages of that letter read like a piece of sarcasm, or a bitter satire; and yet it was written in no vein of this sort. The spirit it breathes is that of intense moral earnestness, which permitted the writer to think but of one thing, even the saving of those about to sink in a great destruction. Not thus did Luther write when he wished to pierce an opponent with the shafts of his wit, or to overwhelm him with the bolts of his indignation. The words he addressed to Leo were not those of insolence or of hatred, though some have taken them for such, but of affection too deep to remain silent, and too honest and fearless to flatter. Luther could distinguish between Leo and the ministers of his government.

We need give only a few extracts from this extraordinary letter:—

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 28, p. 112. Sleidan, bk. ii., p. 36.

“To the most Holy Father in God, Leo X., Pope at Rome, be all health in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

“From amid the fearful war which I have been waging for three years with disorderly men, I cannot help looking to you, O Leo, most Holy Father in God. And though the folly of your impious flatterers has compelled me to appeal from your judgment to a future Council, my heart is not turned away from your holiness; and I have not ceased to pray God earnestly, and with profound sighs, to grant prosperity to yourself and your Pontificate.

“It is true I have attacked some anti-Christian doctrines, and have inflicted a deep wound on my adversaries because of their impiety. Of this I repent not, as I have here Christ for an example. Of what use is salt if it have lost its savour, or the edge of a sword if it will not cut? Cursed be he who doeth the work of the Lord negligently. Most excellent Leo, far from having conceived any bad thoughts with regard to you, my wish is that you may enjoy the most precious blessings throughout eternity. One thing only I have done; I have maintained the word of truth. I am ready to yield to all in everything; but as to this word I will not, I cannot abandon it. He who thinks differently on this subject is in error.

“It is true that I have attacked the court of Rome; but neither yourself nor any man living can deny that there is greater corruption in it than was in Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the impiety that prevails makes cure hopeless. Yes, I have been horrified in seeing how, under your name, the poor followers of Christ were deceived. . . .

“You know it. Rome has for many years been inundating the world with whatever could destroy both soul and body. The Church of Rome, formerly the first in holiness, has become a den of robbers, a place of prostitution, a kingdom of death and hell; so that Antichrist himself, were he to appear, would be unable to increase the amount of wickedness. All this is as clear as day.

“And yet, O Leo, you yourself are like a lamb in the midst of wolves—a Daniel in the lions’ den. But, single-handed, what can you oppose to these monsters? There may be three or four cardinals who to knowledge add virtue. But what are these against so many? You should perish by poison even before you could try any remedy. It is all over with the court of Rome. The wrath of God has overtaken and will consume it. It hates counsel—it fears reform—it will not moderate the fury of its ungodliness; and hence it may be justly said of it as of its mother: *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed—forsake her.*

“Rome is not worthy of you, and those who resemble you.” This, however, was no great compliment to Leo, for the Reformer immediately adds, “the only chief whom she deserves to have is Satan himself, and hence it is that in this Babylon he is more king than you are. Would to God that, laying

aside this glory which your enemies so much extol, you would exchange it for a modest pastoral office, or live on your paternal inheritance. Rome's glory is of a kind fit only for Iscariots.

“Is it not true that under the vast expanse of heaven there is nothing more corrupt, more hateful than the Roman court? In vice and corruption it infinitely exceeds the Turks. Once the gate of heaven, it has become the mouth of hell—a wide mouth which the wrath of God keeps open, so that on seeing so many unhappy beings thrown headlong into it, I was obliged to lift my voice as in a tempest, in order that, at least, some might be saved from the terrible abyss.”

Luther next enters into some detail touching his communications with De Vio, Eck, and Miltitz, the agents who had come from the Roman court to make him cease his opposition to the Papal corruptions. And then he closes—

“I cannot retract my doctrine. I cannot permit rules of interpretation to be imposed upon the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God—the source whence all freedom springs—must be left free. Perhaps I am too bold in giving advice to so high a majesty, whose duty it is to instruct all men, but I see the dangers which surround you at Rome; I see you driven hither and thither; tossed, as it were, upon the billows of a raging sea. Charity urges me, and I cannot resist sending forth a warning cry.”

That he might not appear before the Pope empty-handed, he accompanied his letter with a little book on the “Liberty of the Christian.” The two poles of that liberty he describes as faith and love; faith which makes the Christian free, and love which makes him the servant of all. Having presented this little treatise to one who “needed only spiritual gifts,” he adds, “I commend myself to your Holiness. May the Lord keep you for ever and ever! Amen.”

So spoke Luther to Leo—the monk of Wittenberg to the Pontiff of Christendom. Never were spoken words of greater truth, and never were words of truth spoken in circumstances in which they were more needed, or at greater peril to the speaker. If we laud historians who have painted in truthful colours, at a safe distance, the character of tyrants, and branded their vices with honest indignation, we know not on what principle we can refuse to Luther our admiration and praise. Providence so ordered it that before the final rejection of a Church which had once been renowned throughout the earth for its faith, Truth, once more and for the last time, should lift up her voice at Rome.

The bull of excommunication arrived at Wittenberg in October, 1520. It had ere this been published far and wide, and almost the last man to see it was the man against whom it was fulminated. But here at last it is. Luther and Leo: Wittenberg and Rome now stand face to face—Rome has excommunicated Wittenberg, and Wittenberg will excommunicate Rome. Neither can retreat, and the war must be to the death.

The bull could not be published in Wittenberg, for the university possessed in this matter powers superior to those of the Bishop of Brandenburg. It did, indeed, receive publication at Wittenberg, and that of a very emphatic kind, as we shall afterwards see, but not such publication as Eck wished and anticipated. The arrival of the terrible missive caused no fear in the heart of Luther. On the contrary, it inspired him with fresh courage. The movement was expanding into greater breadth. He saw clearly the hand of God guiding it to its goal.

Meanwhile the Reformer took those formal measures that were necessary to indicate his position in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of the Church which had condemned him, and in the eyes of posterity. He renewed his appeal with all solemnity from Leo X. to a future Council.¹ On Saturday, the 17th of November, at ten o'clock in the morning, in the Augustine convent where he resided, in the presence of a notary public and five witnesses, among whom was Caspar Cruciger, he entered a solemn protest against the bull. The notary took down his words as he uttered them. His appeal was grounded on the four following points:—*First*, because he stood condemned without having been heard, and without any reason or proof assigned of his being in error. *Second*, because he was required to deny that Christian faith was essential to the efficacious reception of the Sacrament. *Third*, because the Pope exalts his own opinions above the Word of God; and *Fourth*, because, as a proud contemner of the Holy Church of God, and of a legitimate Council, the Pope had refused to convoke a Council of the Church, declaring that a Council is nothing of itself.

This was not Luther's affair only, but that of all Christendom, and accordingly he accompanied his protest against the bull by a solemn appeal to "the emperor, the electors, princes, barons, nobles, senators, and the entire Christian magistracy of Germany," calling upon them, for the sake of Catholic truth, the Church of Christ, and the liberty and right of a lawful Council, to stand by him and his appeal, to resist the impious tyranny of the Pope, and not to execute the bull till he had been legally summoned and heard before impartial judges, and convicted from Scripture. Should they act dutifully in this matter, "Christ, our Lord," he said, "would reward them with His everlasting grace. But if there be any who scorn my prayer, and continue to obey that impious man, the Pope, rather than God," he disclaimed all responsibility for the consequences, and left them to the supreme judgment of Almighty God.

In the track of the two nuncios blazed numerous piles—not of men, as yet, but of books, the writings of Luther. In Louvain, in Cologne, and many other towns in the hereditary estates of the emperor, a bonfire had been made

¹ *Luth. Opp.*, ii. 315; Jenæ.

of his works. To these many piles of Eck and Aleander, Luther replied by kindling one pile. He had written his bill of divorcement, now he will give a sign that he has separated irrevocably from Rome.

A placard on the walls of the University of Wittenberg announced that it was Luther's intention to burn the Pope's bull, and that this would take place at nine o'clock in the morning of December 10th, at the eastern gate of the town. On the day and hour appointed, Luther was seen to issue from the gate of the university, followed by a train of doctors and students to the number of 600, and a crowd of citizens who enthusiastically sympathised. The procession held on its way through the streets of Wittenberg, till, making its exit at the gate, it bore out of the city—for all unclean things were burned without the camp—the bull of the Pontiff. Arriving at the spot where this new and strange immolation was to take place, the members of procession found a scaffold already erected, and a pile of logs laid in order upon it. One of the more distinguished Masters of Arts took the torch and applied it to the pile. Soon the flames blazed up. At this moment, the Reformer, wearing the frock of his order, stepped out from the crowd and approached the fire, holding in his hand the several volumes which constitute the Canon Law, the Compend of Gratian, the Clementines, the Extravagants of Julius II., and other and later coinages of the Papal mint. He placed these awful volumes one after the other on the blazing pile.

It fared with them as if they had been common things. Their mysterious virtue did not profit in the fire. The flames, fastening on them with their fiery tongues, speedily turned these monuments of the toil, the genius, and the infallibility of the Popes to ashes. This hecatomb of Papal edicts was not yet complete. The bull of Leo X. still remained. Luther held it up in his hand. "Since thou hast vexed the Holy One of the Lord," said he, "may everlasting fire vex and consume thee."¹ With these words he flung it into the burning mass. Eck had pictured to himself the terrible bull, as he bore it in triumph across the Alps, exploding in ruin above the head of the monk. A more peaceful exit awaited it. For a few moments it blazed and crackled in the flames, and then it calmly mingled its dust with the ashes of its predecessors, that winter morning, on the smouldering pile outside the walls of Wittenberg.²

The blow had been struck. The procession reformed. Doctors, masters, students, and townsmen, again gathering round the Reformer, walked back, amid demonstrations of triumph, to the city.

Had Luther begun his movement with this act, he would but have wrecked it. Men would have seen only fury and rage, where now they saw courage and faith. The Reformer began by posting up his "Theses"—by

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 31, p. 121.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 22.

letting in the light upon the dark places of Rome. Now, however, the minds of men were to a large extent prepared. The burning of the bull was, therefore, the right act at the right time. It was felt to be the act, not of a solitary monk, but of the German people—the explosion of a nation’s indignation. The tidings of it travelled fast and far; and when the report reached Rome, the powers of the Vatican trembled upon their seats. It sounded like the Voice that is said to have echoed through the heathen world at our Saviour’s birth, and which awoke lamentations and wailings amid the shrines and groves of paganism: “Great Pan is dead!”

Luther knew that one blow would not win the battle; that the war was only commenced, and must be followed up by ceaseless, and if possible still mightier blows. Accordingly next day, as he was lecturing on the Psalms, he reverted to the episode of the bull, and broke out into a strain of impassioned eloquence and invective. The burning of the Papal statutes, said he, addressing the crowd of students that thronged the lecture-room, is but the sign, the thing signified was what they were to aim at, even the conflagration of the Papacy. His brow gathered and his voice grew more solemn as he continued: “Unless with all your hearts you abandon the Papacy, you cannot save your souls. The reign of the Pope is so opposed to the law of Christ and the life of the Christian, that it will be safer to roam the desert and never see the face of man, than abide under the rule of Antichrist. I warn every man to look to his soul’s welfare, lest by submitting to the Pope he deny Christ. The time is come when Christians must choose between death here and death hereafter. For my own part, I choose death here. I cannot lay such a burden upon my soul as to hold my peace in this matter: I must look to the great reckoning. I abominate the Babylonian pest. As long as I live I will proclaim the truth. If the wholesale destruction of souls throughout Christendom cannot be prevented, at least I shall labour to the utmost of my power to rescue my own countrymen from the bottomless pit of perdition.”¹

The burning of the Pope’s bull marks the closing of one stage and the opening of another in the great movement. It defines the fulness of Luther’s doctrinal views; and it was this matured and perfected judgment respecting the two systems and the two Churches, that enabled him to act with such decision—a decision which astounded Rome, and which brought numerous friends around himself. Rome never doubted that her bolt would crush the monk. She had stood in doubt as to whether she ought to launch it, but she never doubted that, once launched, it would accomplish the suppression of the Wittenberg revolt. For centuries no opponent had been able to stand before her. In no instance had her anathemas failed to execute the vengeance they were meant to inflict. Kings and nations, principalities and powers,

¹ *Luth. Opp.* (Lat.), ii. 123. D’Aubigné, ii. 152.

when struck by excommunication, straightway collapsed and perished as if a vial of fire had been emptied upon them. And who was this Wittenberg heretic, that he should defy a power before which the whole world crouched in terror? Rome had only to speak, to stretch out her arm, to let fall her bolt, and this adversary would be swept from her path; nor name nor memorial would remain to him on earth. Rome would make Wittenberg and its movement a reproach, a hissing, and a desolation. She did speak, she did stretch out her arm, she did launch her bolt. And what was the result? To Rome a terrible and appalling one. The monk, rising up in his strength, grasped the bolt hurled against him from the Seven Hills, and flung it back at her from whom it came.

CHAPTER III.

INTERVIEWS AND NEGOTIATIONS.

