THE DISCUSSION OF LEIPSIC (1519)

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Chapter 1

Luther’s Danger

Dangers had gathered around Luther and the Reformation. The appeal of the Wittenberg doctor to a general council was a new assault upon the Papal power. A Bull of Pius II had pronounced the greater excommunication even against the emperors who should dare be guilty of such an act of revolt. Frederick of Saxony, as yet weak in the evangelical doctrine, was ready to banish Luther from his states. A new message from Leo X would therefore have driven the reformer among strangers, who might have feared to compromise themselves by receiving a monk under the anathema of Rome. And if any of the nobles had drawn the sword in his defense, these simple knights, despised by the mighty princes of Germany, would soon have been crushed in their perilous enterprise.

But at the very moment that the courtiers of Leo X were urging him to measures of severity,

and when another blow would have placed his adversary in his hands, this pope suddenly changed his policy, and entered upon a course of conciliation and apparent mildness. We may reasonably presume that he was deceived as to the elector’s sentiments, and thought them more favorable to Luther than they really were; we may admit that the public voice and the spirit of the age — powers then quite new — appeared to surround Luther with an impregnable rampart; we may suppose, as one of his historians have done, that he followed the impulses of his judgement and of his heart, which inclined him to mildness and moderation; but this new mode of action, adopted by Rome at such a moment, is so strange, that it is impossible not to recognize in it a higher and a mightier hand.

A Saxon noble, the pope’s chamberlain, and canon of Mentz, Treves, and Meissen, was then at the Roman court. He had contrived to make himself of importance. He boasted of being distantly related to the Saxon princes, so that the Roman courtiers sometimes gave him the title of

Duke of Saxony. In Italy, he made a foolish display of his German nobility; in Germany, he was an awkward imitator of the elegance and manners of Italians. He was fond of wine, and his residence at the court of Rome had increased this vice. The Roman courtiers, however, entertained great expectations of him. His insinuating manners, his skill in business, — all led them to hope that Charles of Miltitz (for such was his name) would by his prudence succeed in arresting the mighty revolution that threatened to shake the world.

It was of importance to conceal the real object of the mission of the Roman chamberlain. This was effected without difficulty. Four years previously, the pious elector has petitioned the Pope for the Golden Rose. This Rose, the most beautiful of flowers, represented the body of Jesus Christ; it was consecrated yearly by the sovereign pontiff, and sent to one of the chief princes in Europe. It was resolved to give it this year to the elector.

Miltitz departed with a commission to examine the state of affairs, and to gain over Spalatin and

Pfeffinger, the elector’s councilors. He carried private letters for them. In this manner, by seeking to conciliate those who surrounded the prince, Rome hoped erelong to have her formidable adversary in her power.

The new legate, who arrived in Germany in December 1518, was engaged during his journey in sounding the public opinion. To his great surprise he found, that wherever he went, the majority of the inhabitants were partisans of the Reformation. They spoke of Luther with enthusiasm.

For one person favorable to the pope, there were three favorable to the reformer. Luther has transmitted to us one of the incidents of his mission. “what do you think of the papal chair?” the legate would frequently ask the landladies and maidservants at the inns. On one occasion one of these poor women artlessly replied: “What can we know of the papal chair, whether it is of wood or of stone?” The mere rumor of the new legate’s arrival filled the elector’s court, the university and town of Wittenberg, and the whole of Saxony, with

suspicion and distrust. “Thanks be to God, Luther is still alive,” wrote Melancthon in affright. It was affirmed that the Roman legate had received orders to get Luther into his power either by violence or stratagem. Every one recommended the doctor to be on his guard against the treachery of Miltitz. “He is coming,” said they, “to seize you and give you up to the pope. Trustworthy persons have seen the briefs he is bringing with him.” — “I await God’s will,” replied Luther. Miltitz indeed came bearing letters for the elector, for his councilors, and for the bishops and the burgomaster of Wittenberg. He brought with him seventy apostolical briefs. If the flattery and the favors of Rome attained their end, — if Frederick delivered Luther into his hands, these seventy briefs were, in some measure, to serve as passports. He would produce and post up one in each of the cities through which he would have to pass, and by this means he hoped to succeed in dragging his prisoner to Rome without opposition. The pope appeared to have taken every precaution. Already in the electoral court they did not know what course to adopt. They would have resisted violence; but how

could they oppose the head of Christendom, who spoke with so much mildness, and with so great an appearance of reason? Would it not be desirable, they said, for Luther to conceal himself, until the storm had passed over? An unexpected event extricated Luther, the elector, and the Reformation from this difficult position. The aspect of the world suddenly changed.

On the 12th of January 1519, Maximilian, emperor of Germany, expired.

Frederick of Saxony, in conformity with the Germanic constitution, became administrator of the empire. Henceforth the elector no longer feared the projects of nuncios. New interests began to agitate the court of Rome, which forced it to be cautious in its negotiations with Frederick, and arrested the blow that Miltitz and De Vio undoubtedly were meditating.

The pope earnestly desired to prevent Charles of Austria, already king of Naples, from filling the imperial throne. He thought that a neighboring king

was more to be feared than a German monk. Desirous of securing the elector, who might be of great use to him in this affair, he resolved to let the monk rest, that he might the better oppose the king; but both advanced in spite of him. Thus changed Leo X.

Another circumstance also contributed to turn aside the storm that threatened the Reformation. Political troubles broke out immediately after Maximilian's death. In the south of the empire, the Swabian confederation desired to punish Ulric of Wurtemberg, who had been unfaithful to it; in the north, the Bishop of Hildesheim threw himself with an armed force upon the bishopric of Minden and on the territories of the Duke of Brunswick. In the midst of all this agitation, how could the great ones of the age attach any importance to a dispute about the remission of sins?

But God especially advanced the cause of the Reformation by the wisdom of the elector, now become vicar of the empire, and by the protection he granted to the new teachers. "The tempest

suspended its rage," says Luther, "the papal excommunication began to fall into contempt. Under the shadow of the elector's viceroyalty, the Gospel circulated far and wide, and popery suffered great damage in consequence." Besides, during an interregnum the severest prohibitions naturally lost their force.

All became easier and more free. The ray of liberty that shone upon these beginnings of the Reformation powerfully developed the yet tender plant; and already it might have been seen how favorable political liberty would be to the progress of evangelical Christianity.

Miltitz, who had reached Saxony before the death of Maximilian, had hastened to visit his old friend Spalatin; but he had no sooner begun his complaints against Luther, than Spalatin broke out against Tetzel. He made the nuncio acquainted with the falsehoods and blasphemies of the indulgencemerchant, and declared that all Germany ascribed to the Dominican the divisions by which the Church was rent.

Miltitz was astonished. Instead of being the accuser, he found himself the accused. All his anger was immediately directed at Tetzel. He summoned him to appear at Altenburg and justify his conduct.

The Dominican, as cowardly as he was boastful, fearing the people whom his impositions had exasperated, had discontinued passing from town to town, and had hidden himself in the college of St. Paul at Leipsic. He turned pale on receiving Miltitz's letter. Even Rome abandons him. She threatens and condemns him; she wishes to draw him from the only asylum in which he thinks himself secure, and to expose him to the anger of his enemies. Tetzel refused to obey the nuncio's summons. "Certainly," wrote he to Miltitz on the 31st of December 1518, "I should not care about the fatigue of the journey, if I could leave Leipsic without danger to my life; but the Augustine Martin Luther has so excited and aroused the men of power against me, that I am nowhere safe. A great number of Luther's partisans

have sworn my death; I cannot, therefore, come to you." What a striking contrast is here between these two men, the one residing in the college of St. Paul at Leipsic, the other in the Augustine cloister at Wittenberg. The servant of God displayed an intrepid courage in the presence of danger; the servant of men a contemptible cowardice.

Miltitz had been ordered to employ persuasive measures in the first instance; and it was only when these failed that he was to produce his seventy briefs, and at the same time make use of all the favors of Rome to induce the elector to restrain Luther. He therefore intimated his desire to have an interview with the reformer. Their common friend, Spalatin, offered his house for that purpose, and Luther quitted Wittenberg on the 2nd or 3rd of January to visit Altenburg.

In this interview Miltitz exhausted all the cunning of a diplomat and of a Roman courtier. Luther had scarcely arrived when the nuncio approached him with great demonstrations of

friendship. “Oh!” thought Luther, “how his violence is changed into gentleness! This new Saul came to Germany, armed with more than seventy apostolical briefs, to drag me alive and in chains to that murderous Rome; but the Lord has thrown him to the ground by the way.” “My dear Martin,” said the pope’s chamberlain, in a fawning tone, “I thought you were an old theologian who, seated quietly at his fireside, was laboring under some theological crotchet; but I see you are still a young man and in the prime of life. Do you know,” continued he, assuming a graver tone, “that you have drawn away everybody from the pope and attached them to yourself?” Miltitz was not ignorant that the best way of seducing mankind is to flatter their pride; but he did not know the man he had to deal with. “If I had an army of 25,000 men,” added he, “I do not think I should be able to carry you to Rome.” Rome with all her power was sensible of her weakness compared with this poor monk; and the monk felt strong compared to Rome. “God stays the waves of the sea upon the shore,” said Luther, “and he stays them — with sand!” The nuncio, believing he had now prepared his

adversary's mind, continued in these terms: "Bind up the wound that you yourself have inflicted on the Church, and that you alone can heal. Beware," said he, dropping a few tears, "beware of raising a tempest that would cause the destruction of Christendom." He then gradually proceeded to hint that a retractation alone could repair the mischief; but he immediately softened down whatever was objectionable in this word, by giving Luther to understand that he felt the highest esteem for him, and by storming against Tetzel. The snare was laid by a skillful hand: how could it fail to catch the prey? "If, at the outset, the Archbishop of Mentz had spoken to me in this manner," said the reformer afterwards, "this business would not have created so much disturbance." Luther then replied, and set forth with calmness, but with dignity and force, the just complaints of the Church; he did not conceal his great indignation against the Archbishop of Mentz, and complained in a noble manner of the unworthy treatment he had received from Rome, notwithstanding the purity of his intentions. Miltitz, who had not expected to hear such decided language, was able however to

suppress his anger.

“I offer,” resumed Luther, “to be silent for the future on this matter, and to let it die away of itself, provided my opponents are silent on their part; but if they continue attacking me, a serious struggle will soon arise out of a trifling quarrel. My weapons are quite prepared.” — “I will do still more,” he added a moment after; “I will write to his holiness, acknowledging I have been a little too violent, and I will declare to him that it is as a faithful son of the Church that I opposed discourses which drew upon them the mockeries and insults of the people. I even consent to publish a writing desiring all those who read my works not to see in them any attacks upon the Roman Church, and to continue under its authority. Yes! I am willing to do and to bear everything; but as for a retractation, never expect one from me.” Miltitz saw by Luther’s firm tone that the wisest course would be to appear satisfied with what the reformer so readily promised. He merely proposed that they should choose an archbishop to arbitrate on some points that were still to be discussed. “Be it so,”

said Luther; “but I am very much afraid that the pope will not accept any judge; in that case I will not abide by the pope’s decision, and then the struggle will begin again.

The pope will give the text, and I shall make my own comments upon it.” Thus ended the first interview between Luther and Miltitz. They had a second meeting, in which the truce or rather the peace was signed. Luther immediately informed the elector of what had taken place. “Most serene prince and most gracious lord,” wrote he, “I hasten most humbly to acquaint your electoral highness that Charles of Miltitz and myself are at last agreed, and have terminated this matter by deciding upon the following articles: — 1. Both parties are forbidden to preach, write, or do anything further in the discussion that has been raised.

2. Miltitz will immediately inform the holy Father of the state of affairs. His holiness will empower an enlightened bishop to investigate the matter, and to point out the erroneous articles I

should retract. If they prove me to be in error I shall willingly recant, and will do nothing derogatory to the honor or authority of the holy Roman Church." When the agreement had been thus effected, Miltitz appeared overjoyed.

"These hundred years past," exclaimed he, "no question has occasioned more anxiety to the cardinals and Roman courtiers than this. They would rather have given ten thousand ducats than consent to its being prolonged." The pope's chamberlain spared no marks of attention to the monk of Wittenberg. At one time he manifested his joy, at another he shed tears.

This show of sensibility moved the reformer but little; still he avoided showing what he thought of it. "I pretended not to understand the meaning of these crocodile's tears," said he. Miltitz gave Luther an invitation to supper, which the latter accepted. His host laid aside all the severity connected with his mission, and Luther indulged in all the cheerfulness of his disposition. The repast was joyous, and when the moment of departure

was come, the legate opened his arms to the heretical doctor, and kissed him. “A Judas kiss,” thought Luther; “I pretended not to understand these Italian artifices,” wrote he to Staupitz. Was that kiss destined to reconcile Rome and the dawning Reformation?

