

MARTIN LUTHER, AFTER FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.



MARTIN LUTHER. (FROM A WOOD-CUT BY LUCAS CRANACH, ENGRAVED IN 1546.)

MARGARET LUTHER, the mother of Martin, told Melanchthon that she recollected the day of the month and the hour when her son was born, but not the year. But James Luther, his brother, whom Melanchthon pronounces an honest and upright man, told him that it was 1483. This brother was conversant with the family history. His testimony, not to speak of other evidence, establishes the fact that the "modern Hercules," whose heroic qualities, as well as his achievements in the reform of religion, were on a level with the fabled labors and spirit of the son of Zeus, drew his first breath on the night of the 10th of November,—it was after the hour of eleven,—four hundred years ago. No man ever showed himself to the world more unreservedly than this mighty leader of the Teutonic revolt against Rome. He abhorred concealment. He was really

incapable of disguise. He could not do otherwise than lay bare his heart and mind. His outspokenness was often a source of terror and anxiety to his friends, not less than of wrath to his enemies. If, on very rare occasions, he made the attempt to be shrewd and diplomatic, the effort was sure to be clumsy and abortive, and he was himself disgusted with the experiment. The secret fears and misgivings, from which even his clear and bold mind was not free, he had no inclination to hide. For example, we read in the "Table Talk": "A man must be plunged in bitter affliction when in his heart he means good and yet is not regarded. I can never get rid of these cogitations, wishing that I had never begun this business with the Pope. * * * But 'tis the frailty of our nature to be thus discouraged." Is he for the moment struck with weariness at being misunderstood

and rejected? Like a child, he expresses the transient regret that he ever undertook to set the world right. Even the inward temptations of the flesh he does not hesitate, in the most simple way, to refer to. Witness his letters from the Wartburg, which depict his bodily infirmities and the evil thoughts that at times tormented him in his solitary hours. His unguarded freedom of speech respecting himself was connected with an equal freedom and candor in speaking of others. His writings are not only multitudinous; they were composed so rapidly, in quick response to emergencies, that they are a transparent mirror of his thought and feeling. His personality is in them all to an extent that is, perhaps, true of no other writer on religion since the Apostle Paul. His correspondence, stretching through many volumes, is an endless source of information respecting him and his ways. The object of boundless interest in his own time, attracting the intense admiration of a part of mankind, and provoking the violent antipathy of another part, it was inevitable that numberless reports of his sayings and doings should become current. Devoted companions treasured up fragments of his spontaneous talk as he sat at the table with them, and their notes were subsequently compiled in a volume, one of the most suggestive and entertaining in this species of literature. By this time we ought to know Luther well. It demonstrates the richness and depth of his nature that men do not grow tired of him. They may dislike the fierce dogmatism, which became more boisterous in the battles which he waged and in the days of ill health and advancing age. The coarseness and occasional indelicacy of his language may repel readers who are not over-fastidious. But the originality of thought and the virility of expression, the insight into the deep things of the spirit, the vein of humor that mingles itself unbidden with the most profound and serious reflection, the play of imagination,—these qualities that belong to the utterances of Luther constitute an unfailing charm. A poet, and no less a poet than Coleridge, has said of him: "He was a poet, indeed, as great a poet as ever lived in any age or country; but his poetic images were so vivid that they mastered the poet's own mind. He was possessed with them as with substances distinct from himself: Luther did not write, he acted, poems."

As the world has ample means of acquainting itself with the personal traits of Luther, so is it with the circumstances of his career. A few errors or apocryphal incidents still cling to the story. His parents were not at Eisleben to attend a fair on the occasion of his birth.

They had previously removed to that place from Möhra, a village in the Thuringian forest, not far from the spot where the English monk, Boniface, the apostle of Germany, first planted the Gospel among the Germanic tribes. Luther's progenitors, as he himself says, were all plain working people. His parents were quite poor; but they were self-respecting and religious, and set a proper value on intellectual and Christian training. John Luther, his father, became a magistrate in Mansfeld, the place to which he removed shortly after the Reformer's birth. Thanks to the filial regard of his son, John Luther passed his last days in comfort, and left behind him, for a man in his station, considerable property. It is characteristic of Luther that, in framing the form of marriage ceremony to be used by the clergy, he used the names of his father and mother, Hans and Gretha, to fill the blanks: "You, Hans, take Gretha," etc. There is no proof that, as commonly related, one of his friends was struck dead by lightning at his side. Melancthon speaks of the sudden death of one of his intimate friends by some accident, the nature of which was not known to the narrator. He was probably murdered, or killed in a duel. Luther, however, had a terrific experience of some sort in a thunder-storm, when the lightning struck near him. Incidents of this character were not without an influence in determining him to take the vows of a monk; but the main causes, of course, lay deeper, in the whole bent of his thoughts and in the profound religious anxieties which were independent in their origin of any casual occurrence. Fervent admirers of Luther, or zealous Protestants, have occasionally suppressed remarks, or passed silently over events, which they have imagined to reflect some discredit on their hero. One instance is a phrase in the description which was given of his person and manners by Petrus Mosellanus, who was Professor of Greek at Leipsic when Luther was there at the public disputation with Eck,—a description which it is worth while to notice, as having an interest apart from the point referred to. This was in 1519, two years after the posting of the Theses, when Luther was thirty-four years old. Mosellanus writes to Julius Pflug: "Martin is of middle stature, thin and worn with anxiety and study, so that one may count almost all his bones, but of manly and fresh age, and with a clear and loud voice. His knowledge of Scripture is so great that he has all at his fingers' ends. He is so conversant with Greek and Hebrew that he can judge of the fidelity of interpretations. He possesses, too, a great abundance and command of words and facts, but somewhat