A Spring-time—The New Creation—Three Circles—The *Inner* Reformed Doctrine—The *Middle* Morality and Liberty—The *Outer*—The Arts and Sciences—Charles V. Crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle—Papal Envoy Aleander—Labours to have the Bull executed against Luther—His Efforts with Frederick and Charles—Prospect of a War with France—The Emperor courts the Pope—Luther to be the Bribe—The Pope Won—The Court goes to Worms—A Tournament Interrupted—The Emperor's Draft—Edict for Luther's Execution.

FROM the posting of the "Theses" on the doors of the Schloss Kirk of Wittenberg, on October 31st, 1517, to the burning of the Pope's bull on December 10th, 1520, at the eastern gate of the same town, are just three years and six weeks. In these three short years a great change has taken place in the opinions of men, and indeed in those of Luther himself. A blessed spring-time seems to have visited the world. How sweet the light! How gracious the drops that begin to fall out of heaven upon the weary earth! What a gladness fills the souls of men, and what a deep joy breaks out on every side, making itself audible in the rising songs of the nations, which, gathering around the standard of a recovered Gospel, now "come," in fulfilment of an ancient oracle, "unto Zion with singing!"

The movement we are contemplating has many circles or spheres. We trace it into the social life of man; there we see it bringing with it purity and virtue. We trace it into the world of intellect and letters; there it is the parent of vigour and grace—a literature whose bloom is fairer, and whose fruit is sweeter than the ancient one, immediately springs up. We trace it into the politics of nations; there it is the nurse of order, and the guardian of liberty. Under its aegis there grow up mighty thrones, and powerful and prosperous nations. Neither is the monarch a tyrant, nor are the subjects slaves; because the law is superior to both, and forbids power to grow into oppression, or liberty to degenerate into licentiousness. Over the whole of life does the movement diffuse itself. It has no limits but those of society—of the world.

But while its circumference was thus vast, we must never forget that its centre was religion or dogma—great everlasting truths, acting on the soul of man, and effecting its renewal, and so restoring both the individual and society to right relations with God, and bringing both into harmony with the holy, beneficent, and omnipotent government of the Eternal. This was the pivot on which the whole movement rested, the point around which it revolved.

At that centre were lodged the vital forces—the truths. These ancient, simple, indestructible, changeless powers came originally from Heaven. They constitute the life of humanity, and while they remain at its heart it

cannot die, nor can it lose its capacity of reinvigoration and progress. These life-containing and life-giving principles had, for a thousand years past, been as it were in a sepulchre, imprisoned in the depths of the earth. But now, in this gracious spring-time, their bands were loosed, and they had come forth to diffuse themselves over the whole field of human life, and to manifest their presence and action in a thousand varied and beautiful forms.

Without this centre, which is theology, we never should have had the outer circles of this movement, which are science, literature, art, commerce, law, liberty. The progress of a being morally constituted, as society is, must necessarily rest on a moral basis. The spiritual forces, which Luther was honoured to be the instrument of once more setting in motion, alone could originate this movement, and conduct it to such a goal as would benefit the world. The love of letters, and the love of liberty, were all too weak for this. They do not go deep enough, nor do they present a sufficiently high aim, nor supply motives strong enough to sustain the toil, the self-denial, the sacrifice by which alone the end aimed at in any true reformation can be attained. Of this the history of Protestantism furnishes us with two notable examples. Duke George of Saxony was a prince of truly national spirit, and favoured the movement at the first, because he saw that it embodied a resistance to foreign tyranny. But his hatred to the doctrine of grace made him, in no long time, one of its bitterest enemies. He complained that Luther was spoiling all by his “detestable doctrines,” not knowing that it was the doctrines that won hearts, and that it was the hearts that furnished swords to fight the battle of civil liberty.

The career of Erasmus was a nearly equally melancholy one. He had many feelings and sympathies in common with Luther. The Reformation owes him much for his edition of the Greek New Testament.¹ Yet neither his refined taste, nor his exquisite scholarship, nor his love of liberty, nor his abhorrence of monkish ignorance could retain him on the side of Protestantism; and the man who had dealt Rome some heavy blows, when in his prime, sought refuge when old within the pale of Romanism, leaving letters and liberty to care for themselves.

We turn for a little while from Luther to Charles V., from Wittenberg to Aix-la-Chapelle. The crown of Charlemagne was about to be placed on the head of the young emperor, in the presence of the electoral princes, the dukes, archbishops, barons, and counts of the Empire, and the delegates of the Papal See. Charles had come from Spain to receive the regalia of empire, taking England in his way, where he spent four days in attempts to secure the friendship of Henry VIII., and detach his powerful and ambitious minister,

¹ Published, privately in 1515; publicly in 1516. He thus, as Gerdesius says, exhibited the *FOUNDATION* and *rule* of all reformation. (*Hist. Renovati Doctrinæque Reformatæ* tom. i., p. 147.)

Cardinal Wolsey, from the interests of the French king, by dangling before his eyes the brilliant prize of the Papal tiara. Charles was crowned on the 23rd of October, in presence of a more numerous and splendid assembly than had ever before gathered to witness the coronation of emperor.

Having fallen prostrate on the cathedral floor and said his prayers, Charles was led to the altar and sworn to keep the Catholic faith and defend the Church. He was next placed on a throne overlaid with gold. While mass was being sung he was anointed on the head, the breast, the armpits, and the palms of his hands. Then he was led to the vestry, and clothed as a deacon. Prayers having been said, a naked sword was put into his hand, and again he promised to defend the Church and the Empire. Sheathing the sword, he was attired in the imperial mantle, and received a ring, with the sceptre and the globe. Finally, three archbishops placed the crown upon his head; and the coronation was concluded with a proclamation by the Archbishop of Mainz, to the effect that the Pope confirmed what had been done, and that it was his will that Charles V. should reign as emperor.¹

Along with the assemblage at Aix-la-Chapelle came a visitor whose presence was neither expected nor desired—the plague; and the moment the coronation was over, Charles V. and his brilliant suite took their departure for Cologne. The emperor was now on his way to Worms, where he purposed holding his first Diet. The rules of the Golden Bull had specially reserved that honour for Nuremberg; but the plague was at present raging in that town also, and Worms was chosen in preference. In the journey thither the court halted at Cologne, and in this ancient city on the banks of the Rhine were commenced those machinations which culminated at the Diet of Worms.

The Papal See had delegated two special envoys to the imperial court to look after the affair of Luther, Marino Caraccioli, and Girolamo Aleander.² This matter now held the first place in the thoughts of the Pope and his counsellors. They even forgot the Turk for the time. All their efforts to silence the monk or to arrest the movement had hitherto been in vain, or rather had just the opposite effect. The alarm in the Vatican was great. The champions sent by Rome to engage Luther had one after another been discomfited. Tetzels, the great indulgence-monger, Luther had put utterly to rout. Cajetan, the most learned of their theologians, he had completely baffled. Eck, the ablest of their polemics, he had vanquished; the plausible Miltitz had spread his snares in vain, he had been outwitted and befooled; last of all, Leo himself had descended into the arena; but he had fared no better than the others; he had been even more ignominiously handled, for the audacious monk had burned his bull in the face of all Christendom. Where was all this to end? Already the

¹ Sleidan, bk. ii., p. 37.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 23.

See of Rome had sustained immense damage. Pardons were becoming un-saleable. Annats and reservations and first-fruits were, alas! withheld; holy shrines were forsaken; the authority of the keys and the ancient regalia of Peter was treated with contempt; the canon law, that mighty monument of Pontifical wisdom and justice, which so many minds had toiled to rear, was treated as a piece of lumber, and irreverently thrown upon the burning pile; worst of all, the Pontifical thunder had lost its terrors, and the bolt which had shaken monarchs on their thrones was daringly flung back at the thunderer himself. It was time to curb such audacity and punish such wickedness.

The two envoys at the court of the emperor left no stone unturned to bring the matter to an issue. Of the two functionaries the more zealous was Aleander, who has already come before us. An evil prestige attached to him for his connection with the Papal See during the most infamous of its Pontificates, that of Alexander VI.; but he possessed great abilities, he had scholarly tastes, indefatigable industry, and profound devotion to the See of Rome. She had at that hour few men in her service better able to conduct to a favourable issue this difficult and dangerous negotiation. Luther sums up graphically his qualities. "Hebrew was his mother-tongue, Greek he had studied from his boyhood, Latin he had long taught professionally. He was a Jew,¹ but whether he had ever been baptised he did not know. He was no Pharisee, however, for certainly he did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, seeing he lived as if all perished with the body. His greed was insatiable, his life abominable, his anger at times amounted to insanity. Why he seceded to the Christians he knew not, unless it were to glorify Moses by obscuring Christ."²

Aleander opened the campaign with a bonfire of Luther's writings at Cologne. "What matters it," said some persons to the Papal delegate, "to erase the writing on paper? it is the writing on men's hearts you ought to erase. Luther's opinions are written there." "True," replied Aleander, comprehending his age, "but we must teach by signs which all can read."³ Aleander, however, wished to bring something else to the burning pile—the author of the books even. But first he must get him into his power. The Elector of Saxony stood between him and the man whom he wished to destroy. He must detach Frederick from Luther's side. He must also gain over the young emperor Charles. The last ought to be no difficult matter. Born in the old faith, descended from an ancestry whose glories were entwined with Catholicism, tutored by Adrian of Utrecht, surely this young and ambitious monarch will not permit a contemptible monk to stand between him and the great projects he is revolving! Deprived of the protection of Frederick and Charles, Luther

¹ Pallavicino informs us that Aleander was born of a respectable family in Friuli.

² Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 34, p. 125.

³ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 23, pp. 91, 92.

will be in the nuncio's power, and then the stake will very soon stifle that voice which is rousing Germany and resounding through Europe! So reasoned Aleander; but he found the path beset with greater difficulties than he had calculated on meeting.

Neither zeal nor labour nor adroitness was lacking to the nuncio. He went first to the emperor. "We have burned Luther's books," he said¹—the emperor had permitted these piles to be kindled—"but the whole air is thick with heresy. We require, in order to its purification, an imperial edict against their author." "I must first ascertain," replied the emperor, "what our father the Elector of Saxony thinks of this matter."

It was clear that before making progress with the emperor the elector must be managed. Aleander begged an audience of Frederick. The elector received him in the presence of his counsellors, and the Bishop of Trent. The haughty envoy of the Papal court assumed a tone bordering on insolence in the elector's presence. He pushed aside Caraccioli, his fellow-envoy, who was trying to win Frederick by flatteries, and plunged at once into the business. This Luther, said Aleander, is rending the Christian State; he is bringing the Empire to ruin; the man who unites himself with him separates himself from Christ. Frederick alone, he affirmed, stood between the monk and the chastisement he deserved, and he concluded by demanding that the elector should himself punish Luther, or deliver him up to the chastiser of heretics, Rome.²

The elector met the bold assault of Aleander with the plea of justice. No one, he said, had yet refuted Luther; it would be a gross scandal to punish a man who had not been condemned; Luther must be summoned before a tribunal of pious, learned, and impartial judges.³

This pointed to the Diet about to meet at Worms, and to a public hearing of the cause of Protestantism before that august assembly. Than this proposal nothing could have been more alarming to Aleander. He knew the courage and eloquence of Luther. He dreaded the impression his appearance before the Diet would make upon the princes. He had no ambition to grapple with him in person, or to win any more victories of the sort that Eck so loudly boasted. He knew how popular his cause already was all over Germany, and how necessary it was to avoid everything that would give it additional prestige. In his journeys, wherever he was known as the opponent of Luther, it was with difficulty that he could find admittance at a respectable inn, while portraits of the redoubtable monk stared upon him from the walls of almost every bed-room in which he slept. He knew that the writings of Luther were in all dwellings from the baron's castle to the peasant's cottage. Besides,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.. Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 34, p. 124.

² Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 34, p. 125.

³ *Ibid.*

would it not be an open affront to his master the Pope, who had excommunicated Luther, to permit him to plead his cause before a lay assembly? Would it not appear as if the Pope's sentence might be reversed by military barons, and the chair of Peter made subordinate to the States-General of Germany? On all these grounds the Papal nuncio was resolved to oppose to the uttermost Luther's appearance before the Diet.

Aleander now turned from the Elector of Saxony to the emperor. "Our hope of conquering," he wrote to the Cardinal Julio de Medici, "is in the emperor only."¹ In the truth or falsehood of Luther's opinions the emperor took little interest. The cause with him resolved itself into one of policy. He asked simply which would further most his political projects, to protect Luther or to burn him? Charles appeared the most powerful man in Christendom, and yet there were two men with whom he could not afford to quarrel, the Elector of Saxony and the Pontiff. To the first he owed the imperial crown, for it was Frederick's influence in the electoral conclave that placed it on the head of Charles of Austria. This obligation might have been forgotten, for absolute monarchs have short memories, but Charles could not dispense with the advice and aid of Frederick in the government of the Empire at the head of which he had just been placed. For these reasons the emperor wished to stand well with the elector.