Miltitz hoped so, and was delighted at the thought; for he had a nearer view than the Roman courtiers of the terrible consequences the papacy might suffer from the Reformation. If Luther and his adversaries are silenced, thought he, the dispute will be ended; and Rome, by calling up favorable circumstances, will regain all her former influence. It appeared, then, that the termination of the contest was at hand. Rome had opened her arms, and the reformer seemed to have cast himself into them. But this work was not of man, but of God. The error of Rome was in seeing a mere dispute with a monk in what was an awakening of the Church. The kisses of a papal chamberlain could not check the renewal of Christendom.

Miltitz being of opinion that he would by this

means reclaim the erring Lutherans, behaved most graciously to all of them, accepted their invitations, and sat down to table with the heretics; but soon becoming inebriated (it is a pope who relates this), the pontifical nuncio was no longer master of his tongue. The Saxons led him to speak of the pope and the court of Rome, and Miltitz, confirming the old proverb, in vino veritas, gave an account in the openness of his heart of all the practices and disorders of the papacy. His companions smiled, urging and pressing him to continue; everything was exposed; they took notes of what he said; and these scandals were afterwards made matter of public reproach against the Romans, at the Diet of Worms, in the presence of all Germany. Pope Paul III complained, alleging they had put things in his envoy’s mouth that were utterly destitute of foundation, and in consequence ordered his nuncios, whenever they were invited out, to make a pretense of accepting the invitations, to behave graciously, and to be guarded in their conversation. Miltitz, faithful to the arrangement he had just concluded, went from Altenburg to Leipsic, where Tetzel was residing. There was no necessity to

silence him, for sooner than speak he would have concealed himself if possible in the center of the earth. But the nuncio resolved to vent all his anger on him. As soon as he reached Leipsic, he summoned the wretched Tetzel before him, overwhelmed him with reproaches, accused him of being the author of all his trouble, and threatened him with the pope’s displeasure. This was not enough. An agent from the house of Fugger, who was then in the city, was confronted with him. Miltitz laid before the Dominican the accounts of this establishment, the papers he had himself signed, and proved that he had squandered or stolen considerable sums of money. The unhappy man, whom in the day of his triumph nothing could alarm, bent under the weight of these just accusations: he fell into despair, his health suffered, he knew not where to hide his shame. Luther was informed of the wretched condition of his old adversary, and he alone was affected by it. “I am sorry for Tetzel,” wrote he to Spalatin. He did not confine himself to words: it was not the man but his actions that he hated.

At the very moment that Rome was venting her wrath on the Dominican, Luther sent him a letter full of consolation. But all was unavailing. Tetzel, a prey to remorse, terrified by the reproaches of his best friends, and dreading the pope's anger, died very miserably not long after. It was believed that grief accelerated his death. Luther, in accordance with the promise he had given Miltitz, wrote the following letter to the pope on the 3rd March: — "Blessed Father! May your holiness condescend to incline your paternal ear, which is that of Christ himself, towards your poor sheep, and listen kindly to his bleating. What shall I do, most holy Father? I cannot bear the lightnings of your anger, and I know not how to escape them. I am called upon to retract. I would most readily do so, could that lead to the desired result. But the persecutions of my adversaries have circulated my writings far and wide, and they are too deeply graven on the hearts of men, to be by any possibility erased. A recantation would only still more dishonor the Church of Rome, and draw from the lips of all a cry of accusation against her. Most holy Father! I declare in the presence of God, and of all His

creatures, that I have never desired, and that I shall never desire, to infringe, either by force or by stratagem, the power of the Roman Church or of your holiness. I confess that nothing in heaven or in earth should be preferred above that Church, except Jesus Christ alone — the Lord of all." These words might appear strange and even reprehensible in Luther's mouth, did we not remember that he reached the light not suddenly, but by a slow and progressive course. They are a very important evidence, that the Reformation was not simply an opposition to the papacy; it was not a war waged against certain forms; nor was it the result of a merely negative tendency. Opposition to the pope was in the second line of the battle: a new life, a positive doctrine was the generating principle. "Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, and who must be preferred above all," even above Rome itself, as Luther writes at the end of his letter, was the essential cause of the Revolution of the sixteenth century.

It is probable that shortly before this time the pope would not have passed over unnoticed a letter

in which the monk of Wittenberg plainly refused to retract. But Maximilian was dead: men's minds were occupied with the choice of his successor, and in the midst of the intrigues which then agitated the pontifical city, Luther's letter was disregarded.

The reformer made a better use of his time than his power adversary.

While Leo X was occupied with his interests as a temporal prince, and was making every exertion to exclude a formidable neighbor from the throne, Luther grew each day in knowledge and in faith. He studied the papal decrees, and the discoveries he made therein greatly modified his ideas. "I am reading the decrees of the pontiffs," wrote he to Spalatin, "and (I whisper this in your ear) I do not know whether the pope is Antichrist himself, or his apostle, so greatly is Christ misrepresented and crucified in them." Yet he still felt esteem for the ancient Church of Rome, and had no thought of separating from it. "That the Roman Church," said he in the explanation which he had promised Miltitz to publish, "is honored by God above all

others, is what we cannot doubt. Saint Peter, Saint Paul, fortysix popes, many hundreds of thousands of martyrs, have shed their blood in its bosom, and have overcome hell and the world, so that God's eye regards it with especial favor. Although everything is now in a very wretched state there, this is not a sufficient reason for separating from it. On the contrary, the worse things are going on within it, the more should we cling to it; for it is not by separation that we shall make it better. We must not desert God on account of the devil; or abandon the children of God who are still in the Roman communion, because of the multitude of the ungodly. There is no sin, there is no evil that should destroy charity or break the bond of union. For charity can do all things, and to unity nothing is difficult." It was not Luther who separated from Rome: it was Rome that separated from Luther, and thus rejected; the ancient faith of the Catholic Church, of which he was then the representative. It was not Luther who deprived Rome of her power, and made her bishop descend from a throne which he had usurped: the doctrines he proclaimed, the word of the apostles which God manifested anew

in the Universal Church with great power and admirable purity, could alone prevail against that dominion which had for centuries enslaved the Church.

These declarations, which were published by Luther at the end of February, did not entirely satisfy Miltitz and De Vio. These two vultures, who had both seen their prey escape from their talons, had retired within the ancient walls of Treves. There, assisted by the prince-archbishop, they hoped to accomplish together the object in which each of them had failed separately. The two nuncios felt clearly that nothing more was to be expected from Frederick, now invested with supreme power in the empire.

They saw that Luther persisted in his refusal to retract. The only means of success were to deprive the heretical monk of the elector’s protection, and entice him into their hands. Once at Treves, in the states of an ecclesiastical prince, the reformer will be very skillful if he escapes without having fully satisfied the demands of the sovereign pontiff.

They immediately applied themselves to the task. “Luther,” said Miltitz to the Elector-archbishop of Treves, “has accepted your Grace as arbitrator.

Summon him before you.” The Elector of Treves accordingly wrote on the 3rd May to the Elector of Saxony, requesting him to send Luther to him.

De Vio, and afterwards Miltitz himself, wrote also to Frederick, informing him that the Golden Rose had arrived at Augsburg. This (thought they) is the moment for striking a decisive blow.

But circumstances had changed: neither Frederick nor Luther permitted himself to be shaken. The elector comprehended his new position. He no longer feared the pope, much less his agents. The reformer, seeing Miltitz and De Vio united, foresaw the fate that awaited him if he complied with their invitation. “Everywhere,” said he, “and in every manner they seek after my life.” Besides, he had appealed to the pope, and the pope, busied in intrigues with crowned heads, had not

replied. Luther wrote to Miltitz: “How can I set out without an order from Rome, in the midst of the troubles by which the Empire is agitated? How can I encounter so many dangers, and incur such heavy expense, seeing that I am the poorest of men?” The Elector of Treves, a prudent and moderate man, and a friend of Frederick’s, was desirous of keeping on good terms with the latter.

Besides, he had no desire to interfere in this matter, unless he was positively called upon. He therefore arranged with the Elector of Saxony to put off the inquiry until the next diet, which did not take place until two years after, when it assembled at Worms.

While a providential hand thus warded off, one by one, the dangers by which Luther was threatened, he himself was boldly advancing towards a goal which he did not suspect. His reputation increased; the cause of truth grew in strength; the number of students at Wittenberg was augmented, and among them were the most distinguished young men of Germany.

“Our town,” wrote Luther, “can hardly receive all those who are flocking to it;” — and on another occasion: “The number of students increases considerably, like an overflowing river.” But it was no longer in Germany alone that the reformer’s voice was heard.

It had passed the frontiers of the empire, and begun to shake, among the different nations of Europe, the foundations of the Romish power.

Frobenius, a celebrated printer at Basle, had published a collection of Luther’s works. It was rapidly circulated. At Basle, the bishop himself commended Luther. The cardinal of Sion, after reading his works, exclaimed with a slight tone of irony, playing upon his name: “O Luther! thou art a real Luther!” Erasmus was at Louvain when Luther’s writings reached the Low Countries. The prior of the Augustines of Antwerp, who had studied at Wittenberg, and who, according to the testimony of Erasmus, was a follower of true primitive Christianity, read them with eagerness, as

did other Belgians. But those who consulted their own interests only, remarks the sage of Rotterdam,, and who fed the people with old wives' tales, broke our into gloomy fanaticism. "I cannot describe to you," wrote Erasmus to Luther, "the emotion, the truly tragic sensation which your writings have occasioned." Frobenius sent six hundred copies of these works into France and Spain.

They were sold publicly in Paris. The doctors of the Sorbonne, as it would appear, read them with approbation. "It is high time," said some of them, "that those who devote themselves to biblical studies should speak out freely." In England these books were received with still greater eagerness.

Some Spanish merchants translated them into their mother-tongue, and forwarded them from Antwerp to their own country. "Certainly these merchants must have been of Moorish descent," says Pallavicini. Calvi, a learned bookseller of Pavia, carried a great number of copies to Italy, and circulated them in all the transalpine cities. It was not the love of gain that inspired this man of letters,

but a desire of contributing to the revival of piety. The energy with which Luther maintained the cause of Christ filled him with joy. “All the learned men of Italy,” wrote he, “will unite with me, and we will send you verses composed by our most distinguished writers.” Frobenius, in transmitting a copy of his publication to Luther, related all these joyful tidings, and added: “I have sold every copy except ten; and I have never made so good a speculation.” Other letters informed Luther of the joy caused by his works. I am delighted,” said he, “that the truth is so pleasing, although she speaks with so little learning and in so barbarous a tone.” Such was the commencement of the awakening in the various countries of Europe. If we except Switzerland, and even France, where the Gospel had already been preached, the arrival of the Wittenberg doctor’s writings everywhere forms the first page of the history of the Reformation. A printer of Basle scattered the first germs of truth. At the very moment when the Roman pontiff thought to stifle the work in Germany, it began in France, the Low Countries, Italy, Spain, England, and Switzerland. What matters it, even should

Rome cut down the parent stem!.....the seeds are already scattered over every land.

Chapter 2

Pause in Germany

While the combat was beginning beyond the confines of the empire, it appeared dying away within. The most impetuous of the Roman champions, the Franciscans of Juterbock, who had imprudently attacked Luther, had hastily become silent after the reformer's vigorous reply. The papal partisans were mute: Tetzel was no longer in a condition to fight.

Luther was entreated by his friends not to continue the discussion, and he had promised compliance. The theses were passing into oblivion. This treacherous peace rendered the eloquence of the reformer powerless. The Reformation appeared checked. "But," said Luther somewhat later, when speaking of this epoch, "men imagine vain things; for the Lord awoke to judge the people. — God does not guide me," he said in another place; "he pushes me forward, he carries me away. I am not master of myself. I desire to live in repose; but I

am thrown into the midst of tumults and revolutions.” Eck the scholastic, Luther’s old friend, and author of the Obelisks, was the man who recommenced the combat. He was sincerely attached to the papacy, but seems to have had no true religious sentiments, and to have been one of that class of men, so numerous in every age, who look upon science, and even theology and religion, as the means of acquiring worldly reputation. Vain glory lies hid under the priest’s cassock no less than under the warrior’s coat of mail. Eck had studied the art of disputation according to the rules of the schoolmen, and had become a master in this sort of controversy. While the knights of the middle ages and the warriors in the time of the Reformation sought for glory in the tournament, the schoolmen struggled for it in syllogistic disputations, — a spectacle of frequent occurrence in the universities. Eck, who entertained no mean idea of himself, and was proud of his talents, of the popularity of his cause, and of the victories he had gained in eight universities of Hungary, Lombardy, and Germany, ardently desired to have an opportunity of trying his strength and skill against

the reformer. He had spared no exertion to acquire the reputation of being one of the most learned men of the age.