lacks, perhaps, judgment and discretion in the use of them." These last words have been omitted by several of the Lutheran authorities. Mosellanus proceeds: "In his manners he is courteous and friendly, and has nothing stoical or supercilious about him; he can accommodate himself to all occasions. In society he is a lively and pleasant jester,"—this word "nugator" (trifler) has likewise been sometimes left out in citations of the passage,—"always of bright and joyous aspect, let his opponent threaten him never so fiercely; so that one can scarcely imagine this man to have undertaken such weighty matters without the aid of God. But the fault which almost all find with him is that he is somewhat imprudent in reprehension, and more biting than is safe in an innovator in religious matters, or decorous in a theologian." This was the impression which Luther made on the Leipsic Greek professor. A year before, Cardinal Cajetan had bluntly said of him: "I will converse no more with this beast, for he has deep-set eyes and wonderful speculations in his head." Those who are familiar with Cranach's portraits know that as Luther grew older he became stout. On his stern and rugged, yet not ungenial face, were stamped the mingled determination and sincerity that were native to his character.

It is vain to seek to account for a personality like that of Luther by his environment. There is a mysterious personal force which has an origin independent of circumstances,—a vast force brought into the current of human affairs to modify its direction. Yet the conditions of the emerging of this personal power are furnished by the contemporary and previous situation. A man, however great, must mold himself on his times. It would be impossible for such a man to be transferred from one age to another. Luther owed much to his family, lowly as was their condition of life. There lay back of him the Latin Church, with its varied and mighty influences, active during more than a thousand years for the shaping of mind and character. He advanced beyond the experience of a priest and a monk, but without that experience he would not have been Luther. There was a development of conscience under the mediæval system of religion in which Luther partook to the full. The blood of the German race flowed in his veins. It is more than a fancy to suppose that he may have sprung from the tall warriors and stalwart chieftains who confronted the legions of old Rome and remained unconquered.

Luther was a German of the Germans,—the "Ur-Deutscher," the typical German, as he has been called. He knew his people

thoroughly, and they recognized themselves in him. Foe as well as friend allows that no man ever did more for an entire nation or left a stronger mark upon it. The very language in which Germans have spoken and written since Luther is an indestructible monument of his influence. He created the language anew. He stands at the fountain-head of the modern literature of the "Fatherland." He has molded the minds of uncounted millions of his countrymen, on whom his image has been consciously or unconsciously impressed. His words have had a greater and more lasting effect on his countrymen than the words of any other man. When we look at the influence which has gone forth from his manuals of religious instruction, and from the hymns which have been sung in churches and households, and by armies on the march to battle, now for four centuries, the measure of his power is felt to be indeed incalculable. All this has been eloquently expressed by the ablest of the modern Roman Catholic theologians, Döllinger, who had spent a long life largely in withstanding Luther's doctrine. The failure, it may be here remarked, of the "Old Catholic movement," supported though it was by many scholars and by princes, brings out in stronger relief the gigantic power of the Reformer, who carried through what might appear to be an infinitely more formidable task.

Of all Luther's gifts to the German people, his translation of the Bible is, no doubt, the most valuable. In nothing are the resources of his intellect and the vigor of his character more manifest than in his ability, in the midst of a literary warfare with a hundred antagonists, to undertake most important works of a positive character, involving a great amount of thought and toil, for the upbuilding of the church. The translation of the Bible cost him a world of labor. He recognized the necessity of taking counsel in such a work. Besides the regular help of Melancthon, Jonas, and his other coadjutors, he would discuss words and phrases at his own table with the friends and guests who happened to be with him. Imbued himself with the vernacular of the people, he still did not neglect to inquire of common men in cases where he was doubtful as to the right term to be chosen, or as to the precise significance of a popular phrase. For he meant to make a translation which should come home to the understanding and heart of the common man. It should be a *German* Bible that he would give to the people. Not that he undervalued accuracy: he claimed that, in cases where precision was necessary, he had secured it, sparing no outlay of thought and inquiry to achieve this