On the other hand, Charles could not afford to break with the Pope. He was on the brink of war with Francis I., the King of France. That chivalrous sovereign had commenced his reign by crossing the Alps and fighting the battle of Marignano (1515), which lasted three days—"the giant battle," as Marshal Trivulzi called it.² This victory gained Francis I. the fame of a warrior, and the more substantial acquisition of the Duchy of Milan. The Emperor Charles meditated despoiling the French king of this possession, and extending his own influence in Italy. The Italian Peninsula was the prize for which the sovereigns of that age contended, seeing its possession gave its owner the preponderance in Europe. This aforesaid frequent contest between the Kings of Spain and France was now on the point of being resumed. But Charles would speed all the better if Leo of Rome were on his side.

It occurred to Charles that the monk of Wittenberg was a most opportune card to be played in the game about to begin. If the Pope should engage to aid him in his war with the King of France, Charles would give Luther into his hands, that he might do with him as might seem good to him. But should the Pope refuse his aid, and join himself to Francis, the emperor would protect the monk, and make him an opposing power against Leo. So stood the matter. Meanwhile, negotiations were being carried on with the view of

¹ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 24, p. 93.

² Müller, *Univ. Hist.*, vol. ii., pp. 406, 420.

ascertaining on which side Leo, who dreaded both of these potentates, would elect to make his stand, and what in consequence would be the fate of the Reformer, imperial protection or imperial condemnation.

In this fashion did these great ones deal with the cause of the world's regeneration. The man who was master of so many kingdoms, in both the Old and the New Worlds, was willing, if he could improve his chances of adding the Dukedom of Milan to his already overgrown possessions, to fling into the flames the Reformer, and with him the movement out of which was coming the new times. The monk was in their hands; so they thought. How would it have astonished them to be told that they were in his hands, to be used by him as his cause might require; that their crowns, armies, and policies were shaped and moved, prospered or defeated, with sole reference to those great spiritual forces which Luther wielded! Wittenberg was small among the many proud capitals of the world, yet here, and not at Madrid or at Paris, was, at this hour, the centre of human affairs.

The imperial court moved forward to Worms. The two Papal representatives, Caraccioli and Aleander, followed in the emperor's train. Feats of chivalry, parties of pleasure, schemes of ambition and conquest, occupied the thoughts of others; the two nuncios were engrossed with but one object, the suppression of the religious movement; and to effect this all that was necessary, they persuaded themselves, was to bring Luther to the stake. Charles had summoned the Diet for the 6th of January, 1521. In his circular letters to the several princes, he set forth the causes for which it was convoked. One of these was the appointment of a council of regency for the government of the Empire during his necessary absences in his hereditary kingdom of Spain; but another, and still more prominent matter in the letters of convocation, was the concerting of proper measures for checking those new and dangerous opinions which so profoundly agitated Germany, and threatened to overthrow the religion of their ancestors.¹

Many interests, passions, and motives combined to bring together at Worms, on this occasion, a more numerous and brilliant assemblage than perhaps had ever been gathered together at any Diet since the days of Charlemagne. It was the emperor's first Diet. His youth, and the vast dominions over which his sceptre was swayed, threw a singular interest around him. The agitation in the minds of men, and the gravity of the affairs to be discussed, contributed further to draw unprecedented numbers to the Diet. Far and near, from the remotest parts, came the grandees of Germany. Every road leading to Worms displayed a succession of gay cavalcades. The electors, with their courts; the archbishops, with their chapters; margraves and barons, with their military retainers; the delegates of the various cities, in the badges of their

¹ Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. ii.

office; bands of seculars and regulars, in the habits of their order; the ambassadors of foreign States—all hastened to Worms, where a greater than Charles was to present himself before them, and a cause greater than that of the Empire was to unfold its claims in their hearing.

The Diet was opened on the 28th of January, 1521. It was presided over by Charles—a pale-faced, melancholy-looking prince of twenty, accomplished in feats of horsemanship, but of weak bodily constitution. Thucydides and Machiavelli were the authors he studied. Chièvres directed his councils; but he does not appear to have formed as yet any decided plan of policy. “Charles had chiefly acquired from history,” says Müller, “the art of dissimulating, which he confounded with the talent of governing.”¹ Amid the splendour that surrounded him, numberless affairs and perplexities perpetually distracted him; but the pivot on which all turned was the monk of Wittenberg and this religious movement. The Papal nuncios were night and day importuning him to execute the Papal bull against Luther. If he should comply with their solicitations and give the monk into their hands, he would alienate the Elector of Saxony, and kindle a conflagration in Germany, which all his power might not be able to extinguish. If, on the other hand, he should refuse Aleander and protect Luther, he would thereby grievously offend the Pope, and send him over to the side of the French king, who was every day threatening to break out into war against him in the Low Countries, or in Lombardy, or in both.

There were tournaments and pastimes on the surface, anxieties and perplexities underneath; there were feasting in the banquet-hall, intrigues in the cabinet. The vacillations of the imperial mind can be traced in the conflicting orders which the emperor was continually sending to the Elector Frederick. One day he would write to him to bring Luther with him to Worms, the next he would command him to leave him behind at Wittenberg. Meanwhile Frederick arrived at the Diet without Luther.

The opposition which Aleander encountered only roused him to yet greater energy—indeed, almost to fury. He saw with horror the Protestant movement advancing from one day to another, while Rome was losing ground. Grasping his pen, he wrote a strong remonstrance to the Cardinal de Medici, the Pope’s relative, to the effect that “Germany was separating itself from Rome;” and that, unless more money was sent to be scattered amongst the members of the Diet, he must abandon all hope of success in his negotiations.² Rome listened to the cry of her servant. She sent not only more ducats, but more anathemas. Her first bull against Luther had been conditional,

¹ Müller, *Univ. Hist.*, vol. iii., p. 3.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 25, pp. 95,96: “Il gran seguito di Martino; l’ alienazione del popolo d’ Alemagna dalla Corte di Roma . . . e il rischio di perdere la Germania per avarizia d’ una moneta.”

inasmuch as it called on him to retract, and threatened him with excommunication if, within sixty days, he failed to do so. Now, however, the excommunication was actually inflicted by a new bull, fulminated at this time (6th January, 1521), and ordered to be published with terrible solemnities in all the churches of Germany.¹ This bull placed all Luther's adherents under the same curse as himself; and thus was completed the separation between Protestantism and Rome. The excision, pronounced and sealed by solemn anathema, was the act of Rome herself.

This new step simplified matters to both Aleander and Luther, but it only the more embroiled them to the emperor and his councillors. The politicians saw their path less clearly than before. It appeared to them the wiser course to stifle the movement, but the new ban seemed to compel them to fan it. This would be to lose the Elector even before they had gained the Pope; for the negotiations with the court of the Vatican had reached as yet no definite conclusion. They must act warily, and shun extremes.

A new device was hit upon, which was sure to succeed, the diplomatists thought, in entrapping the theologians of Wittenberg. There was at the court of the emperor a Spanish Franciscan, John Glapio by name, who held the office of confessor to Charles. He was supple, plausible, and able. This man undertook to arrange the matter² which had baffled so many wise heads; and with this view he craved an interview with Gregory Bruck, or Pontanus, the councillor of the Elector of Saxony. Pontanus was a man of sterling integrity, competently versed in theological questions, and sagacious enough to see through the most cunning diplomatist in all the court of the emperor. Glapio was a member of the reform party within the Roman pale, a circumstance which favoured the guise he now assumed. At his interview with the councillor of Frederick, Glapio professed a very warm regard for Luther; he had read his writings with admiration, and he agreed with him in the main. "Jesus Christ,"³ he said, heaving a deep sigh, "was his witness that he desired the reformation of the Church as ardently as Luther, or any one." He had often protested his zeal on this head to the emperor, and Charles sympathised largely with his views, as the world would yet come to know.

From the general eulogium pronounced on the writings of Luther, Glapio excepted one work—the *Babylonish Captivity*. That work was not worthy of Luther, he maintained. He found in it neither his style nor his learning. Luther must disavow it. As for the rest of his works, he would propose that they should be submitted to a select body of intelligent and impartial men, that Luther should explain some things and apologise for others; and then the

¹ This bull is engrossed in *Bullarum*, Jan., 1521, under the title of *Decret. Romanum Pontificem*.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 24, p. 93

³ *Weimar State Papers: apud D' Aubigné*, vol. ii., p. 192.

Pope, in the plenitude of his power and benignity, would reinstate him. Thus the breach would be healed, and the affair happily ended.¹ Such was the little artifice with which the wise heads at the court of Charles hoped to accomplish so great things. They only showed how little able they were to gauge the man whom they wished to entrap, or to fathom the movement which they sought to arrest. Pontanus looked on while they were spreading the net, with a mild contempt; and Luther listened to the plot, when it was told him, with feelings of derision.

The negotiations between the emperor and the court of the Vatican, which meanwhile had been going on, were now brought to a conclusion. The Pope agreed to be the ally of Charles in his approaching war with the French king, and the emperor, on his part, undertook to please the Pope in the matter of the monk of Wittenberg. The two are to unite, but the link between them is a stake. The Empire and the Popedom are to meet and shake hands over the ashes of Luther. During the two centuries which included and followed the Pontificate of Gregory VII., the imperial diadem and the tiara had waged a terrible war with each other for the supremacy of Christendom. In that age the two shared the world between them—other competitor there was none. But now a new power had risen up, and the hatred and terror which both felt to that new power made these old enemies friends. The die is cast. The spiritual and the temporal arms have united to crush Protestantism.

The emperor prepared to fulfil his part of the arrangement. It was hard to see what should hinder him. He had an overwhelming force of kingdoms and armies at his back. The spiritual sword, moreover, was now with him. If with such a combination of power he could not sweep this troublesome monk from his path, it would be a thing so strange and unaccountable that history might be searched in vain for a parallel to it.

It was now the beginning of February. The day was to be devoted to a splendid tournament. The lists were already marked out, the emperor's tent was pitched; over it floated the imperial banner; the princes and knights were girding on their armour, and the fair spectators of the show were preparing the honours and prizes to reward the feats of gallantry which were to signalise the mimic war, when suddenly an imperial messenger appeared commanding the attendance of the princes in the royal palace. It was a real tragedy in which they were invited to take part. When they had assembled, the emperor produced and read the Papal brief which had lately arrived from Rome, enjoining him to append the imperial sanction to the excommunication against Luther, and to give immediate execution to the bull. A yet greater surprise awaited them. The emperor next drew forth and read to the

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 37, p. 143.

assembled princes the edict which he himself had drawn up in conformity with the Papal brief, commanding that it should be done as the Pope desired.

CHAPTER IV.

LUTHER SUMMONED TO THE DIET AT WORMS.

A Check—Aleander Pleads before the Diet—Protestantism more Frightful than Mahomedanism—Effect of Aleander’s Speech—Duke George—The Hundred and One Grievances—The Princes Demand that Luther be Heard—The Emperor resolves to Summon him to the Diet—A Safe-conduct—Maundy-Thursday at Rome—The Bull *In Cæna Domini*—Luther’s Name Inserted in it—Luther comes to the Fulness of Knowledge—Arrival of the Imperial Messenger at Wittenberg—The Summons.

YET the storm did not burst. We have seen produced the Pope’s bull of condemnation; we have heard read the emperor’s edict empowering the temporal arm to execute the spiritual sentence; we have only a few days to wait, so it seems, and we shall see the Reformer dragged to the stake and burned. But to accomplish this one essential thing was yet lacking. The constitution of the Empire required that Charles, before proceeding further, should add that “if the States knew any better course, he was ready to hear them.” The majority of the German magnates cared little for Luther, but they cared a good deal for their prescriptive rights; they hated the odious tyranny and grinding extortions of Rome, and they felt that to deliver up Luther was to take the most effectual means to rivet the yoke that galled their own necks. The princes craved time for deliberation. Aleander was furious; he saw the prey about to be plucked from his very teeth. But the emperor submitted with a good grace. “Convince this assembly,” said the politic monarch to the impatient nuncio. It was agreed that Aleander should be heard before the Diet on the 13th of February.