He was constantly endeavoring to excite some new discussion, to make a sensation, and aimed at procuring, by means of his exploits, all the enjoyments of life. A journey that he had made to Italy had been, according to his own account, one long series of triumphs. The most learned scholars had been forced to subscribe to his theses. This experienced gladiator fixed his eyes on a new field of battle, in which he thought the victory already secure. The little monk who had suddenly grown into a giant, — that Luther, whom hitherto no one had been able to vanquish, galled his pride and excited his jealousy. Perhaps in seeking his own glory, Eck might ruin Rome. But his scholastic vanity was not to be checked by such a consideration. Theologians, as well as princes, have more than once sacrificed the general interest to their personal glory. We shall see what circumstances afforded the Ingoldstadt doctor the means of entering the lists with his importunate

rival.

The zealous but too ardent Carlstadt was still on friendly terms with Luther. These two theologians were closely united by their attachment to the doctrine of grace, and by their admiration for Saint Augustine.

Carlstadt was inclined to enthusiasm, and possessed little discretion: he was not a man to be restrained by the skill and policy of a Miltitz. He had published some theses in reply to Dr. Eck’s Obelisks, in which he defended Luther and their common faith. Eck had answered him; but Carlstadt did not let him have the last word. he discussion grew warm.

Eck, desirous of profiting by so favorable an opportunity, had thrown down the gauntlet, and the impetuous Carlstadt had taken it up. God made use of the passions of these two men to accomplish His purposes. Luther had not interfered in their disputes, and yet he was destined to be the hero of the fight. There are men who by the force of

circumstances are always brought upon the stage. It was agreed that the discussion should take place at Leipsic. Such was the origin of that Leipsic disputation which became so famous.

Eck cared little for disputing with and even conquering Carlstadt: Luther was his great aim. He therefore made every exertion to allure him to the field of battle, and with this view published thirteen theses, which he pointed expressly against the chief doctrines already set forth by the reformer. The thirteenth was thus drawn up: “We deny that the Roman Church was not raised above the other churches before the time of Pope Sylvester; and we acknowledge in every age, as the successor of St. Peter and the vicar of Jesus Christ, him who has filled the chair and held the faith of St. Peter.” Sylvester lived in the time of Constantine the Great; by this thesis, Eck denied, therefore, that the primacy enjoyed by Rome had been conferred on it by that emperor.

Luther, who had reluctantly consented to remain silent, was deeply moved as he read these

propositions. He saw that they were aimed at him, and felt that he could not honorably avoid the contest. “This man,” said he, “calls Carlstadt his antagonist, and at the same time attacks me. But God reigns. He knows what He will bring out of this tragedy. It is neither Doctor Eck nor myself that will be at stake. God’s purpose will be accomplished. Thanks to Eck, this affair, which hitherto has been mere play, will become serious, and inflict a deadly blow on the tyranny of Rome and of the Roman pontiff.” Rome herself had broken the truce. She did more; in renewing the signal of battle, she began the contest on a point that Luther had not yet attacked. It was the papal supremacy to which Doctor Eck drew the attention of his adversaries. In this he followed the dangerous example that Tetzel had already set. Rome invited the blows of the gladiator: and, if she left some of her members quivering on the arena, it was because she had drawn upon herself his formidable arm.

The pontifical supremacy once overthrown, the whole edifice would crumble into ruin. The

greatest danger was impending over the papacy, and yet neither Miltitz nor Cajetan took any steps to prevent this new struggle. Did they imagine that the Reformation would be vanquished, or were they struck with that blindness which often hurries along the mighty to their destruction?

Luther, who had set a rare example of moderation by remaining silent so long, fearlessly replied to the challenge of his antagonist. He immediately published some new theses in opposition to those of Doctor Eck. The last was conceived in these words: “It is by contemptible decretals of Roman pontiffs, composed within the last four centuries, that they would prove the primacy of the Church of Rome; but this primacy is opposed by all the credible history of eleven centuries, — by the declarations of Holy Scripture, — and by the resolutions of the Council of Nice, the holiest of all councils.” “God knows,” wrote he at the same time to the elector, “that I was firmly resolved to keep silence, and that I was glad to see this struggle terminated at last. I have so strictly adhered to the treaty concluded with the papal

commissary, that I have not replied to Sylvester Prierio, notwithstanding the insults of my adversaries, and the advice of my friends. But now Doctor Eck attacks me, and not only me, but the university of Wittenberg also. I cannot suffer the truth to be thus covered with opprobrium." At the same time Luther wrote to Carlstadt: "Most excellent Andrew, I would not have you enter upon this dispute, since they are aiming at me. I shall joyfully lay aside my serious occupations to take my part in the sports of these flatterers of the Roman pontiff." — Then addressing his adversary, he cries disdainfully from Wittenberg to Ingolstadt: "Now, my dear Eck, be brave, and gird thy sword upon thy thigh, thou mighty man! If I could not please thee as mediator, perhaps I shall please thee better as antagonist. Not that I imagine I can vanquish thee; but because after all the triumphs thou hast gained in Hungary, Lombardy, and Bavaria (if at least we are to believe thee), I shall give thee opportunity of gaining the title of conqueror of Saxony and Misnia, so that thou shalt for ever he hailed with the glorious title of August." All Luther's friends did not share in his

courage; for no one had hitherto been able to resist the sophisms of Doctor Eck. But their greatest cause of alarm was the subject of the discussion: the pope's primacy. How can the poor monk of Wittenberg dare oppose that giant who for ages has crushed all his enemies? The courtiers of the elector were alarmed. Spalatin, the prince's confidant and Luther's intimate friend, was filled with anxiety.

Frederick was uneasy: even the sword of the knight of the holy sepulcher, with which he had been invested at Jerusalem, would be of little avail in this war. The reformer alone did not blench. The Lord (thought he) will deliver him into my hands. The faith by which he was animated gave him the means of encouraging his friends: "I entreat you, my dear Spalatin," said he, "do not give way to fear. You well know that if Christ had not been on my side, all that I have hitherto done must have been my ruin.

Quite recently has not the Duke of Pomerania's chancellor received news from Italy, that I had

turned Rome topsy-turvy, and that they knew not how to quiet the agitation? so that it was resolved to attack me, not according to the rules of justice, but by Roman artifices (such was the expression used), meaning, I suppose, poison, ambush, or assassination.

“I restrain myself, and from love to the elector and the university I suppress many things that I would publish against Babylon, if I were elsewhere. O my poor Spalatin, it is impossible to speak with truth of the Scriptures and of the Church without arousing the beast. Never expect to see me free from danger, unless I abandon the teaching of sound divinity. If this matter be of God, it will not come to an end before all my friends have forsaken me, as Christ was forsaken by his disciples. Truth will stand alone, and will triumph by its own right hand, not by mine, nor yours, nor any other man’s. If I perish, the world will not perish with me. But, wretch that I am, I fear I am unworthy to die in such a cause.” — “Rome,” he wrote again about the same time, “Rome is eagerly longing to kill me, and I am wasting my time in

braving her. I have been assured that an effigy of Martin Luther was publicly burnt in the Campo di Fiore at Rome, after being loaded with execrations. I await their furious rage. The whole world," he continued, "is moved, and totters in body and mind; what will happen, God only knows. For my part, I foresee wars and disasters. The Lord have mercy on us!" Luther wrote letter upon letter to Duke George, begging this prince, in whose states Leipsic was situated, to give him permission to go and take part in the disputation; but he received no answer. The grandson of the Bohemian king, alarmed by Luther's propositions on the papal authority, and fearing the recurrence of those wars in Saxony of which Bohemia had so long been the theater, would not consent to the doctor's request. The latter therefore resolved to publish an explanation of the 13th thesis. But this writing, far from persuading the duke, made him only the more resolved; he positively refused the sanction required by the reformer to take a share in the disputation, allowing him only to be present as a spectator. This annoyed Luther very much: yet he had but one desire, — to obey God. He resolved to

go — to look on — and to wait his opportunity.

At the same time the prince forwarded to his utmost ability the disputation between Eck and Carlstadt. George was attached to the old doctrine; but he was upright, sincere, a friend to free inquiry, and did not think that every opinion should be judged heretical, simply because it was offensive to the court of Rome. More than this, the elector used his influence with his cousin; and George, gaining confidence from Frederick's language, ordered that the disputation should take place. Adolphus, bishop of Merseburg, in whose diocese Leipsic was situated, saw more clearly than Miltitz and Cajetan the danger of leaving such important questions to the chances of single combat. Rome dared not expose to such hazard the hard-earned fruits of many centuries. All the Leipsic theologians felt no less alarm, and entreated their bishop to prevent the discussion. Upon this, Adolphus made the most energetic representations to Duke George, who very sensibly replied: "I am surprised that a bishop should have so great a dread of the ancient and praiseworthy custom of our fathers, — the

investigation of doubtful questions in matters of faith. If your theologians refuse to defend their doctrines, it would be better to employ the money spent on them in maintaining old women and children, who at least could spin while they were singing." This letter had but little effect on the bishop and his theologians. There is a secret consciousness in error that makes it shrink from examination, even when talking most of free inquiry. After having imprudently advanced, it retreated with cowardice. Truth gave no challenge, but it stood firm: error challenged to the combat, and ran away. Besides, the prosperity of Wittenberg was an object of jealousy to the university of Leipsic. The monks and priests of the latter city begged and entreated their flocks from the pulpit to flee from the new heretics. They vilified Luther; they depicted him and his friends in the blackest colors, in order to excite the ignorant classes against the doctors of the Reformation. Tetzel, who was still living, awoke to cry out from the depth of his retreat: "It is the devil who urges them to this contest." All the Leipsic professors did not, however, entertain the same opinions: some

belonged to the class of indifferents always ready to laugh at the faults of both parties. Among this body was the Greek professor, Peter Mosellanus. He cared very little about either John Eck, Carlstadt, or Martin Luther; but he flattered himself that he would derive much amusement from their disputation. “John Eck, the most illustrious of goose-quill gladiators and of braggadocios,” wrote he to his friend Erasmus, “John Eck, who like the Aristophanic Socrates despises even the gods themselves, will have a bout with Andrew Carlstadt. The match will end in loud cries. Ten such men as Democritus would find matter for laughter in it.” The timid Erasmus, on the contrary, was alarmed at the very idea of a combat, and his prudence would have prevented the discussion. “If you would take Erasmus’s word,” wrote he to Melancthon, “you would labor rather in cultivating literature than in disputing with its enemies. I think that we should make great progress by this means. Above all, let us never forget that we ought to conquer not only by our eloquence, but also by mildness and moderation.” Neither the alarm of the priests nor the discretion of the pacificators could

any longer prevent the combat. Each man got his arms ready.

Chapter 3

Arrival of Eck and of the Wittenbergers

While the electors were meeting at Frankfort to choose an emperor (June 1519), the theologians assembled at Leipsic for an act unnoticed by the world at large, but whose importance was destined to be quite as great for posterity.

Eck came first to the rendezvous. On the 21st of June he entered Leipsic with Poliander, a young man whom he had brought from Ingolstadt to write an account of the disputation. Every mark of respect was paid to the scholastic doctor. Robed in his sacerdotal garments, and at the head of a numerous procession, he paraded the streets of the city on the festival of Corpus Christi. All were eager to see him: the inhabitants were on his side, he tells us himself; “yet,” adds he, “a report was current in the town that I should be beaten in this combat.” On the day succeeding the festival

(Friday, 24th June), which was the feast of Saint John, the Wittenbergers arrived, Carlstadt, who was to contend with Doctor Eck, sat alone in his carriage, and preceded all the rest. Duke Barnim of Pomerania, who was then studying at Wittenberg, and who had been named honorary rector of the university, came next in an open carriage: at each side were seated the two great divines — the fathers of the Reformation — Luther and Melancthon. The latter would not quit his friend. “Martin, the soldier of the Lord,” he had said to Spalatin, “has stirred up this fetid pool. My spirit is vexed when I think of the disgraceful conduct of the papal theologians. Be firm, and abide with us!” Luther himself had wished that his Achates, as he called him, should accompany him.

John Lange, vicar of the Augustines, many doctors in law, several masters of arts, two licentiates in theology, and other ecclesiastics, among whom was Nicholas Amsdorff, closed the procession. Amsdorff, sprung from a noble family, valuing little the brilliant career to which his illustrious birth might have called him, had

dedicated himself to theology. The theses on indulgences had brought him to a knowledge of the truth. He had immediately made a bold confession of faith. Possessing a strong mind and an ardent character, Amsdorff frequently excited Luther, who was naturally vehement enough, to acts that were perhaps imprudent. Born in exalted rank, he had no fear of the great, and he sometimes spoke to them with a freedom bordering on rudeness. “The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” said he one day before an assembly of nobles, “belongs to the poor and afflicted — not to you, princes, lords, and courtiers, who live continually in luxury and pleasures.” But these persons alone did not form the procession from Wittenberg. A great number of students followed their teachers: Eck affirms that they amounted to two hundred. Armed with pikes and halberds, they surrounded the carriages of the doctors, ready to defend them, and proud of their cause.