end. Still, he was determined to issue, not a colorless version, or a version enervated by idiomatic peculiarities of the Hebrew and the Greek, or a pedantic version, intelligible and interesting only to the cultivated, but rather a translation which should make the Bible appear to have been written in German. He gives amusing accounts of the struggles it cost him to make the sacred writers "speak German." In dealing with Job, especially, his patience was well-nigh exhausted. No one could understand what it had cost him to make Job "*reden Deutsch*." But he succeeded. In his version, the apostles and prophets "*reden Deutsch*,"—the *Deutsch* of the shop, the market, and the hearthstone. Luther's Bible is a living book. If the recent English revision of the authorized version, admirable in various particulars, fails at any point, it is just here. There is a lack of freedom in the incorporation of English idioms; in a word, there is an undue servility. So far as a translation fails to give the force and beauty of the original, it is incorrect. Close adhesion to grammar and lexicon, in many instances, may be the cause of greater loss than gain. We must have the spirit as well as the letter of the text. If we cannot have both, then better the spirit than the letter. Our recent revisers make the frightened disciples who saw Jesus walking on the sea cry out, "It is an apparition" (Matt. xiv. 26). Would such a company of fishermen, in a state of alarm, use this word? If not, some other should have been substituted for it. The juicy language of Luther's version, its sinewy vigor, its racy idioms, and the rhythmical charm which it has in common with the authorized English version, are literary merits which it is impossible to estimate too highly.

Full of patriotic feeling, Luther shared in the national aversion to the Italian spirit and to Italian domination. There is a lively dramatic interest in certain memorable interviews in which he was brought face to face with Italian prelates. One of these was the conference with Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg, to which we have referred. Luther found him, he wrote, "a complete Italian." The wary and accomplished Italian, liberal-minded, too, as he proved himself in his subsequent career, found the monk whom he expected to convert much more ready to debate than to be instructed. In reply to the question where he would stand if the Elector failed to protect him, Luther answered, "*Sub cælo*" ("Under heaven"). Many years later, when the state of things had greatly altered, and Rome had learned that the Saxon insurrection was not easy to be suppressed, Vergerio, another trained and refined prelate, was

sent by Pope Paul III. to negotiate with the Lutherans on the matter of a projected council. He arrived at Wittenberg on Saturday, November 6, 1535. On Sunday morning Luther summoned his barber, and jocosely informed him that, being about to meet the Pope's nuncio, he wished to make his best appearance; "that I may," he added, "be taken for a younger man than I am, and so terrify my enemies with the threat of a long life." Clad in his best apparel, with an ornament of gold hung upon his neck, he stepped into the carriage, with his companion, Pomeranus, exclaiming, "Here go the German Pope and Cardinal Pomeranus!" Luther frankly declared to Vergerio his disbelief in the sincerity of the Pope, his jubilant confidence in the soundness of his doctrine, his readiness to go to a council anywhere, adding that he would bring his "neck along with him." His hilarity, his cheerful tone of defiance, as well as his barbarous colloquial Latin, made a somewhat unpleasing impression on the polished Italian. It is remarkable, however, that Vergerio himself afterward joined the Protestants. The checkered career of this man is a remarkable illustration of the changes of opinion and of fortune that were not unfrequent in that revolutionary age.

Luther might have limited himself to the work of a national reformer, and have put himself at the head of a movement having no other end than to emancipate the German church from subservience to Rome. The connection of Germany and Italy in the middle ages, after the Roman Empire was established in the German line, was attended with perpetual jealousy and conflict. One might be tempted to judge that it would have been better if the Empire, with the long investiture struggle and all the contests and suffering which the imperial idea involved, had not existed, and Germany and Italy had been kept apart. But, as Ranke has sagaciously remarked, the course of history is not marked out—it is well that it is not—after these preconceived notions. Without the union of Germany and Italy, prolific of evil though it was, the "evolution" of Christendom could not have taken place. The loss from isolation would have been greater than the gain. It is true, however, that a national antipathy, which had been the growth of ages, had been developed through the abuses of papal administration in relation to Germany, until the German nation at the beginning of the sixteenth century was ripe for a united movement that should lay an effectual curb upon papal domination, and redress the grievances which had so long been a theme of loud complaint. In the councils of Constance and of