It was a proud day for the nuncio. The assembly was a great one: the cause was even greater. Aleander was to plead for Rome, the mother and mistress of all churches: he was to vindicate the pryncedom of Peter before the assembled puissances of Christendom. He had the gift of eloquence, and he rose to the greatness of the occasion. Providence ordered it that Rome should appear and plead by the ablest of her orators in the presence of the most august of tribunals, before she was condemned. The speech has been recorded by one of the most trustworthy and eloquent of the Roman historians, Pallavicino.¹

The nuncio was more effective in those parts of his speech in which he attacked Luther, than in those in which he defended the Papacy. His charges against the Reformer were sweeping and artful. He accused him of labouring to accomplish a universal ruin; of striking a blow at the foundations of religion by denying the doctrine of the Sacrament; of seeking to raze the foundations of the hierarchy by affirming that all Christians are priests; of seeking

¹ See Aleander’s speech in Pallavicino, bk. i., chap. 25, pp. 98–108.

to overturn civil order by maintaining that a Christian is not bound to obey the magistrate; of aiming to subvert the foundations of morality by his doctrine of the moral inability of the will; and of unsettling the world beyond the grave by denying purgatory. The portion of seeming truth contained in these accusations made them the more dangerous. "A unanimous decree," said the orator in closing his speech, "from this illustrious assembly will enlighten the simple, warn the imprudent, decide the waverers, and give strength to the weak. . . . But if the axe is not laid at the root of this poisonous tree, if the death-blow is not struck, then . . . I see it overshadowing the heritage of Jesus Christ with its branches, changing our Lord's vineyard into a gloomy forest, transforming the kingdom of God into a den of wild beasts, and reducing Germany into that state of frightful barbarism and desolation which has been brought upon Asia by the superstition of Mahomet."¹ "I should be willing," said he, with consummate art, "to deliver my body to the flames, if the monster that has engendered this growing heresy could be consumed at the same stake, and mingle his ashes with mine."²

The nuncio had spoken for three hours. The fire of his style, and the enthusiasm of his delivery, had roused the passions of the Diet; and had a vote been taken at that moment, the voices of all the members, one only excepted, would have been given for the condemnation of Luther.³ The Diet broke up, however, when the orator sat down, and thus the victory which seemed within the reach of Rome escaped her grasp.

When the princes next assembled, the fumes raised by the rhetoric of Aleander had evaporated, and the hard facts of Roman extortion alone remained deeply imprinted in the memories of the German barons. These no eloquence could efface. Duke George of Saxony was the first to present himself to the assembly. His words had the greater weight from his being known to be the enemy of Luther, and a hater of the evangelical doctrines, although a champion of the rights of his native land and a foe of ecclesiastical abuses. He ran his eye rapidly over the frightful traces which Roman usurpation and venality had left on Germany. Annats were converted into dues; ecclesiastical benefices were bought and sold; dispensations were procurable for money; stations were multiplied in order to fleece the poor; stalls for the sale of indulgences rose in every street; pardons were earned not by prayer or

¹ "Onde awenga della Germania per la licenziosa Eresia di Lutero cib ch' e avvenuto dell' Asia per la sensuale Superstizione di Macometto." (Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 25.)

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 25, p. 97. Seckendorf has said that Pallavicino invented this speech and put it into the mouth of Aleander. Some Protestant writers have followed Seckendorf. There is no evidence in support of this supposition. D'Aubigné believes in the substantial authenticity of the speech. Pallavicino tells us the sources from which he took the speech; *more* especially Aleander's own letters, still in the library of the Vatican.

³ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p. 108: "La maggior parte de raunati concorrevano nella sentenza d'estirpar l'Eresia Luterana."

works of charity, but by paying the market-price of sin; penances were so contrived as to lead to a repetition of the offence; fines were made exorbitant to increase the revenue arising from them; abbeys and monasteries were emptied by commendams, and their wealth transported across the Alps to enrich foreign bishops; civil causes were drawn before ecclesiastical tribunals: all which “grievous perdition of miserable souls “demanded a universal reform, which a General Council only could accomplish. Duke George in conclusion demanded that such should be convoked.

To direct past themselves the storm of indignation which the archbishops and abbots¹ saw to be rising in the Diet, they laid the chief blame of the undeniable abuses, of which the duke had presented so formidable a catalogue, at the door of the Vatican. So costly were the tastes and so luxurious the habits of the reigning Pope, they hinted, that he was induced to bestow Church livings not on pious and learned men, but on jesters, falconers, grooms, valets, and whosoever could minister to his personal pleasures or add to the gaiety of his court. The excuse was, in fact, an accusation.

A committee was appointed by the Diet to draw up a list of the oppressions under which the nation groaned.² This document, containing a hundred and one grievances, was presented to the emperor at a subsequent meeting of the Diet, together with a request that he would, in fulfilment of the terms of the capitulation which he had signed when he was crowned, take steps to effect a reformation of the specified abuses.

The Diet did not stop here. The princes demanded that Luther should be summoned before it. It were unjust, they said, to condemn him without knowing whether he were the author of the incriminated books, and without hearing what he had to say in defence of his opinions.³ The emperor was compelled to give way, though he covered his retreat under show of doubting whether the books really were Luther’s. He wished, he said, to have certainty on that point. Alexander was horror-struck at the emperor’s irresolution. He saw the foundations of the Papacy shaken, the tiara trembling on his master’s brow, and all the terrible evils he had predicted in his great oration, rushing like a devastating tempest upon Christendom. But he strove in vain against the emperor’s resolve, and the yet stronger force behind it, in which that

¹ The progress which the reforming spirit had made, even among the German ecclesiastics, may be judged of from the indifference of many who were deeply interested in the maintenance of the old system. “Even those,” complained Eck, “who hold from the Pope the best benefices and the richest canonries remained mute as fishes; many of them even extolled Luther as a man filled with the Spirit of God, and called the defenders of the Pope sophists and flatterers.” (D’Aubigné.)

² The important catalogue has been preserved in the archives of Weimar. (Seckendorf. p. 328; apud D’Aubigné, vol. ii., p. 203.)

³ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p. 108.

resolve had its birth—the feeling of the German people.¹ It was concluded in the Diet that Luther should be summoned. Aleander had one hope left, the only mitigating circumstance about this alarming affair, even that Luther would be denied a safe-conduct. But this proposal he was ultimately unable to carry,² and on the 6th of March, 1521, the summons to Luther to present himself within twenty-one days before the Diet at Worms was signed by the emperor. Enclosed in the citation was a safe-conduct, addressed “To the honourable, our well-beloved and pious Doctor Martin Luther, of the order of Augustines,”³ and commanding all princes, lords, magistrates, and others to respect this safe-conduct under pain of the displeasure of the Emperor and the Empire. Gaspard Sturm, the imperial herald, was commissioned to deliver these documents to Luther and accompany him to Worms.⁴

The fiat has gone forth. It expresses the will and purpose of a Higher than Charles. Luther is to bear testimony to the Gospel, not at the stake, but on the loftiest stage the world can furnish. The master of so many kingdoms and the lords of so many provinces must come to Worms, and there patiently wait and obediently listen while the miner’s son speaks to them.⁵ While the imperial herald is on his way to bring hither the man for whom they wait, let us turn to see what is at that moment taking place at the opposite poles of Christendom.

Far separated as are Rome and Wittenberg, there is yet a link binding together the two. An unseen Power regulates the march of events at both places, making them advance by equal steps. What wonderful harmony under antagonism! Let us turn first to Rome. It is Maundy-Thursday. On the balcony of the Metropolitan Cathedral, arrayed for one of the grand ceremonies of his Church, sits the Pope. Around him stand attendant priests, bearing lighted torches; and beneath him, crowding in silence the spacious area, their knees bent and their heads uncovered, are the assembled Romans. Leo is pronouncing, as the wont is before the festival of Easter, the terrible bull *In Cæna Domini*.

This is a very ancient bull. It has undergone, during successive Pontificates, various alterations and additions, with the view of rendering its scope

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 38., p. 150. Varillas says that Charles had a strong desire to see Luther.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p. 109.

³ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 38, p. 151;

⁴ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p. 109.

⁵ “It may perhaps appear strange,” says Mosheim, “and even inconsistent with the laws of the Church, that a cause of a religious nature should be examined and decided in the public Diet. But it must be considered that these Diets in which the archbishops, bishops, and even certain abbots had their places, as well as the princes of the Empire, were not only political assemblies, but also provincial councils for Germany, to whose jurisdiction, by the ancient canon law, such causes as that of Luther properly belonged.” (*Eccl. Hist.*, cent. 16, bk. iv., sec. 1, ch. 2.)

more comprehensive and its excommunications more frightful. It has been called “the pick of excommunications.” It was wont to be promulgated annually at Rome on the Thursday before Easter Sunday, hence its name the “Bull of the Lord’s Supper.” The bells were tolled, the cannon of St. Angelo were fired, and the crowd of priests that thronged the balcony around the Pope waved their tapers wildly, then suddenly extinguished them; in short, no solemnity was omitted that could add terror to the publication of the bull—a superfluous task surely, when we think that a more frightful peal of cursing never rang out from that balcony, from which so many terrible excommunications have been thundered. All ranks and conditions of men, all nationalities not obedient to the Papal See, are most comprehensively and energetically cursed in the bull *In Cæna Domini*. More especially are heretics of every name cursed. “We curse,” said the Pope, “all heretics, Cathari, Patarins, Poor Men of Lyons, Arnoldists, Speronists, Wickliffites, Hussites, Fratricelli;”—“because,” said Luther, speaking aside, “they desired to possess the Holy Scriptures, and required the Pope to be sober and preach the Word of God.” “This formulary,” says Sleidan, “of excommunication coming afterwards into Luther’s hands, he rendered it into High Dutch, besprinkling it with some very witty and satirical animadversions.”¹

This year a new name had been inserted in this curse, and a prominent place assigned it. It was the name of Martin Luther. Thus did Rome join him to all those witnesses for the truth who, in former ages, had fallen under her ban, and many of whom had perished in her fires. Casting him out of the Roman pale irrevocably, she united him with the Church spiritual and holy and catholic.

At the same moment that Rome fulfils and completes her course, Luther fulfils and completes his. He has now reached his furthest point of theological and ecclesiastical advancement. Step by step he has all these years been going forward, adding first one doctrine, then another, to his store of acquired knowledge; and at the same time, and by an equal process, has he been casting off, one after another, the errors of Romanism. The light around him has been waxing clearer and ever clearer, and now he has come to the meridian of his day. In his cell he was made to feel that he was utterly fallen, and wholly without power to save himself. This was his first lesson. The doctrine of a free justification—salvation by grace—was next revealed to him. As he stood encompassed by the darkness of despair, caused by the combined sense of his utter ruin and his utter inability, this doctrine beamed out upon him from the page of Scripture. The revelation of it was to him the very opening of the gates of Paradise. From these initial stages he soon came to a clear apprehension of the whole of what constituted the Reformed system—the

¹ Sleidan, bk. iii., p. 42.

nature and end of Christ's obedience and death; the office and work of the Holy Spirit; the sanctification of men by the instrumentality of the Word; the relation of good works to faith; the nature and uses of a Sacrament; the constituent principle of the Church, even belief in the truth and union to Christ. This last, taken in connection with another great principle to the knowledge of which he had previously attained, the sole infallible authority of Scripture, emancipated him completely from a thralldom which had weighed heavily upon him in the earlier stages of his career, the awe, even, in which he stood of Rome as the Church of Christ, and the obedience which he believed he owed the Pontiff as head of the Church. The last link of this bondage was now gone. He stood erect in the presence of a power before which the whole of Christendom wellnigh still bowed down. The study of Paul's Epistles and of the Apocalypse, and the comparison of both with the history of the past, brought Luther about this time to the full and matured conviction that the Church of Rome as it now existed was the predicted "Apostasy," and that the dominion of the Papacy was the reign of Antichrist. It was this that broke the spell of Rome, and took for him the sting out of her curse. This was a wonderful training, and not the least wonderful thing in it was the exact coincidence in point of time between the maturing of Luther's views and the great crisis in his career. The summons to the Diet at Worms found him in the very prime and fulness of his knowledge.

On the 24th of March the imperial herald, Gaspard Sturm, arrived at Wittenberg, and put into the hands of Luther the summons of the emperor to appear before the Diet at Worms.

CHAPTER V.

LUTHER'S JOURNEY AND ARRIVAL AT WORMS.

Luther's Resolution—Alarm in Germany—The Reformer sets out—His Reception at Leipsic—Erfurt—Preaches—Eisenach—Sickness—Auguries of Evil—Luther's Courage—Will the Safe-conduct be respected?—Fears of his Friends—They advise him not to come on—His Reply—Enters Worms—Crowd in the Street—An Ill-omened Pageant—The Princes throng his Apartment—Night and Sleep.

“WILL he come?” asked the members of the Diet of one another, when they had determined to summon Luther before them. The only man who did not hesitate a moment on that point was Luther himself. In the citation now in his hand he beheld the summons of a Greater than the emperor, and straightway he made ready to obey it. He knew that in the assembly before which he was to appear there was but one man on whom he could fully rely, the Elector Frederick. His safe-conduct might be violated as that of John Huss had been. In going to Worms he might be going to the stake. His opponents, he knew, thirsted for his blood, still not for a moment did he permit fear to make him waver in his resolution to go to Worms. There he should be able to bear testimony to the truth, and as to all beyond, it gave him no concern. “Fear not,” he wrote to Spalatin, the elector's secretary, “that I shall retract a single syllable. With the help of Christ, I will never desert the Word on the battlefield.”¹ “I am called,” said he to his friends, when they expressed their fears; “it is ordered and decreed that I appear in that city. I will neither recant nor flee. I will go to Worms in spite of all the gates of hell, and the prince of the power of the air.”² The news that Luther had been summoned to the Diet spread rapidly through Germany, inspiring, wherever the tidings came, a mixed feeling of thankfulness and alarm. The Germans were glad to see the cause of their country and their Church assuming such proportions, and challenging examination and discussion before so august an assembly. At the same time they trembled when they thought what might be the fate of the man who was eminently their nation's representative, and by much the ablest champion of both its political and its religious rights. If Luther should be sacrificed nothing could compensate for his loss, and the movement which promised to bring them riddance of a foreign yoke, every year growing more intolerable, would be thrown back for an indefinite period. Many eyes and hearts, therefore, in all parts of Germany followed the monk as he went his doubtful way to Worms.