Such was the order in which the cortege of the reformers arrived in Leipsic.

They had already entered by the Grimma gate, and advanced as far as St.

Paul’s cemetery, when one of the wheels of Carlstadt’s carriage gave way.

The archdeacon, whose vanity was delighted at so solemn an entry, rolled into the mud. He was not hurt, but he was compelled to proceed to his lodgings on foot. Luther’s carriage, which followed next, rapidly outstripped him, and bore the reformer in safety to his quarters. The inhabitants of Leipsic, who had assembled to witness the entry of the Wittenberg champions, looked upon this accident as an evil omen to Carlstadt: and erelong the whole city was of opinion that he would be vanquished in the combat, but that Luther would come off victorious. Adolphus of Merseburg was not idle. As soon as he heard of the approach of Luther and Carlstadt, and even before they had alighted from their carriages, he ordered placards to be posted upon the doors of all the churches, forbidding the opening of the disputation under pain of excommunication. Duke George,

astonished at this audacity, commanded the town-council to tear down the placards, and committed to prison the bold agent who had ventured to execute the bishop’s order. George has repaired to Leipsic, attended by all his court, among whom was that Jerome Emser at whose house in Dresden Luther had passed a remarkable evening. George made the customary presents to the respective combatants. “The duke,” observed Eck with vanity, “gave me a fine deer; but he only gave a fawn to Carlstadt.” Immediately on hearing of Luther’s arrival, Eck went to visit the Wittenberg doctor. “What is this!” asked he; “I am told that you refuse to dispute with me!” Luther. — “How can I, since the duke has forbidden me?” Eck. — “If I cannot dispute with you, I care little about meeting Carlstadt. It was on your account I came here.” Then after a moment’s silence he added: “If I can procure you the duke’s permission, will you enter the lists with me?” Luther, joyfully. — “Procure it for me, and we will fight.” Eck immediately waited on the duke, and endeavored to remove his fears.

He represented to him that he was certain of

victory, and that the papal authority, far from suffering in the dispute, would come forth covered with glory. The ringleader must be attacked: if Luther remains standing, all stands with him; if he falls, everything will fall with him. George granted the required permission.

The duke had caused a large hall to be prepared in his palace of the Pleissenburg. Two pulpits had been erected opposite each other; tables were placed for the notaries commissioned to take down the discussion, and benches had been arranged for the spectators. The pulpits and benches were covered with handsome hangings. Over the pulpit of the Wittenberg doctor was suspended the portrait of Saint Martin, whose name he bore; over that of Doctor Eck, a representation of Saint George the champion.

“We shall see,” said the presumptuous Eck, as he looked at this emblem, “whether I shall not ride over my enemies.” Every thing announced the importance that was attached to this contest.

On the 25th June, both parties met at the palace to hear the regulations that were to be observed during the disputation. Eck, who had more confidence in his declamations and gestures than in his arguments, exclaimed, “We will dispute freely and extemporaneously; and the notaries shall not take down our words in writing.” Carlstadt. — “It has been agreed that the disputation should be reported, published, and submitted to the judgment of all men.” Eck. — “To take down every thing that is said is dispiriting to the combatants, and prolongs the battle. There is an end to that animation which such a discussion requires. Do not check the flow of eloquence.” The friends of Doctor Eck supported his proposition, but Carlstadt persisted in his objections. The champion of Rome was obliged to give way.

Eck. — “Be it so; it shall be taken down. But do not let the notes be published before they have been submitted to the examination of chosen judges.” Luther. — “Does then the truth of Doctor Eck and his followers dread the light?” Eck. — “We must have judges.” Luther. — “What

judges?” Eck. — “When the disputation is finished, we will arrange about selecting them.” The object of the partisans of Rome was evident. If the Wittenberg divines accepted judges, they were lost; for their adversaries were sure beforehand of those who would be applied to. If they refused these judges, they would be covered with shame, for their opponents would circulate the report that they were afraid to submit their opinions to impartial arbitrators.

The judges whom the reformers demanded were, not any particular individual, whose opinion had been previously formed, but all Christendom. They appealed to this universal suffrage. Besides, it was a slight matter to them if they were condemned, if, while pleading their cause before the whole world, they brought a few souls to the knowledge of the truth. “Luther,” says a Romanist historian, “required all men for his judges; that is, such a tribunal that no urn could have been vast enough to contain the votes.” They separated. “See what artifices they employ,” said Luther and his friends one to another. “They desire no doubt to

have the pope or the universities for judges.” In fact, on the next morning the Romanist divines sent one of their number to Luther, who was commissioned to propose that their judge should be — the pope!.....”The pope!” said Luther; “how can I possibly agree to this?” “Beware,” exclaimed all his friends, “of acceding to conditions so unjust.” Eck and his party held another council. They gave up the pope, and proposed certain universities. “Do not deprive us of the liberty which you had previously granted,” answered Luther. — “We cannot give way on this point,” replied they. — “Well then!” exclaimed Luther, “I will take no part in the discussion!” Again the parties separated, and this matter was a general topic of conversation throughout the city. “Luther,” everywhere exclaimed the Romanists, “Luther will not dispute!.....He will not acknowledge any judge!” His words were commented on and misrepresented, and his adversaries endeavored to place them in the most unfavorable light. “What! does he really decline the discussion?” said the reformer’s best friends.

They went to him and expressed their alarm. “You refuse to take any part in the discussion!” cried they. “Your refusal will bring everlasting disgrace on your university and on your cause.” This was attacking Luther on his weakest side. — “Well then!” replied he, his heart overflowing with indignation, “I accept the conditions imposed upon me; but I reserve the right of appeal, and except against the court of Rome.

Chapter 4

Opening of the Disputation

The 27th of June was the day appointed for the opening of the discussion.

Early in the morning the two parties assembled in the college of the university, and thence went in procession to the Church of Saint Thomas, where a solemn mass was performed by order and at the expense of the duke. After the service, they proceeded to the ducal palace. At their head were Duke George and the Duke of Pomerania; after them came counts, abbots, knights, and other persons of distinction, and last of all the doctors of the two parties. A guard composed of seventy-six citizens, armed with halberds, accompanied the train, with banners flying and to the sound of martial music. It halted at the castle-gates.

The procession having reached the palace, each took his station in the hall appointed for the discussion. Duke George, the hereditary Prince

John, Prince George of Anhalt, then twelve years old, and the Duke of Pomerania, occupied the seats assigned them.

Mosellanus ascended the pulpit to remind the theologians, by the duke's order, in what manner they were to dispute. "If you fall to quarrelling," said the speaker, "what difference will there be between a theologian in discussion and a shameless duelist? What is your object in gaining the victory, if it be not to recover a brother from the error of his ways?.....It appears to me that each of you should desire less to conquer than to be conquered!" When this address was terminated, sacred music resounded through the halls of the Pleissenburg; all the assembly knelt down, and the ancient hymn of invocation to the Holy Ghost, Veni, Sancte Spiritus was sung.

This was a solemn moment in the annals of the Reformation. Thrice the invocation was repeated, and while this solemn strain was heard, the defenders of the old doctrine and the champions of the new; the churchmen of the Middle Ages and

those who sought to restore the church of the apostles, here assembled and confounded with one another, humbly bent their heads to the earth. The ancient tie of one and the same communion still bound together all those different minds; the same prayer still proceeded from all those lips, as if pronounced by one heart.

These were the last moments of outward — of dead unity: a new unity of spirit and of life was about to begin. The Holy Ghost was invoked upon the Church, and was preparing to answer and to renovate Christendom.

The singing and the prayers being ended, they all rose up. The discussion was about to open; but as it was past the hour of noon, it was deferred until two o’clock.

The duke invited to his table the principal persons who were to be present at the discussion. After the repast, they returned to the castle. The great hall was filled with spectators. Disputations of this kind were the public meetings of that age. It

was here that the representatives of their day agitated the questions that occupied all minds. The speakers were soon at their posts. That the reader may form a better idea of their appearance, we will give their portraits as drawn by one of the most impartial witnesses of the contest.

“Martin Luther is of middle stature, and so thin, in consequence of his studies, that his bones may almost be counted. He is in the prime of life, and has a clear and sonorous voice. His knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures is unparalleled; he has the Word of God at his fingers’ ends. Besides this, he possesses great store of arguments and ideas. One might perhaps desire a little more judgment in arranging his subjects. In conversation he is pleasing and affable; there is nothing harsh or austere about him; he can accommodate himself to every one; his manner of speaking is agreeable and unembarrassed. He displays firmness, and has always a cheerful air, whatever may be his adversaries’ threats; so that it is difficult to believe that he could undertake such great things without the Divine protection. He is

blamed, however, for being more caustic, when reproving others, than becomes a theologian, particularly when putting forward novelties in religion.

“Carlstadt is of shorter stature; his complexion is dark and sunburnt, his voice unpleasing, his memory less trustworthy than Luther’s, and he is more inclined to anger. He possesses, however, though in a smaller degree, the qualities that distinguish his friend.

“Eck is tall, broad-shouldered, and has a strong and thorough German voice. He has good lungs, so that he would be heard well in a theater, and would even make an excellent town-crier. His accent is rather vulgar than elegant. He has not that gracefulness so much extolled by Fabius and Cicero. His mouth, his eyes, and his whole countenance give you the idea of a soldier or a butcher rather than of a divine.

He has an excellent memory, and if he had only as much understanding, he would be really a

perfect man. But he is slow of comprehension, and is wanting in judgment, without which all other qualities are useless. Hence, in disputing, he heaps together, without selection or discernment, a mass of passages from the Bible, quotations from the Fathers, and proofs of all kinds. He has, besides, an impudence almost beyond conception. If he is embarrassed, he breaks off from the subject he is treating of, and plunges into another; he sometimes even takes up his adversary's opinion, clothing it in other words, and with extraordinary skill attributes to his opponent the absurdity he had been himself defending." Such, according to Mosellanus, were the men at that time attracting the attention of the crowd which thronged the great hall of the Pleissenburg.

The dispute began between Eck and Carlstadt.

Eck's eyes were fixed for a moment on certain objects that lay on the desk of his adversary's pulpit, and which seemed to disturb him; they were the Bible and the holy Fathers. "I decline the discussion," exclaimed he suddenly, "if you are

permitted to bring your books with you." Surprising that a divine should have recourse to books in order to dispute! Eck's astonishment was still more marvelous. "It is the fig-leaf which this Adam makes use of to hide his shame," said Luther. "Did not Augustine consult his books when arguing with the Manicheans?" What did that matter? Eck's partisans raised a great clamor. The other side did the same.

"The man has no memory," said Eck. At last it was arranged, according to the wish of the Chancellor of Ingolstadt, that each should rely upon his memory and his tongue only. "Thus then," said many, "the object of this disputation will not be to discover the truth, but what praise is to be conferred on the tongue and the memory of the disputants." As we are unable to give the details of this discussion which lasted seventeen days, we shall, as an historian expresses it, imitate the painters, who, when they have to represent a battle, set the most memorable actions in the foreground, and leave the others in the distance. The subject of discussion between Eck and

Carlstadt was important.

“Man’s will, before his conversion,” said Carlstadt, “can perform no good work: every good work comes entirely and exclusively from God, who gives man first the will to do, and then the power of accomplishing.” This truth had been proclaimed by Scripture, which says: It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and by Saint Augustine, who, in his dispute with the Pelagians, had enunciated it in nearly the same terms. Every work in which the love of God and obedience towards Him do not exist is deprived in the eyes of the Almighty of all that can render it good, even should it originate in the best of human motives. Now there is in man natural opposition to God — an opposition that the unaided strength of man cannot surmount. He has neither the will nor the power to overcome it. This must therefore effected by the Divine will.

This is the whole question of free will — so simple, and yet so decried by the world. Such had been the doctrine of the Church. But the schoolmen

had so explained it that it was not recognizable. Undoubtedly (said they) the natural will of man can do nothing really pleasing to God; but it can do much towards rendering men meet to receive the grace of God, and more worthy to obtain it. They called these preparations a merit of congruity: “because it is congruous,” said Thomas Aquinas, “that God should treat with particular favor him who makes good use of his own will.” And, as regards the conversion to be effected in man, undoubtedly it must be accomplished by the grace of God, which (according to the schoolmen) should bring it about, but not to the exclusion of his natural powers.” These powers (said they) were not destroyed by sin: sin only opposes an obstacle to their development; but so soon as this obstacle is removed (and it was this, in their opinion, that the grace of God had to effect) the action of these powers begins again. The bird, to use one of their favorite comparisons, that has been tied for some time, has in this state neither lost its ability nor forgotten the art of flying; but some hand must loose the bonds, in order that he may again make use of his wings. This is the case with man, said

they. Such was the question agitated between Eck and Carlstadt. At first Eck had appeared to oppose all Carlstadt's propositions on this subject; but finding his position untenable, he said: "I grant that the will has not the power of doing a good work, and that it receives this power from God" — "Do you acknowledge then," asked Carlstadt, overjoyed at obtaining so important a concession, "that every good work comes entirely from God?" — "The whole good work really proceeds from God, but not wholly," cunningly replied the scholastic doctor. — "Truly, this is a discovery not unworthy of the science of divinity," exclaimed Melancthon. — "An entire apple," continued Eck, "is produced by the sun, but not entirely and without the co-operation of the plant." Most certain it has never yet been maintained that an apple is produced solely by the sun.