Basel, in the fifteenth century, Germany had nearly succeeded in organizing a national movement to secure a fair measure of ecclesiastical autonomy. The failure, and the continuance of abuses, only made the discontent deeper. The Emperor Maximilian thought of getting himself chosen Pope in order to remedy the evils complained of. He had never known a Pope, he said, who had dealt truly and faithfully with him. "Eternal God!" he once exclaimed, "if it were not that Thou art watchful, how bad it would be with the world which we rule,—I a miserable hunter, and that drunken and rascally [Pope] Julius." In the classification of his writings which Luther made at the Diet of Worms, in response to the comprehensive demand that he should retract what he had written, he made emphatic mention of the wrongs of Germany. "The sufferings and complaints of all mankind," he said, "are my witnesses that, through the laws of the Pope and the doctrines of men, the consciences of the faithful have been ensnared, tortured, and torn in pieces, while at the same time their property and substance have been devoured by an incredible tyranny, and are still devoured without end and by degrading means, and that, too, most of all in this noble nation of Germany." The extortion of money from the poor, by such emissaries as Tetzels, was only one item in a long catalogue of measures adapted to rouse the indignation of the German people. If Luther had confined himself to abuses of administration and flagrant stretches of prerogative on the part of Rome, and, for the most part, had let doctrine alone, there is little doubt that all Germany might have been rallied to his cause. It is not given to man to forecast the future; but, as we imagine this course to have been taken, the vision arises of a united Germany gradually shaking off ecclesiastical tyranny and advancing in a peaceful career on the upward path of culture and civilization. Instead of this result, what do we behold? The nation divided, and ultimately torn in twain: first the war of Smalcald, then the Thirty Years' War, with its pitiless barbarities, destroying arts and industry, liberty and independence, and making Germany for generations a prey to implacable factions and merciless foreign invaders.

The wisdom which reasons thus is plausible but shallow. Like remarks might be made respecting Christianity in its beginnings, and in its relation to the religion of the Jews and the gentile philosophy and worship. The Prince of Peace came "not to bring peace but a sword." It is the greatness of Luther that he was more than a German patriot; he

was more than a reformer of ecclesiastical and civil polity. The perceptions and convictions that possessed his soul were of a more universal character. Religion, and the truth of religion, were to his mind the supreme concern. Hence, he laid the axe at the root of the tree. He went back to the fundamental truth of Christianity, which lay at the foundation of the Church in the intention of its Founder. He planted himself on principles which have to do with man's essential relations to God and to the invisible world.

The Christianity which Luther, after prolonged struggle for light and peace, learned from the New Testament, brought him into mortal conflict with the Scholastic Theology, which had been elaborated, on the basis of the Fathers, by the mediæval doctors, notably Thomas Aquinas, and had been sealed and sanctioned by the Church and the Popes. The principle of faith; the idea of the immediate connection of the receptive and dependent soul with God and Christ, with no human priest to intervene; the doctrine of gratuitous forgiveness without works or merits in man,—were as clear to Luther as if they had been written in letters of fire on the sky. Thomas Aquinas was the oracle of the Dominican order. It was this order which had in charge the sale of indulgences, the scandal which first provoked the indignation of Luther. Against the theology of Aquinas and of his followers, and the doctrine of salvation which Rome required him to preach, he prosecuted an unrelenting crusade. It was a part of Luther's endeavor to break down the overweening authority of Aristotle. This philosopher had ruled in the schools for several centuries. First, his logical method had been adopted with eager enthusiasm by the Schoolmen. At length his other writings, including his "Ethics," gained an almost equal sway. He was considered to have exhausted the powers of unassisted human reason in the quest for moral and religious truth. To disparage Aristotle was little short of heresy. Luther, in common with the Humanists, early contended against the supremacy of the Stagirite. But what inflamed Luther's antagonism was the ethical doctrine that good works make the habit or principle. That the work derives all its worth from the principle out of which it springs, this principle being faith, was Luther's cardinal maxim. The scholastic doctrine of works had really not been drawn from Aristotle. It had arisen independently, and then welcome corroboration had been sought and found in the master of heathen wisdom. Luther's exasperation against the obnoxious doctrine included in it, however, an antagonism to the philosopher

who was thought to stand as its sponsor. Every student of Luther knows, or ought to know, how to make a proper discount from his vituperative language, which, by utterances in some other connection, is often neutralized or at least qualified. But certainly he is unsparing in the denunciation which, in various passages, he pours out on the head of the heretical philosopher. "It grieves me to the heart," he says, "that the damned, arrogant, rascally heathen with his false words has seduced and befooled so many of the best Christians."* He reproaches his adversaries with having chosen for their master "a dead and damned heathen." (As the word "damned" is, in these places, a past participle and is literally meant, we give it a literal rendering.) This "dead heathen," he avers, "has well-nigh suppressed God's books." In the excess of his vehemence he asserts that even a potter knows more even of natural things than stands written in Aristotle's books. All this is sufficiently extravagant. It is merely one mode of indicating his extreme repugnance to a Pelagian theory of character, which makes a man merit his own salvation, and dispenses with God's help and grace in the building up of character, and with faith as the fountain of right conduct.