¹ *L. Epp.*, i. 574. *D'Aubigné* ii. 208.

² *Luth. Opp.*, i. 987.

On the 2nd of April the arrangements for his departure were completed. He did not set out alone. Three of his more intimate friends, members of the university, accompanied him. These were the courageous Amsdorf—Schurf, professor of jurisprudence, as timid as Amsdorf was bold, yet who shrank not from the perils of this journey— and Suaven, a young Danish nobleman, who claimed, as the representative of the students, the honour of attending his master.

Most tender was the parting between Luther and Melanchthon. In Luther the young scholar had found again his country, his friends, his all. Now he was about to lose him. Sad at heart, he yearned to go with him, even should he be going to martyrdom. He implored, but in vain; for if Luther should fall, who but Philip could fill his place and carry on his work? The citizens were moved as well as the professors and youth of the university. They thronged the street to witness the departure of their great townsman, and it was amidst their tears that Luther passed out at the gate, and took his way over the great plains that are spread out around Wittenberg.

The imperial herald, wearing his insignia and displaying the imperial eagle, to show under what guardianship the travellers journeyed, came first on horseback; after him rode his servant, and closing the little cavalcade was the humble wagon which contained Luther and his friends. This conveyance had been provided by the magistrates of Wittenberg at their own cost, and, provident of the traveller's comfort, it was furnished with an awning to shade him from the sun or cover him from the rain.¹

Everywhere, as they passed along, crowds awaited the arrival of the travellers. Villages poured out their inhabitants to see and greet the bold monk. At the gates of those cities where it was known that Luther would halt, processions, headed by the magistrates, waited to bid him welcome. There were exceptions, however, to the general cordiality. At Leipsic the Reformer was presented with simply the customary cup of wine, as much as to say, "Pass on."² But generally the population were touched with the heroism of the journey. In Luther they beheld a man who was offering himself on the altar of his country, and as they saw him pass they heaved a sigh as over one who should never return. His path was strewn with hints and warnings of coming fate, partly the fears of timid friends, and partly the menaces of enemies who strove by every means in their power to stop his journey, and prevent his appearance at the Diet.

¹ Maimbourg has obligingly provided our traveller with a magnificent chariot and a guard of a hundred horsemen. There is not a particle of proof to show that this imposing cavalcade ever existed save on the page of this narrator. The Canon of Altenburg, writing from Worms to John, brother of Frederick the Elector, April 16th, 1521, says: "Today Dr. Martin arrived here in a common Saxon wagon." (Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 39, p. 152.)

² Letter of Canon of Altenburg to John of Saxony.

His entrance into Erfurt, the city where he had come to the knowledge of the truth, and on the streets of which he had begged as a monk, was more like that of a warrior returning from a victorious campaign, than a humble doctor going to answer a charge of heresy. Hardly had he come in sight of its steeples, when a numerous cavalcade, composed of the members of the senate, the university, and two thousand burghers,¹ met him and escorted him into the city. Through streets thronged with spectators he was conducted to the old familiar building so imperishably associated with his history, the convent of the Augustines. On the Sunday after Easter he entered its great church, the door of which he had been wont, when a friar, to open, and the floor of which he had been wont to sweep out; and from its pulpit he preached to an overflowing crowd, from the words so suitable to the season, “Peace be unto you” (John xx. 19). Let us quote a passage of his sermon. Of the Diet—of the emperor—of himself, not a word: from beginning to end it is Christ and salvation that are held forth.

“Philosophers, doctors, and writers,” said the preacher, “have endeavoured to teach men the way to obtain everlasting life, and they have not succeeded. I will now tell it to you.

“There are two kinds of works—works not of ourselves, and these are good: our own works, they are of little worth. One man builds a church; another goes on a pilgrimage to St. Iago of Compostella, or St. Peter’s; a third fasts, takes the cowl, and goes bare-foot; another does something else. All these works are nothingness, and will come to naught, for our own works have no virtue in them. But I am now going to tell you what is the true work. God has raised one Man from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, that He might destroy death, expiate sin, and shut the gates of hell. This is the work of salvation.

“Christ has vanquished! This is the joyful news! and we are saved by His work, and not by our own. . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ said, ‘*Peace be unto you! behold my hands*’—that is to say, Behold, O man! it is I, I alone, Who have taken away thy sins, and ransomed thee; and now thou hast peace, saith the Lord.”²

Such was the Divine wisdom which Luther dispensed to the men of Erfurt. It was in their city that he had learned it; and well might he have added what the centurion said of his liberty: “With a great sum have I obtained this knowledge, which now I freely give to you.”

Traversing ground every foot-breadth of which was familiar as forming the scene of his childhood, he came soon after to Eisenach, the city of the good “Shunamite.” It must have called up many memories. Over it towered

¹ Letter of Warbeccius, Canon of Altenburg. (Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 39, p. 152—Additio.)

² *Luth. Opp.* (L) xii. 485. D’Aubigné, it 224–226

the Wartburg, where the Reformer was to open the second stage of his career, although this was hidden as yet. At every step his courage was put to the test. The nearer he drew to Worms the louder grew the threats of his enemies, the greater the fears of his friends. "They will burn you and reduce your body to ashes, as they did that of John Huss," said one to him. His reply was that of a hero, but it was clothed in the grand imagery of the poet. "Though they should kindle a fire," said he, "all the way from Worms to Wittenberg, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord, I would appear before them, I would enter the jaws of this Behemoth, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ between his teeth."

All the way from Eisenach to Frankfort-on-the Main, Luther suffered from sickness.¹ This however produced no faintness of spirit. If health should serve him, well; but if not, still his journey must be performed; he should be carried to Worms in his bed. As to what might await him at the end of his journey he bestowed not a thought. He knew that He who preserved alive the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace still lived. If it was His pleasure he would, despite the rage of His foes, return safe from Worms; but if a stake awaited him there, he rejoiced to think that the truth would not perish with his ashes. With God he left it whether the Gospel would be better served by his death or by his life, only he would rather that the young emperor should not begin his reign by shedding his blood; if he must die, let it be by the hands of the Romans.

The Roman party had hoped that the monk would not dare set foot within the gates of Worms.² They were told that he was on the road, but they did not despair by intrigues and menaces to make him turn back. They little knew the man they were trying to affright. To their dismay Luther kept his face steadfastly toward Worms, and was now almost under its walls. His approaching footsteps, coming nearer every hour, sounded, as it were, the knell of their power, and caused them greater terror than if a mighty army had been advancing against them.

Whispers began now to circulate in Worms that the Diet was not bound to respect the safe-conduct of a heretic. This talk coming to the ears of Luther's friends gave them great uneasiness. Was the perfidy of Constance to be repeated? Even the elector shared in the prevalent alarm; for Spalatin sent to Luther, who was now near the city, to say to him not to enter. Fixing his eyes on the messenger, Luther replied, "Go and tell your master that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the house-tops, still I

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 39, p. 152.

² Letter of Canon of Altenburg to John of Saxony. (Seckendorf.)

will enter it.”¹ This was the sorest assault of all, coming as it did from one of his most trusted friends; but he vanquished it as he had done all previous ones, and what remained of his journey was done in peace.

It was ten o’clock in the morning of the 16th of April, when the old towers of Worms rose between him and the horizon. Luther, says Audin, sitting up in his car, began to sing the hymn which he had composed at Oppenheim two days before, “A strong Tower is our God.”² The sentinel on the look-out in the cathedral tower, descrying the approach of the cavalcade, sounded his trumpet. The citizens were at dinner, for it was now mid-day, but when they heard the signal they rushed into the street, and in a few minutes princes, nobles, citizens, and men of all nations and conditions, mingling in one mighty throng, had assembled to see the monk enter. To the last neither friend nor foe had really believed that he would come. Now, however, Luther is in Worms.

The order of the cavalcade was the same as that in which it had quitted Wittenberg. The herald rode first, making way with some difficulty through the crowded street for the wagon in which, shaded by the awning, sat Luther in his monk’s gown,³ his face bearing traces of his recent illness, but there was a deep calm in the eyes whose glance Cardinal Cajetan liked so ill at Augsburg.

The evil auguries which had haunted the monk at every stage of his journey were renewed within the walls of Worms. Pressing through the crowd came a person in grotesque costume, displaying a great cross, such as is earned before the corpse when it is being borne to the grave, and chanting, in the same melancholy cadence in which mass is wont to be sung for the dead, this doleful *requiem*—

“Advenisti, O desiderabilis!
Quem expectabamus in tenebris!”⁴

Those who arranged this ill-omened pageant may have meant it for a little grim pleasantry, or they may have intended to throw ridicule upon the man who was advancing single-handed to do battle with both the temporal and

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i-, sec. 39, p. 152. “These words,” says Seckendorf, “were remembered by many. They were repeated by Luther himself, a little while before his death, at Eisleben.” He added, “I know not whether I would be as courageous now.”

² Audin, ii., p. 90. The common opinion is that this hymn, “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott,” was composed some years later. Audin’s supposition, however, has great inherent probability, and there are some facts which seem to support it. The combined rhythm and strength of this hymn cannot be transferred to a translation.

³ “I entered Worms in a covered wagon and my monk’s gown,” said Luther afterwards. (*Luth. Opp.*, xvii. 587.)

⁴ “Lo, thou art come, O thou greatly desired one, whom we have waited for in the darkness of the grave.” (M. Adam, *Vita Lutheri*, p. 118.)

spiritual powers; or it may have been a last attempt to quell a spirit which no former device or threat had been able to affright. But whatever the end in view, we recognise in this strange affair a most fitting, though doubtless a wholly undesigned, representation of the state and expectancies of Christendom at that hour. Had not the nations waited in darkness—darkness deep as that of those who dwell among the dead—for the coming of a deliverer? Had not such a deliverer been foretold? Had not Huss seen Luther's day a century off, and said to the mourners around his stake, as the patriarchs on their deathbed, "I die, but God will surely visit you"? The "hundred years" had revolved, and now the deliverer appears. He comes in humble guise—in cowl and frock of monk. He appears to many of his own age as a Greater appeared to His, "a root out of a dry ground." How can this poor despised monk save us? men asked. But he brought with him that which far transcends the sword of conqueror—the Word, the Light; and before that Light fled the darkness. Men opened their eyes, and saw that already their fetters, which were ignorance and superstition, were rent. They were free.

The surging crowd soon pushed aside the bearer of the black cross, and drowned his doleful strains in the welcome which they accorded the man who, contrary to the expectation of every one, had at last entered their gates. Luther's carriage could advance at only a slow pace, for the concourse on the streets was greater than when the emperor had entered a few days previously. The procession halted at the hotel of the Knights of Rhodes, which conveniently adjoined the hall of the Diet. "On descending from his car," says Pallavicino, "he said bravely, 'God will be for me.'"¹ This reveals to us the secret of Luther's courage.

After his recent illness, and the fatigue of his journey, now continued for fourteen days, the Reformer needed rest. The coming day, too, had to be thought of; eventful as the day now closing had been, the next would be more eventful still. But the anxiety to see the monk was too great to permit him so much as an hour's repose. Scarcely had he taken possession of his lodgings when princes, dukes, counts, bishops, men of all ranks, friends and foes, besieged his hotel and crowded into his apartments. When one relay of visitors had been dismissed, another waited for admission. In the midst of that brilliant throng Luther stood unmoved. He heard and replied to all their questions with calmness and wisdom. Even his enemies could not withhold their admiration at the dignity with which he bore himself. Where has the miner's son acquired those manners which princes might envy, that courage which heroes might strive in vain to emulate, and where has he learnt that wisdom which has seduced, say some—enlightened, say others—so many thousands

¹ "E nello smontar di carrozza disse forte: *Iddio sard per me.*" (Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p. 109.)

of his countrymen, and which none of the theologians of Rome have been able to withstand? To friend and foe alike he was a mystery. Some revered him, says Pallavicino, as a prodigy of knowledge, others looked upon him as a monster of wickedness; the one class held him to be almost divine, the other believed him to be possessed by a demon.¹

This crowd of visitors, so varied in rank and so different in sentiments, continued to press around Luther till far into the night. They were now gone, and the Reformer was left alone. He sought his couch, but could not sleep. The events of the day had left him excited and restless. He touched his lute; he sang a verse of a favourite hymn; he approached the window and opened the casement. Beneath him were the roofs of the now silent city; beyond its walls, dimly descried, was the outline of the great valley through which the Rhine pours its floods; above him was the awful, fathomless, and silent vault. He lifted his eyes to it, as was his wont when his thoughts troubled him.² There were the stars fulfilling their courses far above the tumults of earth, yet far beneath that throne on which sat a greater King than the monarch before whom he was to appear on the morrow. He felt, as he gazed, a sense of sublimity filling his soul and bringing with it a feeling of repose. Withdrawing his gaze, and closing the casement, he said, "I will lay me down and take quiet rest, for Thou makest me dwell in safety."