Well then, said the opponents, plunging deeper into this important and delicate question of philosophy and religion, let us inquire how God acts upon man, and how man conducts himself under this action. "I acknowledge," said Eck, "that

the first impulse in man's conversion proceeds from God, and that the will of man in this instance is entirely passive." Thus far the two parties were agreed. "I acknowledge," said Carlstadt, "that after this first impulse which proceeds from God, something must come on the part of man, — something that St. Paul denominates will, and which the fathers entitle consent." Here again they were both agreed: but from this point they diverged. "This consent of man," said Eck, "comes partly from our natural will, and partly from God's grace." — "No," said Carlstadt, "God must entirely create this will in man." — Upon this Eck manifested anger and astonishment at hearing words so fitted to make man sensible of his nothingness. "Your doctrine," exclaimed he, "converts a man into a stone, a log, incapable of any reaction!" — "What!" replied the reformers, "the faculty of receiving this strength which God produces in him, this faculty which (according to us) man possesses, does not sufficiently distinguish him from a log or a stone?" — "But," said their antagonist, "by denying that man has any natural ability, you contradict all experience." — "We do

not deny," replied they, "that man possesses a certain ability, and that he has the power of reflection, meditation, and choice. We consider this power and ability as mere instruments that can produce no good work, until the hand of God has set them in motion. They are like a saw in the hands of a sawyer." The great doctrine of free will was here discussed; and was easy to demonstrate that the doctrine of the reformers did not deprive man of his liberty as a moral agent, and make him a mere passive machine. The liberty of a moral agent consists in his power of acting conformably to his choice.

Every action performed without external constraint, and in consequence of the determination of the soul itself, is a free action. The soul is determined by motives; but we continually observe the same motives acting differently on different minds. Many men do not act in conformity with the motives of which, however, they acknowledge the full force. This inefficacy of motives proceeds from the obstacles opposed to them by the corruption of the understanding, and of the heart.

But God, by giving man a new heart and a new spirit, removes these obstacles; and by removing them, far from depriving him of his liberty, He takes away, on the contrary, everything that prevented him from acting freely, from listening to the voice of his conscience, and, in the words of the Gospel, makes him free indeed. (John 8:36).

A trivial circumstance interrupted the discussion. We learn from Eck, that Carlstadt had prepared a number of arguments; and, like many public speakers of our own day, he was reading what he had written. Eck saw in this the tactics of a mere learner, and objected to it. Carlstadt, embarrassed, and fearing that he should break down if he were deprived of his papers, persisted. “Ah!” exclaimed the schoolman, proud of the advantage he thought he had obtained, “his memory is not so good as mine.”

The point was referred to the arbitrators, who permitted the reading of extracts from the Fathers, but decided that in other respects the disputants should speak extempore.

This first part of the disputation was often interrupted by the noise of the spectators. They were in commotion, and frequently raised their voices.

Any proposition that offended the ears of the majority immediately excited their clamors, and then, as in our own days, the galleries were often called to order. The disputants themselves were sometimes carried away by the heat of discussion.

Near Luther sat Melancthon, who attracted almost as much attention as his neighbor. He was of small stature, and appeared little more than eighteen years old. Luther, who was a head taller, seemed connected with him in the closest friendship; they came in, went out, and took their walks together. “To look at Melancthon,” wrote a Swiss theologian who studied at Wittenberg, “you would say he was a mere boy; but in understanding, learning, and talent, he is a giant, and I cannot comprehend how such heights of wisdom and genius can be found in so small a

body.” Between the sittings, Melancthon conversed with Carlstadt and Luther. He aided them in preparing for the combat, and suggested the arguments with which his extensive learning furnished him; but during the discussion he remained quietly seated among the spectators, and carefully listened to the words of the theologians. From time to time, however, he came to the assistance of Carlstadt; and when the latter was near giving way under the powerful declamation of the Chancellor of Ingolstadt, the young professor whispered a word, or slipped him a piece of paper, on which the answer was written. Eck having perceived this on one occasion, and feeling indignant that this grammarian, as he called him, should dare interfere in the discussion, turned towards him and said haughtily: “Hold your tongue, Philip; mind your studies, and do not disturb me.” Perhaps Eck at that time foresaw how formidable an opponent he would afterwards find in this young man. Luther was offended at the gross insult directed against his friend. “Philip’s judgment,” said he, “has greater weight with me than that of a thousand Doctor Ecks.” The calm

Melancthon easily detected the weak points of the discussion.

“We cannot help feeling surprise,” said he, with that wisdom and beauty which we find in all his words, “when we think of the violence with which these subjects were treated. How could any one expect to derive any profit from it? The Spirit of God loves retirement and silence: it is then that it penetrates deep into our hearts. The bride of Christ does not dwell in the streets and market-places, but leads her Spouse into the house of her mother.” Each party claimed the victory. Eck strained every nerve to appear the conqueror. As the points of divergence almost touched each other, he frequently exclaimed that he had convinced his opponent; or else, like another Proteus (said Luther), he suddenly turned round, put forth Carlstadt’s opinions in other words, and asked him, with a tone of triumph, if he did not find himself compelled to yield. And the unskillful auditors, who could not detect the manoeuver of the sophist, applauded and exulted with him. In many respects they were not equally matched.

Carlstadt was slow, and on some occasions did not reply to his adversary's objections until the next day. Eck, on the contrary, was a master in his science, and found whatever he required at the very instant.

He entered the hall with a disdainful air; ascended the rostrum with a firm step; and there he tossed himself about, paced to and fro, spoke at the full pitch of his sonorous voice, had a reply ready for every argument, and bewildered his hearers by his memory and skill. And yet, without perceiving it, Eck conceded during the discussion much more than he had intended. His partisans laughed aloud at each of his devices; "but (said Luther) I seriously believe that their laughter was mere pretense, and that in their hearts they were annoyed at seeing their chief, who had commenced the battle with so many bravados, abandon his standard, desert his army, and become a shameless runaway." Three or four days after the opening of the conference, the disputation was interrupted by the festival of peter and Paul the apostles.

On this occasion the Duke of Pomerania requested Luther to preach before him in his chapel. Luther cheerfully consented. But the place was soon crowded, and as the number of hearers kept increasing, the assembly was transferred to the great hall of the castle, in which the discussion was held.

Luther chose his text from the Gospel of the day, and preached on the grace of God and the power of Saint Peter. What Luther ordinarily maintained before an audience composed of men of learning, he then set before the people. Christianity causes the light of truth to shine upon the humblest as well as the most elevated minds; it is this which distinguishes if from every other religion and from every system of philosophy. The theologians of Leipsic, who had heard Luther preach, hastened to report to Eck the scandalous words with which their ears had been shocked. “You must reply,” exclaimed they; “you must publicly refute these subtle errors.” Eck desired nothing better. All the churches were open to him, and four times in

succession he went into the pulpit to cry down Luther and his sermon. Luther's friends were indignant at this. They demanded that the Wittenberg divine should be heard in his turn. But it was all in vain.

The pulpits were open to the adversaries of the evangelical doctrine; they were closed against those who proclaimed it. "I was silent," said Luther, "and was forced to suffer myself to be attacked, insulted, and calumniated, without even the power of excusing or defending myself." It was not only the ecclesiastics who manifested their opposition to the evangelical doctors: the citizens of Leipsic were, in this respect, of the same opinion as the clergy. A blind fanaticism had rendered them the dupes of the falsehood and hatred that the priests were attempting to propagate. The principal inhabitants did not visit either Luther or Carlstadt. If they met them in the street, they did not salute them, and endeavored to traduce their characters with the duke. But on the contrary they paid frequent visits to the Doctor of Ingolstadt, and ate and drank with him. The latter feasted with them,

entertaining them with a description of the costly banquets to which he had been invited in Germany and Italy, sneering at Luther who had imprudently rushed upon his invincible sword, slowly quaffing the beer of Saxony the better to compare it with that of Bavaria, and casting amorous glances (he boasts of it himself) on the frail fair ones of Leipsic. His manners, which were rather free, did not give a favorable idea of his morals. They were satisfied with offering Luther the wine usually presented to the disputants. Those who were favorable disposed towards him, concealed their feelings from the public; many, like Nicodemus of old, visited him stealthily and by night. Two men alone honorably distinguished themselves by publicly declaring their friendship for him. They were Doctor Auerbach, whom we have already seen at Augsburg, and Doctor Pistor the younger.

The greatest agitation prevailed in the city. The two parties were like tow hostile camps, and they sometimes came to blows. Frequent quarrels took place in the taverns between the students of Leipsic and those of Wittenberg. It was generally reported,

even in the meeting of the clergy, that Luther carried a devil about with him shut up in a little box. “I don’t know whether the devil is in the box or merely under his frock,” said Eck insidiously; “but he is certainly in one or the other.” Several doctors of the two parties had lodgings during the disputation in the house of the printer Herbipolis. They became so outrageous, that their host was compelled to station a police-officer, armed with a halberd, at the head of the table, with orders to prevent the guests from coming to blows.

One day Baumgartner, an indulgence-merchant, quarrelled with a gentleman, a friend of Luther’s, and gave way to such a violent fit of anger that he expired. “I was one of those who carried him to his grave,” said Froschel, who relates the circumstance. In this manner did the general ferment in men’s minds display itself. Then, as in our own times, the speeches in the pulpits found an echo in the drawing-room and in the streets.

Duke George, although strongly biassed in

Eck’s favor, did not display so much passion as his subjects. He invited Eck, Luther, and Carlstadt to meet each other at his table. He even begged Luther to come and see him in private; but it was not long before he displayed all the prejudices with which he had been inspired against the reformer. “By your work on the Lord’s Prayer,” said the duke with displeasure, “you have misled the consciences of many. There are some people who complain that they have not been able to repeat a single pater-noster for four days together.”

Chapter 5

The Hierarchy and Rationalism

On the 4th of July the discussion between Eck and Luther commenced.

Everything seemed to promise that it would be more violent, more decisive, and more interesting than that which had just concluded, and which had gradually thinned the hall. The two combatants entered the arena resolved not to lay down their arms until victory declared its favor of one or the other. The general expectation was aroused, for the papal primacy was to be the subject of discussion. Christianity has two great adversaries: hierarchism and rationalism. Rationalism, in its application to the doctrine of man's ability, had been attacked by the reformers is the previous part of the Leipsic disputation. Hierarchism, considered in what is at once its summit and its base, — the doctrine of papal authority, — was to be contested in the

second. On the one side appeared Eck, the champion of the established religion, vaunting of the discussion he had maintained, as a general boasts of his campaigns. On the other side advanced Luther, who seemed destined to reap persecution and ignominy from this struggle, but who still presented himself with a good conscience, a firm resolution to sacrifice everything in the cause of truth, and an assurance grounded in faith in God, and in the deliverance He grants to all who trust in Him. New convictions had sunk deep into his soul; they were not as yet arranged into a system; but in the heat of the combat they flashed forth like lightning. Serious and daring, he showed a resolution that made light of every obstacle. On his features might be seen the traces of the storms his soul had encountered, and the courage with which he was prepared to meet fresh tempests. These combatants, both sons of peasants, and the representatives of the two tendencies that still divide Christendom, were about to enter upon a contest on which depended, in great measure the future prospects of the State and of the Church.

At seven in the morning the two disputants were in their pulpits, surrounded by a numerous and attentive assembly.