Luther could not make a distinct issue on doctrine with the Church without a direct collision with the Latin hierarchy, and with the Pope, their chief. This battle he did not seek. He would have been glad to avoid it. For a long time he had no idea that matters would be pushed to an extremity. He hoped that he would be allowed to believe and to preach what he read in St. John and St. Paul. More than once he refers to the long, anxious conflict in his own mind through which he passed before he could arrive at the resolve to take a stand against the Pope and the authoritative, traditional teaching of the Church. It was in no temper of foolhardiness, no spirit of bravado, from no impatience of just authority, from no conceit of his own wisdom, but from the deepest conviction that no other course was open to him, that he finally determined to throw off the yoke which it was impossible to wear longer with a good conscience. Long after the "Theses" were published, looking back to that time, he wrote: "What was I then! a poor, miserable little monk, more like a corpse than a man! for me to march against the majesty of the pontiff—of him whose nod was terrible not only to the princes of the earth, but, if I may so say, to heaven and hell! In what straits my soul was confined during the first and following year; to what

submissions, by no means feigned or false, I descended; nay, in what despair I was all but involved, can be little conceived," etc. To whatever he might think or say, the reply was at hand, "Hear the Church!" "Here was my severest struggle, here my greatest difficulties; but at length I did, notwithstanding, overcome the obstacle through the grace of Christ. Indeed, at that time I had a much stronger reverence for the pontifical Church, and a much deeper conviction that it was the true Church, than those perverse men who are now so loudly extolling it in opposition to me." He believed that the Pope taught, and required others to teach, false doctrine. "Wickliffe and Huss," he says, in the "Table Talk," "assailed the immoral conduct of papists; but I chiefly oppose and resist their doctrine; I affirm roundly and plainly that they preach not the truth. To this I am called; I take the goose by the neck and set the knife to its throat." "Well, on in God's name; seeing I am come into the lists, I will fight it out. I know my quarrel and cause are upright and just." Luther has done more than any other man ever did to emancipate the human mind from usurped authority. But this was not his proximate aim. It was the indirect consequence of the movement which he originated. It was the second step which he took,—a step which he was compelled to take, which he took reluctantly but resolutely when the right moment came, although at first it had been far from his thoughts.

The fact that the religious interest was nearest Luther's heart determined his position in relation to "Humanism," and to the renowned leader in the world of letters, Erasmus. Luther was in cordial sympathy with the great literary movement which had already done so much to break down the sway of Scholasticism and the monkish type of piety. He was fond of the ancient classics; he was a student and admirer of Cicero; he took Virgil and Plautus into the cloister with him. Melancthon, in the preface to the Wittenberg edition of Luther's writings, remarks that, if he had found at Erfurt competent teachers, he would have experienced more the softening influence of the philosophers and other authors of antiquity. As it was, he took a good rank among the Humanists, and partly on this account was made by the Elector professor at Wittenberg. He understood the great service which Erasmus had done in exposing superstition and in bringing forward the classical authors and the New Testament writings, as well as the fathers. But when it came to an open rupture with Rome, their ways parted. Not to dwell on the circum-

* "Works," Walch's ed., xxi. 345.

stance that, when Luther nailed his Theses to the church door and braved the Pope's bull, Erasmus had passed middle life, his temperament and taste were all at variance with everything that involved a direct conflict with ecclesiastical authority. He would do for reform what could be done by diffusing literature, by fostering the study of the Scriptures, and by clever satires on the vices of the clergy and the follies of monks. He dreaded a commotion. He dreaded theological war and division. This would interfere with the quiet pursuit of literary studies and the progress of intellectual enlightenment from which he hoped so much. He was right in this vaticination. The first effect of the Lutheran debate was to turn men's minds to distinctively religious and theological themes. The immediate consequence was not favorable to the literary culture which had gained so promising a start. No one can doubt that the cause of literature and science, in the long run, profited incalculably by the Saxon reform. No one can believe that Germany would have accomplished in this field what it has achieved had the Pope's dominion been kept up. But we are now adverting to the effect of the theological strife which immediately followed. The issue between Luther and Erasmus is a plain one. Here were abuses, like the hawking of indulgences. Erasmus would ridicule them; he would seriously argue against them; but he would go no further. If he were bidden to keep silent on pain of excommunication, he would obey, thinking it better to wait for the gradual effect of better influences. To Luther such practices were a damnable imposture. The victims appeared to him like lambs who were given up to be torn in pieces by wolves. He would not keep silent. He would speak out, be the consequences what they might. Luther believed in his inmost heart that the interpretation of the Gospel which he and the rest of the clergy were required to give to the people was false. Christ and the apostles had taught otherwise. The current teaching robbed Christian people of the comfort which Christ came to give, and to a large extent paralyzed the efficiency of the Gospel as a practical system. Erasmus partially, though not wholly, agreed with him. Could Erasmus have regulated the teaching of the Church, it would have been essentially altered, and in the same direction in which Luther altered it,—although Luther, he judged, made extravagant assertions relative to the bondage of the will under evil. But in doctrine Erasmus would have no rupture of Church ties, no division, no revolt against the councils and popes. On the other hand, Luther, filled to the center of his being with the conviction