¹ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p, 109.

² Worsley, vol. i., p. 230.

CHAPTER VI.

LUTHER BEFORE THE DIET AT WORMS.

Luther's Supplications—Conducted to the Diet—The Crowd—Words of Encouragement—Splendour of the Diet—Significance of Luther's Appearance before it—Chancellor Eccius—Luther asked touching his Books—Owns their Authorship—Asked to Retract their Opinions—Craves Time to give an Answer—A Day's Delay granted—Charles's First Impressions of Luther—Morning of the 18th of May—Luther's Wrestlings—His Weakness—Strength not his own—Second Appearance before the Diet—His Speech—Repeats it in Latin—No Retraction—Astonishment of the Diet—The Two Great Powers.

NEXT morning—Wednesday, the 17th of April— at eight o'clock, the hereditary Marshal of the Empire, Ulrich von Pappenheim, cited Luther to appear, at four of the afternoon, before his Imperial Majesty and the States of the Empire. An important crisis, not only in the life of Luther, but also in the history of that Reformation which he had so recently inaugurated, was fast approaching, and the Reformer prepared himself to meet it with all the earnestness that marked his deeply religious nature. He remained all forenoon within doors, spending most of the time in prayer. His supplications and the groans that accompanied them were audible outside his chamber door. From kneeling before the throne of the Eternal God, with whom lay the issues of the coming strife, Luther rose up to stand before the throne of Charles.

At four the Marshal of the Empire, accompanied by a herald, returned, and Luther set out with them to the Diet. But it was no easy matter to find their way to the town-hall, where the princes were assembled. The crowd in the streets was greater than on the previous day. Every window had its group of faces; every house-top had its cluster of spectators, many of whom manifested considerable enthusiasm as they caught sight of the Reformer. The marshal with his charge had proceeded but a little way, when he found that he would never be able to force a passage through so dense a multitude. He entered a private dwelling, passed out at the back door, and conducting Luther through the gardens of the Knights of Rhodes, brought him to the town-hall; the people rushing down alleys, or climbing to the roofs, to catch a glimpse of the monk as he passed on to appear before Charles.

Arrived at the town-hall they found its entrance blocked up by a still denser crowd. The soldiers had to clear a way by main force. In the vestibule and ante-chambers of the hall every inch of space, every recess and window-sill was occupied by courtiers and their friends, to the number of not less than 5,000—Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and other nationalities.

As they were elbowing their way, and were now near the door at which they were to be ushered into the presence of the Diet, a hand was laid upon

Luther's shoulder. It was that of the veteran George Freundsberg, whose name was a synonym with his countrymen for gallantry. He had ere this been in many a hard fight, but never, he felt, had he been in so hard a one as that to which the man on whose shoulder his hand now rested was advancing. "My monk, my good monk," said the soldier, "you are now going to face greater peril than any of us have ever encountered on the bloodiest field; but if you are right, and feel sure of it, go on, and God will fight for you."¹ Hardly had these words been uttered, when the door opened, and Luther passed in and stood before the august assembly.

The first words which reached his ear after he had entered the Diet, whispered to him by some one as he passed through the throng of princes to take his place before the throne of Charles, were cheering: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak;" while other voices said, "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Thus were the hopes which he expressed when he alighted at his hotel door fulfilled. God was with him, for this was His voice.

The sudden transition from the uneasy crowd to the calm grandeur of the Diet had its effect upon him. For a moment he seemed intimidated and bewildered. He felt all eyes suddenly turned upon him; even the emperor scrutinised him keenly. But the agitation of the Reformer quickly passed, and his equanimity and composure returned. Luther advanced till he stood in front of the throne of Charles.

"Never," says D'Aubigné "had man appeared before so imposing an assembly. The Emperor Charles V., whose sovereignty extended over great part of the Old and New Worlds; his brother the Archduke Ferdinand; six electors of the Empire, most of whose descendants now wear the kingly crown; twenty-four dukes, the majority of whom were independent sovereigns over countries more or less extensive, and among whom were some whose names afterwards became formidable to the Reformation; the Duke of Alva and his two sons; eight margraves; thirty archbishops, bishops, and abbots; seven ambassadors, including those from the Kings of France and England; the deputies of ten free cities; a great number of princes, counts, and sovereign barons; the Papal nuncios—in all two hundred and four persons: such was the imposing court before which appeared Martin Luther.

"This appearance was of itself a signal victory over the Papacy. The Pope had condemned the man, and he was now standing before a tribunal which, by this very act, set itself above the Pope. The Pope had laid him under an interdict, and cut him off from all human society, and yet he was summoned in respectful language, and received before the most august assembly in the

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 42, p. 156.

world. The Pope had condemned him to perpetual silence, and he was now about to speak before thousands of attentive hearers drawn together from the furthest parts of Christendom. An immense revolution had thus been effected by Luther's instrumentality. Rome was already descending from her throne, and it was the voice of a monk that caused this humiliation."¹

Let us take a nearer view of the scene as it now presented itself to the eyes of Luther. Chief in this assemblage of the powers spiritual and temporal of Christendom, sat the emperor. He wore the Spanish dress, his only ornaments being the usual ostrich-plume, and a string of pearls circling his breast, from which depended the insignia of the Golden Fleece. A step lower than the imperial platform, on a chair of state, sat his brother, Archduke Ferdinand. On the right and left of the throne were the six electors of the Empire—the three ecclesiastical electors on the emperor's right, and the three secular electors on his left. At his feet sat the two Papal nuncios—on this side Caraccioli, and on that Aleander. On the floor in front of the imperial seat was the table at which were the clerks and Dr. Eccius, who interrogated Luther, and who is not to be confounded with the Dr. Eck with whom the Reformer held the disputation at Leipsic. From the table extending backwards to the wall were rows of benches, which were occupied by the members of the Diet, princes, counts, archbishops, and bishops, the deputies of the towns and the ambassadors of foreign States. Here and there at various points of the hall were stationed guards, with polished armour and glittering halberds.

The sun was near his setting. His level rays, pouring in at the windows and falling in rich mellow light on all within, gave additional splendour to the scene. It brought out in strong relief the national costumes, and variously coloured dresses and equipments, of the members of the Diet. The yellow silken robes of the emperor, the velvet and ermine of the electors, the red hat and scarlet gown of the cardinal, the violet robe of the bishop, the rich doublet of the knight, covered with the badges of his rank or valour, the more sombre attire of the city deputy, the burnished steel of the warrior—all showed to advantage in the chastened radiance which was now streaming in from the descending luminary. In the midst of that scene, which might have been termed gay but for its overwhelming solemnity, stood Luther in his monk's frock.

John Eck or Eccius, Chancellor of the Archbishop of Treves,² and spokesman of the Diet, rose in deep silence, and in a sonorous voice repeated, first in Latin and then in German, the following words: "Martin Luther, his sacred and invincible Majesty has cited you before his throne, with advice and counsel of the States of the Holy Roman Empire, to answer two

¹ D'Aubigné, vol. ii., p. 237.

² "A learned man," says Pallavicino, "a Catholic, and an intimate friend of Aleander's."

questions. First, do you acknowledge these books,” pointing with his finger to a pile of volumes on the table, “to have been written by you? Secondly, are you prepared to retract and disavow the opinions you have advanced in them?”¹

Luther was on the point of owning the authorship of the books, when his friend Schurf, the jurist, hastily interposed. “Let the titles of the books be read,” said he.

The Chancellor Eck advanced to the table, and read, one after another, the titles of the volumes— about twenty in all.²

This done, Luther now spoke. His bearing was respectful, and his voice low. Some members of the Diet thought that it trembled a little; and they fondly hoped that a retractation was about to follow.

The first charge he frankly acknowledged. “Most gracious Emperor, and most gracious Princes and Lords,” said he, “the books that have just been named are mine. As to the second, seeing it is a question which concerns the salvation of souls, and in which the Word of God—than which nothing is greater in heaven or in earth—is interested, I should act imprudently were I to reply without reflection. I entreat your imperial Majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, that I may reply without offending against the Word of God.”³

Nothing could have been more wise or more becoming in the circumstances. The request for delay, however, was differently interpreted by the Papal members of the Diet. He is breaking his fall, said they—he will retract. He has played the heretic at Wittenberg, he will act the part of the penitent at Worms. Had they seen deeper into Luther’s character, they would have come to just the opposite conclusion. This pause was the act of a man whose mind was thoroughly made up, who felt how unalterable and indomitable was his resolve, and who therefore was in no haste to proclaim it, but with admirable self-control could wait for the time, the form, the circumstances in which to make the avowal so that its full and concentrated strength might be felt, and it might appear to all to be irrevocable.

The Diet deliberated. A day’s delay was granted the monk. Tomorrow at this time must he appear again before the emperor and the assembled estates, and give his final answer. Luther bowed; and instantly the herald was by his side to conduct him to his hotel.

The emperor had not taken his eyes off Luther all the time he stood in his presence. His worn frame, his thin visage, which still bore traces of recent illness, and, as Pallavicino has the candour to acknowledge, “the majesty of his address, and the simplicity of his action and costume,” which contrasted

¹ *Luth. Opp.* (L) xvii. 588. D’Aubigné, vol. ii., p. 238.

² Pallavicino tells us that these had been collected by the industry of Aleander.

³ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 26, p. 110.

strongly with the theatrical airs and the declamatory address of the Italians and Spaniards, produced on the young emperor an unfavourable impression, and led to a depreciatory opinion of the Reformer. “Certainly,” said Charles, turning to one of his courtiers as the Diet was breaking up, “certainly that monk will never make a heretic of me.”¹

Scarcely had the dawn of the 18th of April (1521) broke, when the two parties were busy preparing for the parts they were respectively to act in the proceedings of a day destined to influence so powerfully the condition of after-ages. The Papal faction, with Aleander at its head, had met at an early hour to concert their measures.² Nor was this wakeful activity on one side only. Luther, too, “prevented the dawning, and cried.”

We shall greatly err if we suppose that it was an iron firmness of physical nerve, or great intrepidity of spirit, that bore Luther up and carried him through these awful scenes; and we shall not less err if we suppose that he passed through them without enduring great suffering of soul. The services he was destined to perform demanded a nature exquisitely strung, highly emotional, as well as powerfully reflective, with a full complement of the truest sympathies and tenderest sensibilities. But such a constitution renders its possessor, to a proportional extent, liable to the access of tormenting anxieties and gloomy forecastings. There were moments in which Luther gave way to these feelings. That they did not crush him, was owing to an influence higher far than his natural powers, which filled his soul and sustained him till the crisis had passed. The sweet, gracious, omnipotent Spirit of God descended upon him, and shed a divine serenity and strength into his mind; but so sweetly and gently did it infuse itself into, and work along with, his own natural faculties, that Luther was sensible of the indwelling influence only by his feeling that—to use Melancthon’s beautiful words—“he was more than himself.” He was also made sensible of this by the momentary withdrawal at times of this upholding power.³ Then he was again simply himself—weak as other men; and difficulties would of a sudden thicken around him, and dangers would all at once rise like so many giants in his path, and threaten him with destruction. So did it befall him on the morning of this eventful day. He felt as if he were forsaken. A horror of great darkness filled his soul; he had come to Worms to perish.

It was not the thought that he would be condemned and led to the stake that shook the Reformer on the morning of his second appearance before the Imperial Diet. It was something more terrible than to die—than to die a hundred times. The crisis had come, and he felt himself unable to meet it. The

¹ “Costui certamente non mi farebbe mai diventar Eretico.” (Pallavicino, lib. i., p. 110.)

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 27, p. 110.

³ Seckendorf (lib. i., p. 156) gives extracts from Luther’s letters to Spalatin, descriptive of his feelings at Worms, which prove this.

upholding power which had sustained him in his journey thither, and which had made the oft-repeated threat of foe, and the gloomy anticipation of friend, as ineffectual to move him as ocean's spray is to overturn the rock, had been withdrawn. What will he do? He sees a terrible catastrophe approaching; he will falter before the Diet; he will wreck his cause; he will blast the hopes of future ages; and the enemies of Christ and the Gospel will triumph.

Let us draw near to his closet-door, and hear his groans and strong cryings! They reveal to us the deep agony of his soul.

He has already been some considerable while engaged in prayer. His supplication is drawing to a close. "O God! my God, hearest thou me not? . . . My God, art thou dead? . . . No! thou canst not die. Thou hidest thyself only. Thou Hast chosen me for this work; I know it well! . . . Act then, O God! . . . Stand at my Side, for the sake of thy well-beloved Jesus Christ, who is my defence, my shield, and my strong tower."

Then comes an interval of silence. Again we hear his voice. His wrestlings once more become audible.