Luther stood up, and with a necessary precaution, he said modestly: — “In the name of the Lord, Amen! I declare that the respect I bear to the sovereign pontiff would have prevented my entering upon this discussion, if the excellent Dr. Eck had not dragged me into it.” Eck. — “In thy name, gentle Jesus! before descending into the lists, I protest before you, most noble lords, that all that I may say is in submission to the judgment of the first of all sees, and of him who is its possessor.” After a brief silence, Eck continued: “There is in the Church of God a primacy that cometh from Christ himself. The Church militant was formed in the image of the Church triumphant. Now, the latter is a monarchy in which the hierarchy ascends step by step up to God, its sole chief. For this reason Christ has established a similar order upon earth. What a monster the Church would be if it were without a head!” Luther, turning towards the assembly. — “When

Dr. Eck declares that the universal Church must have a head, he says well. If there is any one among us who maintains the contrary, let him stand up! As for me, it is no concern of mine." Eck. — "If the Church militant has never been without a head, I should like to know who it can be, if not the Roman pontiff?" Luther. — "The head of the Church militant is Christ himself, and not a man. I believe this on the testimony of God's Word. He must reign, says Scripture, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Let us not listen to those who banish Christ to the Church triumphant in heaven. His kingdom is a kingdom of faith. We cannot see our Head, and yet we have one." Eck, who did not consider himself beaten, had recourse to other arguments, and resumed: "It is from Rome, according to Saint Cyprian, that sacerdotal unity has proceeded." Luther. — "For the Western Church, I grant it. But is not this same Roman Church the offspring of that of Jerusalem? It is the latter, properly speaking, that is the nursing-mother of all the churches." Eck. — Saint Jerome declares that if an extraordinary power, superior to all others, were not given to the pope, there would be

in the churches as many sects as there were pontiffs." Luther. — "Given: that is to say, if all the rest of believers consent to it, this power might be conceded to the chief pontiff by human right.

And I will not deny, that if all the believers in the world agree in recognizing as first and supreme pontiff either the Bishop of Rome, or of Paris, or of Magdeburg, we should acknowledge him as such from the respect due to this general agreement of the Church; but that has never been seen yet, and never will be seen. Even in our own days, does not the Greek Church refuse its assent to Rome?" Luther was at that time prepared to acknowledge the pope as chief magistrate of the Church, freely elected by it; but he denied that he was pope of Divine right. It was not till much later that he denied that submission was in any way due to him: and this step he was led to take by the Leipsic disputation. But Eck had ventured on ground better known to Luther than to himself. The latter could not, indeed, maintain his thesis that the papacy had existed during the preceding four centuries only. Eck quoted authorities of an earlier date, to which

luther could not reply.

Criticism had not yet attacked the False Decretals. But the nearer the discussion approached the primitive ages of the Church, the greater was Luther's strength. Eck appealed to the Fathers; Luther replied to him from the Fathers, and all the by standers were struck with his superiority over his rival.

"That the opinions I set forth are those of Saint Jerome," said he, "I prove by the epistle of St. Jerome himself to Evagrius: 'Every bishop,' says he, 'whether at Rome, Eugublum, Constantinople, Rhegium, Tanis, or Alexandria, is partaker of the same merit and of the same priesthood. The power of riches, the humiliation of poverty, are the only things that make a difference in the rank of the bishops.'" From the writings of the Fathers, Luther passed to the decisions of the councils, which consider the Bishop of Rome as only the first among his peers. "We read," said he, "in the decree of the Council of Africa, 'The bishop of the first see shall neither be called prince of the pontiffs,

nor sovereign pontiff, nor by any other name of that kind; but only bishop of the first see.' If the monarchy of the Bishop of Rome was of Divine right," continued Luther, "would not this be an heretical injunction?" Eck replied by one of those subtle distinctions that were so familiar to him: — "The bishop of Rome, if you will have it so, is not universal bishop, but bishop of the universal Church."

Luther. — "I shall make no reply to this: let our hearers form their own opinion of it." — "Certainly," added he directly, "this is an explanation very worthy of a theologian, and calculated to satisfy a disputant who thirsts for glory. It is not for nothing, is seems, that I have remained at great expense at Leipsic, since I have learnt that the pope is not, in truth, the universal bishop, but the bishop of the universal Church!" Eck. — "Well then, I will come to the point. The worthy doctor calls upon me to prove that the primacy of the Church of Rome is of Divine right. I will prove it by this expression of Christ: Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my Church.

Saint Augustine, in one of his epistles, has thus explained the meaning of this passage ‘Thou art Peter, and on this rock (that is to say, on Peter) I will build my Church.’ It is true that in another place the same father has explained that by this rock we should understand Christ himself, but he has not retracted his former exposition.” Luther. — “If the reverend doctor desires to attack me, let him first reconcile these contradictions in Saint Augustine. For it is most certain that Augustine has said many times that the rock was Christ, and perhaps not more than once that it was Peter himself. But even should Saint Augustine and all the Fathers say that the Apostle is the rock of which Christ speaks, I would resist them, single-handed, in reliance upon the Holy Scriptures, that is, on Divine right; for it is written: Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Peter himself terms Christ the chief cornerstone, and a living stone on which we are built up a spiritual house.” Eck. — “I am surprised at the humility and modesty with which the reverend doctor undertakes to oppose, alone, so many illustrious Fathers, and pretends to know

more than the sovereign pontiffs, the councils, the doctors, and the universities! .....It would be surprising, no doubt, if God had hidden the truth from so many saints and martyrs — until the advent of the reverend father!" Luther. — "The Fathers are not against me. Saint Augustine and Saint Ambrose, both most excellent doctors, teach as I teach. Super isto articulo fidei, fundata est Ecclesia, says Saint Ambrose, when explaining what is meant by the rock on which the Church is built. Let my opponent then set a curb upon his tongue. To express himself as he does, will only serve to excite contention, and not be to discuss like a true doctor." Eck had no idea that his opponent's learning was so extensive, and that he would be able to extricate himself from the toils that were drawn around him. "The reverend doctor," said he, "has come well armed into the lists. I beg your lordships to excuse me, if I do not exhibit such accuracy of research. I came here to discuss, and not to make a book." — Eck was surprised but not beaten. As he had no more arguments to adduce, he had a recourse to a wretched and spiteful trick, which, if it did not

vanquish his antagonist, must at least embarrass him greatly. If the accusation of being Bohemian, a heretic, a Hussite, can be fixed upon Luther, he is vanquished; for the Bohemians were objects of abhorrence in the Church. The scene of combat was not far from the frontiers of Bohemia; Saxony, after the sentence pronounced on John Huss by the Council of Constance, had been exposed to all the horrors of a long and ruinous war; it was its boast to have resisted the Hussites at that time; the university of Leipsic had been founded in opposition to the tendencies of John Huss; and this discussion was going on in the presence of princes, nobles, and citizens, whose fathers had fallen in that celebrated contest. To insinuate that Luther and Huss are of one mind, will be to inflict a most terrible blow on the former.

It is to this stratagem that the Ingolstadt doctor now has recourse: “From the earliest times, all good Christians have acknowledged that the Church of Rome derives its primacy direct from Christ himself, and not from human right. I must confess, however, that the Bohemians, while they

obstinately defended their errors, attacked this doctrine. I beg the worthy father's pardon, if I am an enemy of the Bohemians, because they are enemies of the church, and if the present discussion has called these heretics to my recollection; for, in my humble opinion, the doctor's conclusions are in every way favorable to these errors. It is even asserted that the Hussites are loudly boasting of it." Eck had calculated well: his partisans received this perfidious insinuation with the greatest favor. There was a movement of joy among the audience.

"These insults," said the reformer afterwards, "tickled them much more agreeably than the discussion itself." Luther. — "I do not like and I never shall like a schism. Since on their own authority the Bohemians have separated from our unity, they have done wrong, even if the Divine right had pronounced in favor of their doctrines; for the supreme Divine right is charity and oneness of mind." It was during the morning sitting of the 5th July that Luther had made use of this language. The meeting broke up shortly after, as it was the hour of dinner. Luther felt ill at ease. Had he not

gone too far in thus condemning the Christians of Bohemia? Did they not hold the doctrines that Luther is now maintaining? He saw all the difficulties of his position. Shall he rise up against a council that condemned John Huss, or shall he deny that sublime idea of a universal Christian Church which had taken full possession of his mind? The unshaken Luther did not hesitate. He will do his duty, whatever may be the consequences. Accordingly when the assembly met again at two in the afternoon, he was the first to speak. He said with firmness: “Among the articles of faith held by John Huss and the Bohemians, there are some that are most christian. This is a positive certainty.

Here, for instance, is one: ‘That there is but one universal Church;’ and here is another: ‘It is not necessary for salvation to believe the Roman Church superior to all others.’ It is of little consequence to me whether these things were said by Wickliffe or by Huss.....they are truth.” Luther’s declaration produced a great sensation among his hearers. Huss — Wickliffe — those

odious names, pronounced with approbation by a monk in the midst of a catholic assembly! An almost general murmur ran round the hall. Duke George himself felt alarmed. He fancied he saw that banner of civil war upraised in Saxony which had for so many years desolated the states of his maternal ancestors. Unable to suppress his emotion, he placed his hands on his hips, shook his head, and exclaimed aloud, so that all the assembly heard him, “He is carried away by rage!” The whole meeting was agitated: they rose up, each man speaking to his neighbor. Those who had given way to drowsiness awoke. Luther’s friends were in great perplexity; while his enemies exulted. Many who had thus far listened to him with pleasure began to entertain doubts of his orthodoxy. The impression produced on Duke George’s mind by these words was never effaced; from this moment he looked upon the reformer with an evil eye, and became his enemy. Luther did not suffer himself to be intimidated by these murmurs. One of his principal arguments was, that the Greeks had never recognized the pope, and yet they had never been declared heretics; that the

Greek Church had existed, still existed, and would exist, without the pope, and that it as much belonged to Christ as the Church of Rome did. Eck, on the contrary, impudently maintained that the Christian and the Roman Church were one and the same; that the Greeks and Orientals, in abandoning the pope, had also abandoned the christian faith, and were indisputably heretics. “What!” exclaimed Luther, “are not Gregory of Naziangum, Basil the Great, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, and an immense number besides of Greek bishops — are they not saved? and yet they did not believe that the Church of Rome was above the other Churches!.....It is not in the power of the Roman pontiffs to make new articles of faith. The christian believer acknowledges no other authority than Holy Scripture. This alone is the right Divine. I beg the worthy doctor to concede that the Roman pontiffs were men, and that he will not make them gods.” Eck then resorted to one of those jests which give a specious air of triumph to him who employs them.

“The revered father is a very poor cook,” said he; “he has made a terrible hodge-podge of Greek

saints and heretics; so that the odor of sanctity in the one prevents us from smelling the poison of the others.” Luther, interrupting Eck with warmth. — “The worthy doctor is becoming abusive. In my opinion, there can be no communion between Christ and Belial.” Luther had made a great stride in advance. In 1516 and 1517, he had only attacked the sermons of the indulgence-hawkers and the scholastic doctrines, but had respected the papal decrees. Somewhat later he had rejected these decrees, and had appealed to a council. Now he had thrown off even this latter authority, declaring that no council could lay down a new article of faith, and claim to be infallible. Thus had all human authorities fallen successively before; the sands that the rain and the torrents carry with them had disappeared; and for rebuilding the ruined house of the Lord nothing remained but the everlasting rock of the Word of God. “Reverend father,” said Eck, “if you believe that a council, regularly assembled, can err, you are in my eyes nothing better than a heathen and a publican!” Such were the discussions that occupied the two doctors. The assembly listened with earnestness; but their attention

sometimes flagged, and the bystanders were delighted when any incident occurred to amuse and excite them. It often happens that the most serious matters are mixed up with others the most ridiculous. This was the case at Leipsic.

Duke George, according to the custom of the times, had a court-fool. Some wags said to him: “Luther maintains that a court-fool may marry, while Eck says that he cannot.” Upon this, the fool took a great dislike to Eck, and every time he entered the hall in the duke’s train, he looked at the theologian with a threatening air. The Chancellor of Ingolstadt, who was not above indulging in buffoonery, closed one eye (the fool was blind of an eye) and with the other began to squint at the little gentleman, who, losing his temper, overwhelmed the doctor with abuse. The whole assembly (says Peifer) burst into laughter, and this interlude somewhat diminished the extreme tension of their minds. At the same time scenes were enacting in the city and in the churches, that showed the horror inspired in the Romish partisans by Luther’s bold assertions. It was from the

convents attached to the pope’s interest that the loudest clamors proceeded. One Sunday, the Wittenberg doctor entered the Dominican church before high mass. There were present only a few monks repeating low mass at the smaller altars. As soon as it was known in the cloister that the heretic Luther was in the church, the monks ran in hastily, snatched up the remonstrance, and carrying it to the tabernacle, there shut it up carefully, watching over it lest the host should be profaned by the heretical eyes of the Wittenberg Augustine. At the same time those who were reading mass hurriedly caught up the various ornaments employed in the service, deserted the altar, fled across the church, and took refuge in the vestry, as if, says an historian, Satan had been at their heels.