that religion is the supreme interest of man, and that it is a base wickedness to conceal the truth on the subject, could not do otherwise than declare war against the ecclesiastical authorities which commanded him to retract and enjoined on him silence. The verdict of history is on the side of Luther. Erasmus, with all his gifts and virtues, lacked the heroic element. We cannot deny him sincerity; but his beliefs did not take so strong a hold on him that it appeared to him worth while to proclaim them if the result was to be a mortal conflict and a division of the Church. There was truth in the saying that Erasmus laid the egg which Luther hatched. The answer of Erasmus was that the egg laid was the egg of a hen, and the product something quite different. Luther and Erasmus always interest us from the contrast which they present. The fine, sharply-cut features of Erasmus, as seen in Holbein's portrait, show us the face of the critic and keen iconoclast. He is the leader of the sappers and miners. The rougher outline of Luther's bold countenance shows us the pioneer whose vigorous arm breaks through the path from which a less courageous spirit would recoil in dismay. In the combat into which the two fell, it is doubtful which is the more effective weapon, the sledge-hammer of Luther or the rapier of Erasmus. Luther's advice to the chief of the literary school, that he should remain a spectator of a conflict in which he was evidently not fitted to be an actor, must have stung him to the quick. On the contrary, Erasmus was a master in retort. In answer to Luther's remark that some of his interpretations might fairly be thought to countenance Arianism, coming, as they did, from a "suspected person," Erasmus replied that it was diverting to hear Dr. Martin, who was denounced throughout Europe as a heretic, talk about "suspected persons."

Among the statues which surround that of Luther in the great monument at Worms, is that of another eminent Humanist, Reuchlin. Reuchlin was an older man than Erasmus. Born in 1455, he was fifty-two years old when Luther attacked the sale of indulgences. The long war from which this noble and venerable scholar had emerged successfully—the war with Pfefferkorn and Hoogstraten and their followers, who were incensed at his unwillingness to have all the writings of the Jews except the Bible burned—made him value repose. It was a satisfaction to him that the monks would be kept so busy with Luther as to let him alone. He never separated from the Catholic Church; but he gave his grand-nephew, Melanchthon, to the Wittenberg reformers. Ulrich von Hutten, and the

band who, by the *Epistole Obscurorum Virorum*, and by the dread of the carnal weapons which the knights were ready to wield in Reuchlin's defense, had helped on his cause, enlisted in behalf of Luther. Reuchlin died in 1522, having done a great service in the promotion of good learning, and in weakening the prestige of the Dominican inquisitors against whom Luther had to wage his battle.

Melanchthon was only twenty-one years old when he joined Luther as teacher of Greek in the Saxon university. For many years the relation of the two was like that of father and son. But in theology, as in ecclesiastical reform, Melanchthon's caution and moderation naturally inclined him to a middle path. In signing the Smalcald Articles, in 1531, he had the courage to append to his signature the statement that, if the Pope would allow the Gospel, he would, for the sake of peace and unity, concede to him, as a matter of human, not divine right, a superiority over the bishops of those Christians who might choose to live under his jurisdiction. This statement, occasioned by Luther's unstinted denunciations of the Papacy, indicates the leaning of Melanchthon to a more conciliatory course. In matters of ceremony, he would go far in his toleration of the old rites. In truth, at a later day, he was ready to carry his concessions to a dangerous extreme. In theology, he recoiled more and more from the assertions which he had himself made of the absolute control of the human will by the divine power. The arguments of Erasmus impressed him strongly. On the Lord's Supper, he could not sympathize with Luther's violence against the Zwinglians, and himself adopted a middle view closely akin to that of Calvin. As Luther grew old, his physical infirmities increased; he was tortured with ailments which heightened the natural vehemence and obstinacy of his temper. To live near him was like dwelling close to the crater of a volcano, which at any moment might burst forth in flames and streams of lava. His intolerance was quickened by fanatical admirers, who copied his faults without even appreciating his virtues. Consequently, the closeness of the tie between him and the younger associate whom he had so loved and cherished was in a degree loosened; yet not in such a degree that he ceased to love Melanchthon, or that Melanchthon ceased to hold in the highest esteem the noble qualities which had cast a spell over him in his youth. The wonder is that two men, so unlike each other in their mental and moral traits, could live together and cooperate in such a work as that in which they were engaged, with no greater disturbance of mutual confidence and esteem. Melanchthon

was the "Preceptor of Germany." It was he who cemented the alliance of the religious reform and the new learning. His inaugural address, in his early youth, foreshadowed the work in behalf of learning which he so effectually performed.