"Lord, where stayest thou? . . . O my God! where art thou? Come, come! I am ready . . . I am ready to lay down my life for thy truth . . . patient as a lamb. For it is the cause of justice—it is thine. . . . I will never separate myself from thee; neither now, nor through eternity. . . . And though the world should be filled with devils—though my body, which is still the work of thy hands, should be slain, should be racked on the wheel . . . cut in pieces . . . reduced to ashes . . . my soul is thine . . . Yes! thy Word is my assurance of it. My soul belongs to thee! It shall abide for ever with thee. . . . Amen! . . . O God! help me. . . . Amen!"¹

This is one of those solemn points in history where the seen touches the unseen; where earth and heaven meet; where man the actor below, and the Great Actor above, come both together, side by side upon the stage. Such points in the line of history are rare; they occur only at long intervals, but they do occur. The veil is rent; a hand is stretched out; a light breaks in as from a world separated indeed from that on which the terrestrial actors are placed, yet lying at no great distance from it, and the reader of history at such moment feels as if he were nearing the very precincts of the Eternal Throne, and walking on mysterious and holy ground.

Luther now rises from his knees, and in the calm reigning in his soul feels that already he has received an answer to his prayer. He sits down to arrange

¹"This prayer," says D'Aubigné, "is to be found in a collection of documents relative to Luther's appearance at Worms, under No. XVI., in the midst of safe-conducts and other papers of a similar nature. One of his friends had no doubt overheard it, and has transmitted it to posterity. In our opinion, it is one of the most precious documents in all history." (*Hist. Reform.*, vol. ii., p. 243.)

his thoughts, to draft, in outline, his defence, and to search in Holy Scripture for passages wherewith to fortify it. This task finished, he laid his left hand upon the sacred volume, which lay open on the table before him, and raising his right hand to heaven, he swore to remain ever faithful to the Gospel, and to confess it, even should he have to seal his confession with his blood. After this the Reformer experienced a still deeper peace.

At four of the clock, the grand marshal and the herald presented themselves. Through crowded streets, for the excitement grew greater with each passing hour, was the Reformer conducted to the town-hall. On arriving in the outer-court they found the Diet in deep deliberation. When Luther should be admitted no one could say. One hour passed, then another;¹ the Reformer; was still standing amid the hum and clamour of the multitude that filled the area. So long a delay, in such circumstances, was fitted to exhaust him physically, and to ruffle and distract him mentally. But his tranquillity did not for a moment forsake him. He was in a sanctuary apart, communing with One whom the thousands around him saw not. The night began to fall; torches were kindled in the hall of the assembly. Through the ancient windows came their glimmering rays, which, mingling with the lights of evening, curiously speckled the crowd that filled the court, and imparted an air of quaint grandeur to the scene.

At last the door opened, and Luther entered the hall. If this delay was arranged, as some have conjectured, by Aleander, in the hope that when Luther presented himself to the Diet he would be in a state of agitation, he must have been greatly disappointed. The Reformer entered in perfect composure, and stood before the emperor with an air of dignity. He looked around on that assembly of princes, and on the powerful monarch who presided over them, with a calm, steadfast eye.

The chancellor of the Bishop of Treves, Dr. Eck, rose and demanded his answer. What a moment! The fate of ages hangs upon it. The emperor leans forward, the princes sit motionless, the very guards are still: all eager to catch the first utterances of the monk.

He salutes the emperor, the princes, and the lords graciously. He begins his reply in a full, firm, but modest tone.² Of the volumes on the table, the authorship of which he had acknowledged the day before, there were, he said, three sorts. There was one class of his writings in which he had expounded, with all simplicity and plainness, the first principles of faith and morals. Even his enemies themselves allowed that he had done so in a manner conformable to Scripture, and that these books were such as all might read with profit. To

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 41, p. 154.

² *Ibid.*

deny these would be to deny truths which all admit—truths which are essential to the order and welfare of Christian society.

In the second class of his productions he had waged war against the Papacy. He had attacked those errors in doctrine, those scandals in life, and those tyrannies in ecclesiastical administration and government, by which the Papacy had entangled and fettered the conscience, had blinded the reason, and had depraved the morals of men, thus destroying body and soul. They themselves must acknowledge that it was so. On every side they heard the cry of oppression. Law and obedience had been weakened, public morals polluted, and Christendom desolated by a host of evils temporal and spiritual. Should he retract this class of his writings, what would happen? Why, that the oppressor would grow more insolent, that he would propagate with greater licence than ever those pernicious doctrines which had already destroyed so many souls, and multiply those grievous exactions, those most iniquitous extortions which were impoverishing the substance of Germany and transferring its wealth to other countries. Nay, not only would the yoke that now weighs upon the Christian people be rendered heavier by his retraction, it would become in a sense legitimate, for his retraction would, in the circumstances, be tantamount to giving this yoke the sanction of his Serene Majesty, and of all the States of the Empire. He should be the most unhappy of men. He should thus have sanctioned the very iniquities which he had denounced, and reared a bulwark around, those very oppressions which he had sought to overthrow. Instead of lightening the burden of his countrymen he should have made it ten-fold heavier, and himself would have become a cloak to cover every kind of tyranny.

There was a third class of his writings in which he said he had attacked those persons who put themselves forward as the defenders of the errors which had corrupted the faith, the scandals which had disgraced the priesthood, and the exactions which had robbed the people and ground them into the dust. These individuals he may not have treated with much ceremony; it may be that he had assailed them with an acrimony unbecoming his ecclesiastical profession; but although the manner may have been faulty, the thing itself was right, and he could not retract it, for that would be to justify his adversaries in all the impieties they had uttered, and all the iniquities they had done.

But he was a man, he continued, and not God, and he would defend himself not otherwise than Christ had done. If he had spoken evil or written evil, let them bear witness of that evil. He was but dust and ashes, liable every moment to err, and therefore it well became him to invite all men to examine what he had written, and to object if they had aught against it. Let him but be convinced from the Word of God and right reason that he was in error, and

he should not need to be asked twice to retract, he would be the first to throw his books into the flames.¹

In conclusion, he warned this assembly of monarchs of a judgment to come: a judgment not beyond the grave only, but on this side of it: a judgment in time. They were on their trial. They, their kingdoms, their crowns, their dynasties, stood at a great Bar. It was to them the day of visitation; it was now to be determined whether they were to be planted in the earth, whether their thrones should be stable, and their power should continue to flourish, or whether their houses should be razed, and their thrones swept away in a deluge of wrath, in a flood of present evils, and of eternal desolation.

He pointed to the great monarchies of former ages—to Egypt, to Babylon, to Nineveh, so mighty in their day, but which, by fighting against God, had brought upon themselves utter ruin; and he counselled them to take warning by these examples if they would escape the destruction that overtook them. “You should fear,” said he, “lest the reign of this young and noble prince, on whom (under God) we build such lofty expectations, not only should begin, but should continue and close, under the most gloomy auspices. I might speak of the Pharaohs, of the Kings of Babylon, and those of Israel, whose labours never more effectually contributed to their own destruction, than when they sought by counsels, to all appearance most wise, to strengthen their dominion. ‘God removeth mountains and they know it not, Who overturneth them in His anger.’”

Having thus spoken, Luther sat down and rested for a few minutes. He then rose once more, and repeated in Latin what he had said in German. The chancellor had made request that he should do so, chiefly for the emperor’s sake, who understood German but imperfectly. Luther spoke with equal facility and unabated animation in the second as in the first delivery of his address. He had occupied in all two hours.²

To their amazement, the princes found that a change had somehow come over the scene. Luther no longer stood at their bar—they had come suddenly to stand at his. The man who two hours before had seemed to them the accused, was now judge—who, unawed by the crowns they wore and the

¹ Sarpi, *Hist. Cone. Trent.*, tom. i., pp. 32, 33; Basle, 1738.

² Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 27, p. 111. Pallavicino, who has given Aleander’s speech before the Diet at such great length, and in such eloquent phrase, has devoted scarcely more than half a page to Luther’s. The effect of Aleander’s address evaporated in a week: Luther’s has been stirring men these three centuries, and its influence is still powerful for good. For the disparity of the two reports, however, we do not blame the historian of the Council of Trent. His narrative, he tells us, was compiled from original documents in the Vatican Library, and especially the letters of Aleander, and it was natural perhaps that Aleander should make but short work with the oration of his great opponent. We have Luther’s speech from German sources. It is given with considerable fulness by D’Aubigné, who adds, “This speech, as well as all the other expressions we quote, is taken literally from authentic documents. See *L. Opp.* (L) xvii. 776–780.” (D’Aubigné, vol. ii., p. 248, foot-note.)

armies they commanded, was entreating, admonishing, and reproving them with a severe but wholesome fidelity, and thundering forth their doom, should they prove disobedient, with a solemnity and authority before which they trembled. “Be wise, ye kings.” What a light has the subsequent history of Europe shed upon the words of Luther! and what a monument are the Popish kingdoms at this day of the truth of his admonition!

At the conclusion of Luther’s address Dr. Eck again rose, and with a fretted air and in peevish tones¹ said, addressing Luther: “You have not answered the question put to you. We did not call you here to bring into question the authority of Councils; there can be no dispute on that point here. We demand a direct and precise answer: will you, or will you not, retract?”

Unmoved, Luther replied: “Since your most Serene Majesty, and your High Mightiness, require from me a direct and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this. I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or to the Councils, because it is clear as day they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or on plain and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgment of error, *I can and will not retract*, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience.” And then, looking round on the assembly, he said—and the words are among the sublimest in history—“HERE I STAND. I CAN DO NO OTHER. MAY GOD HELP ME. AMEN.”²

These words still thrill us after three centuries. The impression which they made on the princes was overpowering, and a murmur of applause, as emphatic as the respect due to the imperial presence permitted, burst out in the Diet. Not from all, however; its Papal partisans were dismayed. The monk’s No had fallen upon them like a thunderbolt. From that hall that No would go forth, and travel throughout Christendom, and it would awaken as it rolled onward the aspirations of liberty, and summon the nations to rise and break the yoke of Rome. Rome had lost the battle. After this it mattered absolutely nothing what her champions in the Diet might do with Luther. They might burn him, but to what avail? The fatal word had already been spoken; the decisive blow had been struck. A stake could neither reverse the defeat they had sustained, nor conceal, although it might enhance, the glory of the victory that Luther had won. Grievous, inexpressibly grievous, was their mortification. Could nothing be done?

Luther was bidden withdraw for a little; and during his absence the Diet deliberated. It was easy to see that a crisis had arisen, but not so easy to counsel the steps by which it was to be met. They resolved to give him

¹ Sleidan, bk. iii., p. 44.

² “Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir. Amen.”

another opportunity of retracting. Accordingly he was called in, led again in front of the emperor's throne, and asked to pronounce over again—now the third time—his yes or no. With equal simplicity and dignity he replied that “he had no other answer to give than that which he had already given.” In the calmness of his voice, in the steadfastness of his eye, and in the leonine lines of his rugged German face, the assembly read the stern, indomitable resolve of his soul. Alas! for the partisans of the Papacy. The no could not be recalled. The die had been cast irrevocably.

There are two Powers in the world, and there are none other greater than they. The first is the Word of God without man, and the second is conscience within him. These two Powers, at Worms, came into conflict with the combined forces of the world. We have seen the issue. A solitary and undefended monk stood up as the representative of conscience enlightened and upheld by the Word of God. Opposed to him was a power which, wielding the armies of emperors, and the anathemas of Popes, yet met utter discomfiture. And so has it been all along in this great war. Victory has been the constant attendant of the one power, defeat the as constant attendant of the other. Triumph may not always have come in the guise of victory; it may have come by the cord, or by the axe, or by the fiery stake; it may have worn the semblance of defeat; but in every case it has been real triumph to the cause, while the worldly powers which have set themselves in opposition have been slowly consumed by their own efforts, and have been undermining their dominion by the very successes which they thought were ruining their rival.

CHAPTER VII.

LUTHER PUT UNDER THE BAN OF THE EMPIRE.

The Movement Widening—Rising of the Diet—The Draught of Beer—Frederick's Joy—Resolves to Protect Luther—Mortification of Papal Party—Charles's Proposal to Violate Safe-Conduct—Rejected with Indignation—Negotiations opened with Luther—He Quits Worms—The Emperor fulminates against him his Ban—The Reformer Seized by Masked Horsemen—Carried to the Wartburg.

OUR line of narration has, hitherto, been in the main continuous. We have followed the current of Protestant development, which has flowed so far within well-defined channels. But now we have reached the point where the movement notably widens. We see it branching out into other countries, and laying hold on the political combinations and movements of the age. We must therefore ascend, and take a more extensive survey of the stage of Christendom than we have as yet had occasion to do, noting the marvellously varied forms, and the infinitely diversified results, in which Protestantism displays itself. It is necessary to mark not only the new religious centres it is planting, but the currents of thought which it is creating; the new social life to which it is giving birth; the letters and arts of which it is becoming the nurse; the new communities and States with which it is covering Christendom, and the career of prosperity it is opening to the nations, making the aspect of Europe so unlike what it has been these thousand years past.

But first let us succinctly relate the events immediately following the Diet of Worms, and try to estimate the advance the Protestant movement had made, and the position in which we leave it at the moment when Luther entered into his "Patmos."