The subject of the discussion furnished matter for conversation in every place. In the inns, the university, and the court, each man expressed his opinion. However great might have been Duke George’s exasperation, he did not obstinately refuse to be convinced. One day, as Eck and Luther were dining with him, he interrupted their

conversation by saying: “Whether the pope be pope by human or by Divine right, nevertheless, he is pope.” Luther was much pleased at these words. “The prince,” said he, “would never have made use of them, had he not been struck by my arguments.” The discussion on the papal primacy had lasted five days. On the 8th of July, they proceeded to the doctrine of Purgatory. This spread over a little more than two days. Luther still admitted this doctrine; but denied that it was taught in Scripture or in the Fathers in the manner that his opponent and the schoolmen pretended. “Our Doctor Eck,” said he, alluding to the superficial character of his adversary’s mind, “has this day skimmed over Scripture almost without touching it — as a spider runs upon water.” On the 11th of July they came to Indulgences. “It was a mere joke,” said Luther; “the dispute was ridiculous. The indulgences fell outright, and Eck was nearly of my opinion.” Eck himself said: “If I had not disputed with Doctor Martin on the papal supremacy, I should almost have agreed with him.” The discussion next turned on Repentance, Absolution of the Priest, and Satisfactions. Eck, according to his usual practice,

quoted the scholastic doctors, the Dominicans, and the pope's canons. Luther closed the disputation with these words: "The reverend doctor flees from the Scriptures, as the devil from before the cross. As for me, with all due respect to the Fathers, I prefer the authority of Holy Writ, and this test I would recommend to our judges." Here ended the dispute between Eck and Luther. Carlstadt and the Ingolstadt doctor kept up the discussion two days longer on human merits in good works. On the 16th of July the business was concluded, after having lasted twenty days, by a speech from the rector of the university.

As soon as he had finished, loud music was heard, and the solemnity was concluded by singing the Te Deum.

But during the chanting of this solemn thanksgiving, men's minds were no longer as they had been during the Veni Spiritus at the opening of the discussion. Already the presentiments of many had been realized. The blows that the champions of the two doctrines had aimed at each other had

inflicted a deep wound upon the papacy.

Chapter 6

Interest felt by the Laity

These theological disputes, to which the men of the world would now be unwilling to consecrate a few brief moments, had been followed and listened to for twenty successive days with great attention: laymen, knights, and princes had manifested a constant interest. Duke Barnim of Pomerania and Duke George were remarkably regular in their attendance.

But, on the contrary, some of the Leipsic theologians, friends of Doctor Eck, slept soundly, as an eyewitness informs us. It was necessary to wake them up at the close of the disputation, for fear they should lose their dinners.

Luther quitted Leipsic first; Carlstadt followed him; but Eck remained several days after their departure.

No decision had been come to on the

discussion. Every one commented on it according to his own feelings. “At Leipsic,” said Luther, “there was great loss of time, but no seeking after truth. We have been examining the doctrines of our adversaries these two years past, so that we have counted all their bones. Eck, on the contrary, has hardly grazed the surface; but he made more noise in one hour than we have in two long years.” In his private letters to his friends, Eck confessed his defeat on certain points; but he had abundant reasons to account for it. “The Wittenbergers,” wrote he to Hochstraten on the 24th July, “conquered me on several points: first, because they brought their books with them; secondly, because some of their friends took notes of the discussion, which they examined at their leisure; thirdly because they were many; two doctors (Carlstadt and Luther), Lange, vicar of the Augustines; two licentiates, Amsdorff, and a very presumptuous nephew of Reuchlin (Melancthon); three doctors of law, and several masters of arts, all of whom aided in the discussion, either in public or in private. But as for me, I appeared alone, the justice of my cause being my sole companion.”

Eck forgot Emser, and the bishop and doctors of Leipsic.

If such avowals escaped from Eck in his familiar correspondence, his behavior in public was very different. The doctor of Ingolstadt and the Leipsic divines loudly vaunted of what they called their victory. They circulated false reports in every direction. All the mouthpieces of their party repeated their self-congratulations. “Eck is triumphing everywhere,” wrote Luther. But in the camp of Rome each man disputed his share of the laurels. “If we had not come to Eck’s support,” said the men of Leipsic, “the illustrious doctor would have been overthrown.” — “The Leipsic divines are very good sort of people,” said the Ingolstadt doctor, “but I expected too much of them. I did everything singlehanded.” — “You see,” said Luther to Spalatin, “that they are singing a new Iliad and a new Aeneid. They are so kind as the make a Hector or a Turnus of me, while Eck, in their eyes, is Achilles or Aeneas. They have but one doubt remaining, whether the victory was gained by the arms of Eck or by those of Leipsic.

All that I can say to clear up the subject is this, Doctor Eck never ceased bawling, and the Leipsic divines did nothing but hold their tongues." "Eck is conqueror in the eyes of those who do not understand the matter, and who have grown gray under the old schoolmen," said the elegant, witty, and wise Mosellanus; "but Luther and Carlstadt are victorious in the opinion of those who possess any learning, understanding, and modesty." The Leipsic disputation was not destined, however, to evaporate in smoke. Every work performed with devotion bears fruit. Luther's words had sunk with irresistible power into the minds of his hearers. Many of those who daily thronged the hall of the castle were subdued by the truth.

It was especially in the midst of its most determined adversaries that its victories were gained. Doctor Eck's secretary, familiar friend, and disciple, Poliander, was won to the Reformation; and in the year 1522, he publicly preached the Gospel at Leipsic. John Cellarius, professor of Hebrew, a man violently opposed to the reformed doctrines, was touched by the words of the

eloquent doctor, and began to search the Scriptures more deeply. Erelong he gave up his station, and went to Wittenberg to study humbly at Luther's feet. Some time after he was pastor at Frankfort and at Dresden.

Among those who had taken their seats on the benches reserved for the court, and who surrounded Duke George, was a young prince, twelve years old, descended from a family celebrated for their combats against the Saracens — it was George of Anhalt. He was then studying at Leipsic under a private tutor. An eager desire for learning and an ardent thirst for truth already distinguished this illustrious youth. He was frequently heard repeating these words of Solomon: Lying lips become not a prince. The discussion at Leipsic awakened serious reflections in this boy, and excited a decided partiality for Luther. Some time after, he was offered a bishopric. His brothers and all his relations entreated him to accept it, wishing to push him to the highest dignities in the Church. But he was determined in his refusal. On the death of his pious

mother, who was secretly well disposed towards Luther, he became possessed of all the reformer's writings. He offered up constant and fervent prayers to God, beseeching Him to turn his heart to the truth, and often in the solitude of his closet, he exclaimed with tears: Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes. His prayers were heard. Convinced and carried away, he fearlessly ranged himself on the side of the Gospel. In vain did his guardians, and particularly Duke George, besiege him with entreaties and remonstrances. He was inflexible, and George exclaimed, half convinced by the reasoning of his ward: "I cannot answer him; but I will still remain in my own Church, for it is a hard matter to break in an old dog." We shall meet again with this amiable prince, one of the noblest characters of the Reformation, who preached in person to his subjects the words of everlasting life, and to whom has been applied the saying of Dion on the Emperor Marcus Antoninus: "He was consistent during the whole of his life; he was a good man, one in whom there was no guile." But it was the students in particular who received

Luther’s words with enthusiasm. They felt the difference between the spirit and energy of the Wittenberg doctor, and the sophistical distinctions, the empty speculations of the Chancellor of Ingolstadt. They saw that Luther relied upon the Word of God, and that Eck’s opinions were grounded on human tradition. The effect was instantaneous. The lecture-rooms of the university of Leipsic were speedily deserted after the disputation. One circumstance, indeed, contributed to this result: the plague seemed on the point of breaking out in that city. But there were other universities (Erfurth, Ingolstadt, etc.) to which the students might have gone. The power of truth drew them to Wittenberg, where the number of students was soon doubled. Among those who removed from the one university to the other, was observed a youth of sixteen years, of melancholy disposition, speaking seldom, and who, in the midst of the conversations and sports of his fellow-students, often appeared absorbed in his own reflections. His parents had at first thought him of weak intellect; but soon found him so quick in learning, and so constantly occupied with his studies, that they

formed the greatest expectations of him. His uprightness and candor, his modesty and piety, won him the affection of all, and Mosellanus pointed him out as a model to the whole university. His name was Gaspard Cruciger, a native of Leipsic. The new student of Wittenberg was afterwards the friend of Melancthon, and Luther's assistant in the translation of the Bible.

The Leipsic disputation bore still greater fruits. Here it was that the theologian of the Reformation received his call. Melancthon sat modest and silent listening to the discussion, in which he took very little part. Till that time literature had been his sole occupation. The conference gave him a new impulse, and launched the eloquent professor into the career of divinity. From that hour his extensive learning bowed before the Word of God. He received the evangelical truth with the simplicity of a child; explained the doctrine of salvation with a grace and perspicuity that charmed all his hearers; and trod boldly in that path so new to him, for, said he, "Christ will never abandon his followers." Henceforward the two friends walked together,

contending for liberty and truth, — the one with the energy of St. Paul, the other with the meekness of St. John.

Luther has admirably expressed the difference of their callings. “I was born,” said he, “to contend on the field of battle with factions and with wicked spirits. This is why my works abound with war and tempests.

It is my task to uproot the stock and the stem, to clear away the briars and underwood, to fill up the pools and the marshes. I am the rough woodman who has to prepare the way and smooth the road. But Philip advances quietly and softly; he tills and plants the ground; sows and waters it joyfully, according to the gifts that God has given him with so liberal a hand.”

If Melancthon, the tranquil sower, was called to the work by the disputation of Leipsic, Luther, the hardy woodman, felt his arm strengthened by it, and his courage reinvigorated. The greatest effect of this discussion was that wrought in Luther

himself. “The scales of scholastic theology,” said he, “fell then entirely from before my eyes, under the triumphant presidence of Doctor Eck.” The veil which the School and the Church had conjointly drawn before the sanctuary was rent for the reformer from top to bottom. Driven to new inquiries, he arrived at unexpected discoveries. With as much indignation as astonishment, he saw the evil in all its magnitude. Searching into the annals of the Church, he discovered that the supremacy of Rome had no other origin than ambition on the one hand, and ignorant credulity on the other. The narrow point of view under which he had hitherto looked upon the Church was succeeded by a deeper and more extended range. He recognized in the Christians of Greece and of the East true members of the Catholic Church; and instead of a visible chief, seated on the banks of the Tiber, he adored, as sole chief of the people of God, an invisible and eternal Redeemer, who, according to his promise, is daily in the midst of every nation upon earth, with all who believe in His name. The Latin Church was no longer in Luther’s estimation the universal Church; he saw

the narrow barriers of Rome fall down, and exulted in discovering beyond them the glorious dominions of Christ. From that time he comprehended how a man might be a member of Christ's Church, without belonging to the pope's. But, above all, the writings of Huss produced a deep impression upon him. He there found, to his great surprise, the doctrine of St. Paul and of St. Augustine, — that doctrine at which he himself had arrived after so many struggles. "I believed and I taught all the doctrines of John Huss without being aware of it: and so did Staupitz. In short, although unconscious of it, we are all Hussites. Paul and Augustine were so themselves. I am confounded, and know not what to think. — Oh! how terribly have men deserved the judgments of God, seeing that the Gospel truth, which has been unveiled and published this century past, has been condemned, burnt, and stifled.....Wo, wo to the world!"

Luther separated from the papacy, and then felt towards it a decided aversion and holy indignation; and all the witnesses that in every age had risen up against Rome came in turns before him and

testified against her, each revealing some abuse or error. “Oh! what thick darkness!” exclaimed he.

He was not allowed to be silent on this sad discovery. The insolence of his adversaries, their pretended triumph, and the efforts they made to extinguish the light, decided his soul. He advanced along the path in which God conducted him, without anxiety as to the goal to which it would lead him. Luther has pointed to this moment as that of his emancipation from the papal yoke. “Learn from me,” said he, “how difficult a thing is to throw off errors confirmed by the example of all the world, and which, through long habit, have become a second nature to us. I had then been seven years reading and publicly explaining the Holy Scriptures with great zeal, so that I knew them almost by heart. I had also all the first-fruits of knowledge and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; that is to say, I knew that we are justified and saved not by our works, but by faith in Christ; and I even maintained openly that the pope is not the head of the Christian Church by Divine right. And yet I could not see the consequences that flowed from

this; namely, that the pope is necessarily and certainly of the devil. For what is not of God must needs be of the devil." Luther adds further on: "I no longer permit myself to be indignant against those who are still attached to the pope, since I, who had for so many years studied the Holy Scriptures so attentively, still clung with so much obstinacy to popery."

Such were the real results of the Leipsic disputation, — results of more importance than the disputation itself. It was like those first successes which discipline an army and excite its courage.

Chapter 7

Eck attacks Melancthon

Eck gave way to all the intoxication of what he wished to represent as a victory. He inveighed against Luther; heaped charge upon charge against him; wrote to Frederick; and desired, like a skillful general, to take advantage of the confusion that always follows a battle, to obtain important concessions from that prince. While waiting for the measures that were to be taken against his adversary's person, he called down fire upon his writings, even on those he had not read. He begged the elector to summon a provincial council: "Let us exterminate these vermin," said the coarse doctor, "before they multiply beyond all bounds."