Luther and Calvin never met. Calvin and Melanchthon had passed days together, and stood in relations of intimacy. Calvin was eight years old when Luther began his war on the Papacy. He appreciated the greatness of the Saxon leader, different as Luther was from him in the cast of his mind and in some of his theological opinions. Luther, to the generality of men who have no special interest in the controversies of theology, is much more engaging and attractive than the Genevan reformer. Luther's vocabulary of condemnation and abuse is more copious, and is stored with coarser material, than that of Calvin. But it is somehow felt that, in the case of Luther, to use a homely adage, "his bark is worse than his bite." In Luther, the deep wells of tenderness, the versatility of genius, the sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men constitute an inexhaustible charm. I have in my hand an old German book called "Dr. Martin Luther's Pastimes," or "Zeitverkürzungen." It is arranged methodically in fifteen chapters. Among them the quaint writer includes one bearing the title, "Luther burns the papal bulls and books." This is embraced in the catalogue of pastimes by which the reformer drove away dull care. Under the head of Luther's fondness for literature, including ballads and fables, mention is made of his translation of Æsop, made in the midst of pressing cares, at Coburg, while the Diet of Augsburg was in session. Luther himself composed fables. For "Reynard the Fox," and stories of that class, he had a cordial relish. Erasmus's "Praise of Folly" delighted him. He was eager to get a copy of More's "Utopia" when he heard of its appearance. On his journeys, he made up humorous poems and riddles. Many of his letters are in a vein of pleasantry. In music Luther had an unailing source of pleasure. "Music," he says, "is a gift and present of God, and not of man. It drives away the devil and makes people joyous. Through it one forgets all wrath, impurity, superciliousness, and other vices. After theology, I give to music the next place and the highest honor." When weary with work, he would sing after supper or during the meal, and thus banish anxious thought. At times he would busy himself with joiners' tools. He writes for a lathe and other things of the sort to Nuremberg, where they were best made. Still more did he make his garden a refuge from the worry and vexation of brain-toil.

He liked to till the ground and watch the coming out of the blossoms. His favorite game was chess. This predilection he had in common with his contemporaries Leo X. and Charles V. John Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, was playing chess when the messenger brought him the sentence of death which the Emperor had pronounced; but the noble prince did not suffer the announcement to interrupt the game. Fortunately, the sentence was never carried out. In social and domestic life, Luther was an entertaining companion, mingling mirth and wisdom in a stream of talk of which no one ever grew weary. His marriage to a runaway nun was as bold a step as the burning of the papal bull. He followed his own judgment, letting his friends recover from their consternation as they might, and disregarding the invectives and scoffs of his enemies, which he considered to be inspired by the devil. To the German people he gave an example of domestic life which they could ill spare. His letters to his "Katy"—his "Doctress Katy," as he was apt to style her—form a diverting portion of his correspondence. When he was bereaved of a child, his heart was broken with sorrow. He could endure public calamities, he said, better than Philip, but not private afflictions of this sort. One of his letters to his children is of special interest,—that in which he pictures heaven as "a lovely and smiling garden, full of children dressed in robes of gold, who play under the trees with beautiful apples, pears, cherries, nuts, and prunes." There, he adds, are beautiful ponies, with golden bridles; musical instruments; the children dance and play with the cross-bow. It is all for good boys who pray and learn well. He has been told that his little son, John Luther, may come into this garden, and bring his sister Madeline. Such a picture, addressed to the imagination of a child, it is doubtful whether another divine of that age, trained to the study of Occam and Gerson, would have thought of painting.

To many who have never looked at the Commentary on the Galatians and the other writings in which the doctrine of Luther is presented in a continuous discussion, he is known through the "Table Talk." This compilation contains some things that Luther never said. Like nearly all similar publications, it requires to be critically sifted. Few Boswells are possessed of the accuracy of the biographer of Johnson. But, as it stands, the "Table Talk" of Luther discovers his peculiar genius on almost every page. His greatness and his limitations, his strong faith, and the superstitions, connected especially with demoniac agency, which he had inherited and which his vivid imagination kept alive, are

fully and artlessly disclosed. There is a wonderful religious power in his expressions. In one place he says: "If I thoroughly appreciated the first words of the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, and really believed that God, who made heaven and earth and all creatures, and has all things in his hand, was my Father, then should I certainly conclude with myself that I also am a lord of heaven and earth, that Christ is my brother, Gabriel my servant, Raphael my coachman, and all the angels my attendants at need, given unto me by my heavenly Father, to keep me in the path, that unawares I knock not my foot against a stone." Luther's egotism is seldom offensive. He speaks of himself as if he were a third person. There is so much in him that, when he touches on himself, the subject is always interesting. "Daniel and Isaiah," he said, "are most excellent prophets. I am Isaiah—be it spoken with humility—to the advancement of God's honor, whose work alone it is, and to spite the devil. Philip Melanchthon is Jeremiah: that prophet stood always in fear; even so it is with Melanchthon." As Goethe could claim to be a better poet than Tieck without any lack of modesty, seeing that he did not make himself, so Luther did not hesitate to rate himself at something like his proper value. Of the wholesome effect of anger, he remarked, in a familiar passage: "I never work better than when I am inspired by anger; when I am angry I can write, pray, and preach well, for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding sharpened, and all mundane vexations and temptations depart." No man ever felt more deeply the power of the Bible. "In it," he says, "thou findest the swaddling clothes and the manger whither the angels directed the poor simple shepherds; they seem poor and mean, but dear and precious is the treasure that lies therein." In his simplicity, he indulged the hope that, with the completion and diffusion of his version of the Bible, there would be very little need or call for other books, and was quite willing to have his own writings cast aside. Wherever Luther deals with his great doctrine of justification by faith, he is at his best. "But here one may say: 'The sins which we daily commit offend and anger God; how then can we be holy?' Answer: A mother's love to her child is much stronger than the distaste of the scurf upon the child's head. Even so God's love toward us is far stronger than our uncleanness. Therefore, though we be sinners, yet we lose not thereby our childhood, neither do we fall from grace by reason of our sins." The prayers of Luther are the spontaneous out-