"The Diet will meet again tomorrow to hear the emperor's decision," said Chancellor Eck, dismissing the members for the night. The streets through which the princes sought their homes were darkened but not deserted. Late as the hour was, crowds still lingered in the precincts of the Diet, eager to know what the end would be. At last Luther was led out between two imperial officers. "See, see," said the bystanders, "there he is, in charge of the guard!" "Are they taking you to the prison?" they shouted out. "No," replied Luther, "they are conducting me to my hotel." The crowd instantly dispersed, and the city was left to the quiet of the night. Spalatin and many friends followed the Reformer to his lodgings. They were exchanging mutual congratulations, when a servant entered, bearing a silver jug filled with Eimbeck beer. Presenting it to the doctor, the bearer said, "My master invites you to refresh yourself with this draught." "Who is the prince," asked Luther, "who so graciously remembers me?" It was the aged Duke Eric of Brunswick, one of the Papal members of the Diet. Luther raised the vessel to his lips, took a

long draught, and then putting it down, said, "As this day Duke Eric has remembered me, so may the Lord Jesus Christ remember him in the hour of his last struggle." Not long after this, Duke Eric of Brunswick lay dying. Seeing a young page standing by his bedside, he said to him, "Take the Bible, and read in it to me." The page, opening the Bible, read out these words : "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Me, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."¹ Duke Eric was refreshed in his turn. When his heart and strength were failing him a golden cup was put to his lips, and he drank therefrom a draught of the Water of Life.

The Elector Frederick was overjoyed at the appearance Luther had made before the Diet. The force and pertinency of his matter, the eloquence of his words, his intrepid yet respectful bearing, had not only delighted the sovereign of Saxony, but had made a deep impression on the princes of the Diet. From that hour many of them became attached friends of Luther and the Reformation. Some of them openly avowed their change of sentiment at the time; in others the words of Luther bore fruit in after-years. Frederick was henceforward more resolved than ever to protect the Reformer; but knowing that the less his hand was seen in the matter, the more effectually would he further the cause and shield its champion, he avoided personal intercourse with the Reformer.² On one occasion only did the two men meet.

The mortification of the Papal party was extreme. They redoubled their activity; they laid snares to entrap the Reformer. They invited him to private conferences with the Archbishop of Treves; they submitted one insidious proposal after another, but the constancy of the Reformer was not to be overcome. Meanwhile Alexander and his conclave had been closeted with the emperor, concocting measures of another kind. Accordingly, at the meeting of the Diet next day, the decision of Charles, written in his own hand,³ was delivered and read. It set forth that after the example of his Catholic ancestors, the Kings of Spain and Austria, &c., he would defend, to the utmost of his ability, the Catholic faith and the Papal chair. "A single monk," said he, "misled by his own folly, has risen against the faith of Christendom. To stay such impiety, I will sacrifice my kingdom, my treasures, my friends, my body, my blood, my life, and my soul."⁴ I am about to dismiss the Augustine Luther. I shall then proceed against him and his adherents as contumacious

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 44, Additio i., p. 160.

² *Ibid.*, lib. i., sec. 42, Additio i., p. 157.

³ Cochlaeus, p. 32. Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 27, p. 111.

⁴ "Pero aver egli statuito d' impiegare i regni, i tesori, gli amici il corpo, il sangue la vita, e lo spirito." (Pallavicino, lib. i., p. 112.) How affecting these words when one thinks of what now is the condition of the kingdom, the treasures, and the royal house of Spain!

heretics, by excommunication, by interdict, and by every means calculated to destroy them.”

But the zeal of Charles had outrun his powers. This proscription could not be carried out without the consent of the States. The announcement of the emperor’s decision raised a storm in the Diet. Two parties instantly declared themselves. Some of the Papal party, especially the Elector of Brandenburg, demanded that Luther’s safe-conduct should be disregarded, and that the Rhine should receive his ashes, as it had done those of John Huss a century before.¹ But, to his credit, Louis, Elector Palatine, expressed instant and utter abhorrence of the atrocious proposal. True, he said, Huss was burned at the stake, but ever since calamity has never ceased to pursue Germany. We dare not, said he, erect a second scaffold. He was joined by Duke George, whose repudiation of the proposed infamy was the more emphatic that he was Luther’s avowed enemy. That the princes of Germany should for a moment entertain the purpose of violating a safe-conduct, was a thing he held impossible. They never would bring such a stain upon the honour of the Fatherland; nor would they open the reign of the young emperor with such an evil augury.² The Bavarian nobles, though mostly Papal, also protested against the violation of the public faith. The proposition met with the fate it deserved; it was expelled the Diet with scorn and indignation.

The extreme men of the Papal party would, without hesitation, have planted the Reformer’s stake, but what would have been the result? A civil war in Germany the very next day. The enthusiasm of all classes was immense. Even Dean Cochläus and Cardinal Pallavicino assure us that there were hundreds of armed men in Worms itself, ready to unsheathe the sword and demand blood for blood. Only a dozen miles away, in his strong castle of Ebernburg, “the refuge of the Righteous,” was the valorous Sickingen, and the fiery knight Hütten, at the head of a corps of men-at-arms amounting to many thousands, ready to descend on Worms, should Luther be sacrificed, to hold a reckoning with all those who were concerned in his death. From the most distant cities of Germany men watched, their hands on their sword-hilts, to see what would happen at Worms. The moderate men among the Papal members of the Diet were well aware, that to violate the safe conduct would simply be to give the signal for outbreak and convulsion from one end of Germany to the other.

Nor could Charles be blind to so great a danger. Had he violated the safe-conduct, his first would probably have been his last Diet; for the Empire itself

¹ Sleidan, bk. iii., p. 44. Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 44, p. 160. Polano, *Hist. Counc. Trent*, bk. i., p. 14; Lond., 1629.

² Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 44, Additio i., p. 160.

would have been imperilled. But if we may trust historians of name,¹ his conduct in this matter was inspired by nobler sentiments than those of self-interest. In opposing the violation of the plighted faith of the Empire, he is reported to have said that “though faith should be banished from all the earth, it ought to find refuge with princes.” Certainly a kingly sentiment, well becoming so powerful a potentate, but there was not wanting a little alloy in its gold. War was then on the point of breaking out between him and the King of France. Charles only half trusted the Pope, and even that was trusting him a little too much. The Pope had just concluded a secret treaty with both kings,² Charles and Francis, pledging his aid to both, with, of course, the wise reservation of giving it only to the one by aiding whom he should, as future events might show, most effectually aid himself. This double-handed policy on the part of Leo, Charles met by tactics equally astute. In the game of checking the Pope, which he found he must needs play, he judged that a living Luther would be a more valuable counter than a dead one. “Since the Pope greatly feared Luther’s doctrine,” says Vettori, “he designed to hold him in check with that rein.”³

The result of so many conflicting yet conspiring circumstances was that Luther departed in peace from those gates out of which no man had expected ever to see him come alive. On the morning of the 26th April, surrounded by twenty gentlemen on horseback, and a crowd of people who accompanied him beyond the walls, Luther left Worms.⁴ His journey back was accomplished amid demonstrations of popular interest more enthusiastic even than those which had signalled his progress thither. A few days after he was gone, the emperor fulminated his “edict” against him, placing him beyond the pale of law, and commanding all men, whenever the term of Luther’s safe-conduct expired, to withhold from him food and drink, succour and shelter, to apprehend him and send him bound to the emperor. This edict was drafted by Aleander, and ratified at a meeting of the Diet which was held, not in the hall of assembly, but in the emperor’s own chamber. The Elector Frederick, the Elector Palatine, and many others, had ere this left Worms. The edict was dated the 8th of May, but in point of fact the imperial signature was appended to it on the 26th of May, as Pallavicino tells us, in the cathedral church of Worms, after the celebration of high mass; the design of the ante-

¹ Seckendorf (quoting from Altingius), lib. i., sec. 44, Additio i. Pallavicino denies that it was proposed to violate the safe-conduct. He founds his denial upon the silence of Aleander. But the Papal nuncio’s silence, which is exceedingly natural, can weigh but little against the testimony of so many historians.

² The imperial proscription of Luther is said to have been dated on the same day on which the treaty with the Pope was concluded. (Ranke, *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. i., p. 65; Bohn’s edit., Lond., 1847.)

³ *Sommario della Storia d’Italia*. (Ranke, vol. i., p. 66.)

⁴ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 28, p. 114.

dating being, the same writer says, to give to the edict the appearance of carrying with it the authority of a full Diet.¹ This edict was more discursive than such documents usually are. Its style, instead of being formal and stately, was figurative and rhetorical. It opened with a profusion of epithets meant to be descriptive of the great heretic of Wittenberg; it ran on, in equally fertile vein, in an enumeration of the heresies, blasphemies, and vices into which he had fallen, and the crimes to which he was inciting the people—“schism, war, murder, robbery, incendiarism”—and it foretold in alarming terms the perdition into which he was dragging society, and the ruin that impended unless his “furious rage” should be checked. The edict reached its climax in the startling affirmation that “this man was not a man, but Satan himself under the form of a man, and dressed in a monk’s frock.”² So spake Charles the Fifth to the electors, princes, prelates, and people of his Empire. Luther had entered Worms with one sword hanging over his head—the anathema of the Pope; he quits it with two unsheathed against him, for now to the Pope’s excommunication is added the emperor’s ban.

Meanwhile the Reformer was going on his way. It was now the ninth day (May 4th) since he set out from Worms. He had traversed the mountains of the Black Forest. How grateful, after the stirs and grandeurs of Worms, their silent glades, their fir-embowered hamlets, their herds quietly pasturing, the morning shooting its silvery shafts through the tall trees, and the evening with its shadows descending from the golden west!

The pines were getting fewer, the hills were sinking into the plain; our traveller was nearing Eisenach; he was now on ground familiar to him from boyhood. At this point of the journey, Schurf, Jonas, and Sauven left him and went on to Wittenberg, taking the high road that leads eastward over the plain by Erfurt. Amsdorf alone remained with him. The doctor and his companion struck northward to the town of Mora to visit his grandmother, who still survived. He passed the next day in the refreshing quiet of this little place. The following morning he resumed his journey, and had reached a lonely spot near the Castle of Altenstein, when a troop of horsemen, wearing masks and completely armed, rushed suddenly upon him. The wagon in which he sat was stopped, the wagoner thrown to the ground, and while one of the masks laid firm hold of Amsdorf, another pulling Luther hastily out of the car, raised him to the saddle, and grasping his horse’s bridle-rein, plunged quickly with him into the forest of Thuringia. All day long the troop of horsemen wandered hither and thither in the wood, their purpose being to defy pursuit. When night fell they began to ascend a mountain, and a little before

¹ Pallavicino, lib. i., cap. 28, p. 117. Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 42, p. 158.

² “Nicht ein Mensch, sondern als der böse Feind in Gestalt eines Menschen mit angemommener Mönchskutten.”—*Luth. Opp.* (L) xvii. 598.

midnight they came under the walls of a castle that crowned its summit.¹ The drawbridge was let down, the portcullis raised, and the cavalcade passing in, the troopers dismounted in the rocky court of the castle. The captive was led up a single flight of steps, and ushered into an apartment, where he was told he must make a sojourn of unknown length, and during it must lay aside his ecclesiastical dress, attire himself in the costume of a knight, which lay ready to his hand, and be known only by the name of Knight George.

When morning broke, and Luther looked from the casement of his apartment, he saw at a glance where he was. Beneath him were the forest glades, the hamlets, and all the well-known scenes that adjoin Eisenach; although the town itself was not in view. Farther away were the plains around Mora, and bounding these was the vast circle of the hills that sweep along on the horizon.² He could not but know that he was in the Castle of the Wartburg, and in friendly keeping.

Thus suddenly the man on whom all eyes were fixed was carried off, as if by a whirlwind, no one knew whither; nor could any one in all Germany, save his captors, tell whether he was now dead or alive. The Pope had launched his bolt, the emperor had raised his mailed hand to strike, on every side destruction seemed to await the Reformer; at that moment Luther becomes invisible. The Papal thunder rolls harmlessly along the sky—the emperor’s sword cleaves only the yielding air.

Strangely have the scenes been shifted, and the stage has become suddenly dark. But a moment ago the theatre was crowded with great actors, emperors, princes, ecclesiastical dignitaries, and ambassadors. Powerful interests were in conflict, and mighty issues were about to be decided. The thunder of a fearful ban had just pealed forth, the sword of the emperor had left its scabbard, matters were hurrying to a crisis, and the crash of some terrible catastrophe seemed to be impending. All at once the action is arrested, the brilliant throng vanishes, a deep silence succeeds the tumult and noise, and we have time to meditate on what we have seen, to revolve its lessons, and to feel in our hearts the presence and the hand of that Great Ruler who “sits King upon the floods.”

¹ Seckendorf, lib. i., sec. 44, p. 159. *L. Epp.*, ii. 3.

² The author has surveyed the scene from the same window, and he describes it as he saw it, and as it must have been daily seen by Luther. The hill of the Wartburg is a steep and wooded slope on all sides, save that on which the window of Luther’s chamber is placed. On this side a bare steep runs sheer down to almost the foot of the mountain.