It was not upon Luther alone that he vented his anger. His imprudence called Melancthon into the lists. The latter, connected by tender ties of friendship with the excellent Oecolampadius, wrote him an account of the disputation, speaking of Dr. Eck in terms of commendation.

Nevertheless, the pride of the Chancellor of Ingolstadt was wounded. He immediately took up the pen against “that grammarian of Wittenberg, who was not ignorant, indeed, of Latin and Greek, but who had dared to publish a letter in which he had insulted him.....Dr. Eck.”

Melancthon replied, and this was his first theological writing. It is characterized by all that exquisite urbanity which distinguished this excellent man. Laying down the fundamental principles of hermeneutics, he showed that we ought not to interpret Scripture by the Fathers but the Fathers by Scripture. “How often has not Jerome been mistaken!” said he; “how frequently Augustine! how frequently Ambrose! how often their opinions are different! and how often they retract their errors! There is but one Scripture, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and pure and true in all things.

“Luther does not follow certain ambiguous explanations of the ancients, say they; and why

should he? When he explains the passage of Saint Matthew: Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, he says the same thing as Origen, who alone is a host; as Augustine in his homily: and as Ambrose in his sixth book upon Saint Luke; I will mention no others. — What then, will you say the Fathers contradict one another? — And is there any thing astonishing in that? I believe in the Fathers, because I believe in Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is one and simple, like heavenly truth itself. It is obtained by comparing scripture with scripture: it is deduced from the thread and connection of the discourse. There is a philosophy that is enjoined us as regards the Divine Scriptures: and that is, to bring all human opinions and maxims to it, as to a touchstone by which to try them." For a very long period such powerful truths had not been set forth with so much elegance. The Word of God was restored to its place, and the Fathers to theirs. The simple method by which we may arrive at the real meaning of Scripture was firmly laid down. The Word floated above all the difficulties and all the explanations of the School. Melancthon furnished the means of replying to all

those who, like Dr. Eck, should perplex this subject, even to the most distant ages. The feeble grammarian had risen up; and the broad and sturdy shoulders of the scholastic gladiator had bent under the first movement of his arm.

The weaker Eck was, the louder he clamored. By his boastings and his accusations, he hoped to secure the victory that he had lost in his discussions. The monks and all the partisans of Rome re-echoed his clamors. From every part of Germany, reproaches were poured upon Luther; but he remained unaffected by them. “The more I find my name covered with opprobrium, the more do I glory in it,” said he at the conclusion of the explanations he published on the Leipsic propositions.

“The truth, that is to say Christ, must needs increase, and I must decrease.

The voice of the Bride and the Bridegroom causes me a joy that far surpasses the terrors inspired by their clamors. Men are not the authors

of my sufferings, and I entertain no hatred towards them. It is Satan, the prince of wickedness, who desires to terrify me. But He who is within us is mightier than he that is in the world. The judgment of our contemporaries is bad, that of posterity will be better." If the Leipsic disputation augmented Luther's enemies in Germany, it also increased the number of his friends in foreign countries. "What Huss was in Bohemia in other days, you now are in Saxony, dear Martin," wrote the Bohemian brethren to him; "for this reason, pray and be strong in the Lord!"

About this time the war broke out between Luther and Emser, then professor at Leipsic. The latter wrote to Dr. Zack, a zealous Romancatholic of Prague, a letter in which his design appeared to be to deprive the Hussites of their notion that Luther belonged to their party. Luther could not doubt that by seeming to justify him, the learned Leipsicker was endeavoring to fix upon him the suspicion of adhering to the Bohemian heresy, and he accordingly resolved to tear aside the veil under which his former host of Dresden desired to

conceal his hostility. With this intent he published a letter, addressed “To Emser the Goat” (his adversary’s crest was a goat), and concluded by these words, so clearly depicting his character: “My maxim is, — to love all men, but to fear none.” While new friends and enemies thus sprung up around Luther, his old friends seemed to be deserting him. Staupitz, who had brought the reformer from the obscurity of his cloister at Erfurth, began to evince some coolness towards him. Luther had soared too high for Staupitz, who could not follow him. “You abandon me,” wrote Luther to him. “All day long I have been very sad on your account, as a weaned child cries after its mother. I dreamt of you last night (continues the reformer): you were leaving me, while I groaned and shed bitter tears. But you stretched out you hand, bade me be calm, and promised to return to me again.” The pacificator Miltitz was desirous of making a fresh attempt to calm the agitation of men’s minds. But what hold could he have over men still agitated by the emotions the struggle had excited? His endeavors proved unavailing. He was the bearer of the famous Golden Rose presented to

the elector, but the latter did not condescend to receive it in person. Frederick knew the artifices of Rome, and all hope of deceiving him was relinquished.

Chapter 8

The Epistle to the Galatians

Luther, far from retreating, advanced daily. It was at this time that he aimed one of his most violent blows against error in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. The second Commentary is undoubtedly superior to the first; but in the first he expounded with great power the doctrine of justification by faith. Each expression of the new apostle was full of life, and God made use of him to introduce a knowledge of Himself in the hearts of the people. “Christ gave himself for our sins,” said Luther to his contemporaries. “It was not silver or gold that He gave for us; it was not a man; it was not all the angels; it was himself that He gave, out of whom there is nothing great. And He gave this inestimable treasure — for our sins. Where now are those who vaunt of the power of our will? — where are the power and the strength of the law? Since our sins were so great that nothing could take them away except a ransom so immeasurable, shall we still claim to obtain

righteousness by the strength of our own will, by the power of the law, or by the teaching of men? What shall we do with all these artifices, with all these delusions? Alas! we shall make hypocrites of ourselves, whom nothing in the world can save."

But while Luther was thus laying down the doctrine that there is no salvation for men out of Christ, he also showed that this salvation transforms man, and makes him abound in good works. "He who has truly heard the Word of Christ (said the Reformer), and who keeps it, is immediately clothed with the spirit of charity. If you love the man who has made you a present of twenty florins, or done you any important service, or in any other manner testified his affection, how much more ought you to love Him who has given you not gold or silver, but himself, who has even received so many wounds for your sake, who for you has sweated drops of blood, and who died for you; in a word, who, by paying for all your sins, has swallowed up death, and obtained for you in heaven a Father full of love!.....If you love Him not, you have not heard with your heart the things

that He has done; you have not believed them, for faith worketh by love." — "This Epistle is my epistle," said Luther, speaking of the Epistle to the Galatians: "I am wedded to it."

His adversaries compelled him to advance more quickly than he would have done without them. At this period Eck incited the Franciscans of Juterbock to attack him again. Luther, in his reply, not content with repeating what he had already taught, attacked errors that he had newly discovered. "I should like to know," said he, "in what part of Scripture the power of canonizing the saints has been given to the popes; and also what necessity, what utility there is in canonizing them.....For that matter," added he sarcastically, "let them canonize as much as they like!" Luther's new attacks remained unanswered. The blindness of his enemies was as favorable to him as his own courage. They passionately defended secondary matters, and when Luther laid his hand on the foundations of the Roman doctrine, they saw them shaken without uttering a wont. They busied themselves in defending the outworks, while their

intrepid adversary was advancing into the body of the place, and there boldly planting the standard of truth. Accordingly, they were afterwards astonished when they beheld the fortress they were defending undermined and on fire, and crumbling into ruins in the midst of the flames, while they were flattering themselves that it was impregnable, and were still braving those who led the assault. Thus are all great catastrophes effected.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was now beginning to occupy Luther's thoughts. He looked in vain for this holy supper in the Mass.

One day, shortly after his return from Leipsic, he went into the pulpit. Let us listen to his words, for they are the first he uttered on a subject that has since rent the Church of the Reformation into two parties. He said: "In the holy sacrament of the altar there are three things we must observe: the sign, which should be outward, visible, and in a bodily shape; the thing signified, which is inward, spiritual, and in the mind of man; and faith, which makes use of both." If definitions had been carried

no farther, unity would not have been destroyed.

Luther continued: “It would be a good thing if the Church, by a general council, should order both kinds to be given to the believer; not however that one kind is not sufficient, for faith alone would suffice.” This bold language pleased his hearers. A few of them were however alarmed and irritated. “It is false and scandalous,” said they.

The preacher continued: “There is no closer, deeper, or more indivisible union than that which takes place between the food and the body which the food nourishes. Christ is so united to us in the sacrament, that he acts as if he were ourselves. Our sins assail him; his righteousness defends us.” But Luther was not satisfied with setting forth the truth; he attacked one of the most fundamental errors of Rome. That Church maintains that the Sacrament operates of itself, independently of the disposition of the communicant. Nothing can be more convenient than such an opinion.

Hence the ardor with which the sacrament is

sought, — hence the profits of the Romish clergy. Luther attacked this doctrine, and opposed it by the contrary doctrine, by virtue of which faith and the concurrence of the heart are necessary.

This energetic protest was of a nature to overthrow the ancient superstitions; and yet it is most astonishing that no one paid any attention to it. Rome passed by that which should have called up a shriek of distress, and fell impetuously on the unimportant remark Luther had made at the beginning of his discourse, touching the communion in both kinds.

This sermon having been published in December, a cry of heresy was raised in every quarter. “It is nothing more nor less than the doctrine of Prague,” was the observation at the court of Dresden, where the sermon arrived during the festival of Christmas; “the work, besides, is in German, in order that the common people may understand it.” The prince’s devotion was disturbed, and on the third day of the festival he wrote to his cousin Frederick: “Since the

publication of this sermon, the number of those who receive the Eucharist in both kinds has increased in Bohemia by six thousand. Your Luther, from being a professor at Wittenberg, is about to become bishop of Prague and arch-heretic!” — “He was born in Bohemia!” said some, “of Bohemian parents; he was brought up in Prague, and taught from Wickliffe’s books!”

Luther thought it his duty to contradict these rumors in a writing where he seriously gives an account of his family. “I was born at Eisleben,” said he, “and christened in St. Peter’s Church. Dresden is the nearest place to Bohemia that I have ever visited.” Duke George’s letter did not estrange the elector from Luther. A few days after, this prince invited the doctor to a splendid banquet which he gave the Spanish ambassador, and there Luther valiantly contended against Charles’s minister. The elector had begged him, through his chaplain, to defend his cause with moderation. “Too much folly is displeasing to me,” replied Luther to Spalatin; “but too much discretion is displeasing to God.

The Gospel cannot be defended without tumult and without scandal. The Word of God is a sword, — a war, — a ruin, — a stumbling-block, — a destruction, — a poison; and, as Amos says, it meets us like a bear in the road or a lioness in the forest. I seek nothing, I ask nothing. There is One greater that I, who seeketh and asketh. If He should fall, I lose nothing; if He stand, I am profited nothing.” Every thing announced that Luther would need faith and courage now more than ever. Eck was forming plans of revenge. Instead of the laurels that he had reckoned on gaining, the Leipsic gladiator had become the laughingstock of all the sensible men of his nation. Several biting satires were published against him. One was the Epistle of Ignorant Canons, written by Oecolampadius, and which cut Eck to the quick. Another was a Complaint against Eck, probably from the pen of the excellent Pirckheimer of Nuremberg, overflowing with a sarcasm and dignity of which Pascal’s Provincial Letters can alone give us any idea. Luther manifested his displeasure at several of these writings. “It is better to attack openly,”

said he, “than to bite from behind a hedge.”

What a disappointment for the chancellor of Ingolstadt! His fellowcountrymen abandoned him. He prepared to cross the Alps to seek foreign support. Wherever he went, he vented his threats against Luther, Melancthon, Carlstadt, and the elector himself. “From his lofty language,” said the Wittenberg doctor, “one might take him to God Almighty.” Inflamed with anger and the desire of revenge, Eck published, in February 1520, a work on the primacy of St. Peter. In this treatise, which was utterly destitute of all sound criticism, he maintained that this apostle was the first of the popes, and had dwelt twenty-five years in Rome. After this he set out for Italy, to receive the reward of his pretended triumphs, and to forge in Rome, under the shadow of the papal capitol, more powerful thunderbolts than the frail weapons of the schoolmen that had shivered in his hands.

Luther foresaw all the perils that his opponent’s journey might draw upon him; but he feared not. Spalatin, in alarm, begged him to propose peace.

“No,” replied Luther, “so long as he continues his clamors, I cannot withdraw my hands from the contest. I trust everything to God. I consign my bark to the winds and to the waves. The battle is the Lord’s. Why should you imagine that Christ will advance his cause by peace? Did he not fight with his own blood, and all the martyrs after him?” Such, at the opening of the year 1520, was the position of the combatants of Leipsic. The one was rousing all the papacy to crush his rival: the other waited for war with the same calmness that men look for peace. The new year was destined to see the storm burst forth.