pouring of his heart. Their familiarity of language has been censured; but, in this respect, they are on the level of the Psalms; and there was no lack of real reverence. "Prayer in Popedom," he exclaims, "is mere tongue-threshing; not prayer, but a work of obedience. Thence a confused din of *Horæ Canonice*, the howling and babbling in cells and monasteries, where they read and sing the psalms and collects, without any spiritual devotion, understanding neither the words, sentences, nor meaning." When he was a monk, he tells us, he used to lock himself up in his cell on Saturdays and make up the omitted prayers for the week. Luther confesses that he could not moderate his language. He had not the gift of Melanchthon. The impetuous flood of thought and emotion broke through all barriers. So his native bluntness and roughness he could not, and, it must be allowed, he did not much seek to, soften down. "Some one sent to know whether it was permissible to use warm water in baptism. The doctor replied: 'Tell the blockhead that water, warm or cold, is water.'" For moving eloquence in the pulpit no one excelled Luther. He not only knew how to preach, but he could tell the secret to others. One defect, he observes, may eclipse numerous gifts in a preacher. "Dr. Justus Jonas has all the good virtues and qualities a man may have; yet merely because he hums and spits, the people cannot bear that good and honest man." Let a preacher stick to his text, and not ramble: "A preacher that will speak everything that comes in his mind is like a maid that goes to market, and, meeting another maid, makes a stand, and they hold a goose-market." He despised the hunger for applause: "Ambition is the rankest poison to the Church, when it possesses preachers." "Cursed are all preachers that in the Church aim at high and loud things, and, neglecting the saving health of the poor, unlearned people, seek their own honor and praise, and therewith to please one or two ambitious persons. When I preach, I sink myself deep down. I regard neither doctors nor magistrates, of whom are here in this church above forty; but I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children, and servants, of whom are more than two thousand. I preach to these, directing myself to them that have need thereof. Will not the rest hear me? The door stands open unto them; they may begone." "An upright, godly, and true preacher should direct his preaching to the poor, simple sort of people, like a mother that stills her child, dandles, and plays with it," etc. "When they come to me, to Melanchthon, to Dr. Pommer, etc., let

them show their cunning, how learned they be; they shall be well put to their trumps. But to sprinkle out Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in their public sermons, savors merely of show," etc. It is needless to say how large a place Satan filled in Luther's thoughts. On his last journey to Eisleben, the rivers were swollen by a freshet. He spoke in a letter of the delight it would give the Pope and the devil—two personages whom he often coupled together—if he and Dr. Jonas were to be drowned in the Saale. The tradition connected with the ink-spot at the Wartburg is in keeping with Luther's habitual ideas of Satanic interference and of the proper way to meet it. It is remarkable that Luther did not share with Melanchthon his faith in astrology. He ridiculed the pretensions of the star-gazers.

The large and comprehensive genius of Luther is more manifest as time goes on. His profound and absorbing reverence for the Word of God did not make him a slave to the letter. The freedom of his comments and criticisms has given rise to the imputation of "Rationalism." Against this aspersion, which was rashly sanctioned by Sir William Hamilton, Luther was triumphantly defended by Julius Hare. If Rationalism signifies a usurpation of the understanding, with disregard of the moral and spiritual function of our being, or if it implies incredulity as regards the Supernatural and Revelation, no one could be at a greater remove from the Rationalistic temper than Luther. But his insight into the treasure of truth in the Scriptures gave him a certain liberty and sense of safety in the treatment of incidental and less material elements in them. We even read in the "Table Talk": "Forsheim said that the first of the five books of Moses was not written by Moses himself. Dr. Luther replied: 'What matters it, even though Moses did not write it? It is, nevertheless, Moses's book, wherein is exactly related the creation of the world.'" Now that the period of Protestant Scholasticism that followed the first age of the Reformation is passing away, the spirit of Luther, even as a Biblical critic, whatever may be thought of the soundness of particular utterances of his, is more justly appreciated. He stands in closer sympathy with the Church of to-day, in its effort to recognize and define the human as well as the divine factor in the books of the Bible, than do the array of Protestant theologians in the century or two that followed him, whose orthodoxy was largely molded by the polemical interest, especially by antagonism to the creed of Trent.

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