

The History of Protestantism

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Book Eleventh

Protestantism in Switzerland from its Establishment in Zurich (1525) to the Death of Zwingle (1631).

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Chapter I.

Zwingli—His Doctrine of the Lord's Supper.

Turn Southward—Switzerland—Reformation from Above—Ulric Zwingli—His Preparation—Resumé of his Career—The Foreign Service—The Gospel the Cure of his Nation's Evils—Zwingli at Zurich—His varied Qualities—Transformation of Switzerland—A Catastrophe near—The Lord's Supper—Transubstantiation—Luther's Views—Calvin's Views—Import of the Lord's Supper on the Human Side—Its Import on the Divine Side—Zwingli's Avoidance of the two Extremes as regards the Lord's Supper.

Following in the track of the light, we have reached our farthest limit toward the north. We now turn southward to those lands where the Reformation had its first rise, and where it fought its greatest battles. There every step it took was amidst stakes and scaffolds, but if there its course was the more tragic, its influence was the more powerful, and the changes it effected the more lasting. In France thousands of confessors and martyrs are about to step upon the stage, and act their part in the great drama; but first we must turn aside to Switzerland, and resuming our narrative at the point where we dropped it, we shall carry it forward to the death of Zwingli.

We have traced in former pages the dawn of Protestantism among the hills of Helvetia. Not from Germany, for the name of Luther had not yet been heard in Switzerland; not from France, nor any neighbouring country, but from the skies, it may be truly said, the light first shone upon the Swiss. From a herdsman's cottage in the valley of the Tockenburg came their Reformer, Ulric Zwingli. When a child he was wont to sit by the evening's hearth and listen with rapt attention to the histories of the Bible recited by his pious grandmother. As years passed on and his powers expanded he found access to the book itself, and made it his daily study. The light broke upon his soul. Continuing to read, it shone clearer every day. At last, but not till years after, his eyes were fully opened, he saw the glory of the Gospel, and bade a final adieu to Rome.

Personal contact with evil can alone give that sense of its malignity, and that burning detestation of it, which will prompt one to a life-long struggle for its overthrow. We can trace this principle in the orderings of Zwingli's lot. He was destined to spend his days in constant battle with two terrible evils that were tarnishing his country's fame, and extinguishing his country's virtue. But reared in the Tockenburg, artless and simple as its shepherds, he was not yet fit for his destined work, and had to be sent to school. We refer to other schools than those of Basle and Vienna, where he was initiated into the language

and philosophy of the ancients. First stationed at Glarus, he there was brought into contact with the horrors of the foreign service. He had daily before his eyes the widows and orphans of the men who had been drawn by French and Italian gold across the Alps and slaughtered; and there, too, he saw a not less affecting sight, the maimed and emaciated forms of those who, escaping the sword, had brought back to their country worse evils than wounds, even the vices of corrupt and luxurious nations. At Einsiedeln, to which by-and-by he removed, he received his second lesson. There he had occasion to mark the ravages which pilgrimages and image-worship inflict upon the conscience and the morals. He had time to meditate on these two great evils. He resolved to spare no effort to uproot them. But his trust for success in this work was solely in the Gospel. This alone could dispel the darkness in which pilgrimages with all their attendant abominations had their rise, and this alone could extinguish that love of gold which was draining at once the blood and the virtue of his countrymen. Other and subsidiary aids would come in their time to assist in this great battle; but the Gospel must come first. He would teach the individual Swiss to bow before a holy altar, and to sit at a pure hearth; and this in due time would pour a current of fresh blood into the veins of the State. Then the virtue of old days would revive, and their glorious valleys would again be trodden by men capable of renewing the heroic deeds of their sires. But the seed of Divine truth must be scattered over the worn-out soil before fruits like these could flourish in it. These were the views that led to the striking union of the pastor and the patriot which Zwingli presents to us. The aim of his Reform, wider in its direct scope than that of Germany, embraced both Church and State, the latter through the former. It was not because he trusted the Gospel less, but because he trusted it more, and saw it to be the one fruitful source of all terrestrial virtues and blessings, and because he more freely interpreted his mission as a Reformer, and as a member of a republic felt himself more thoroughly identified with his country, and more responsible for its failings, than it is possible for a subject of an empire to do, that he chalked out for himself this course and pursued it so steadfastly. He sought to restore to the individual piety, to the nation virtue, and both he would derive from the same fountain—the Gospel.

Having seen and pondered over the two lessons put before him, Zwingli was now prepared for his work. A vacancy occurred in the Cathedral-church of Zurich. The revival of letters had reached that city, and the magistrates cast their eyes around them for some one of greater accomplishments than the chapter could supply to fill the post. Their choice fell on the Chaplain of Einsiedeln. Zwingli brought to Zurich a soul enlightened by Divine truth, a genius which solitude had nursed into ardour and sublimity, and a heart burning with indignation at the authors of his nation's ruin. He firmly resolved to use his eloquence, which was great, in rousing his countrymen to a sense of their degradation. He now stood at the centre of the Republic, and his voice sounded in thrilling tones through all Switzerland. He proceeded step by step, taking care that his actual reforms did not outrun the stage of enlightenment his countrymen had reached. He shone equally as a pastor, as a writer, and as a disputant. He was alike at home in the council-chamber, in the public assembly, and in the hall of business. His activity was untiring. His clear penetrating intellect and capacious mind made toil light, and enabled him to accomplish the work of many men. The light spread around him, other Reformers arose. It was now as when morning opens in that same Swiss land: it is not Mont Blanc that stands up in solitary

radiance; a dozen and a dozen peaks around him begin to burn, and soon not a summit far or near but is touched with glory, and not a valley, however profound, into which day does not pour the tide of its effulgence. So did the sky of Switzerland begin to kindle all round with the Protestant dawn. Towns and hamlets came out of the darkness—the long and deep darkness of monkery—and stood forth in the light. The great centres, Bern (1528), Basle (1529), Schaffhausen (1529), St. Gall (1528), abandoned Rome and embraced the Gospel. Along the foot of the Jura, around the shores of the lakes, east and west of Northern Switzerland, from the gates of Geneva to the shores of Constance did the light spread. The altars on which mass had been offered were overturned; the idols burned like other wood; cowls, frocks, beads, and pardons were cast away as so much rubbish; the lighted candles were blown out and men turned to the living lamp of the Word. Its light led them to the cross whereon was offered, once for all, the sacrifice of the Eternal Priest.

We halted in our narrative at what might be termed the noon of the Zwinglian Reformation. We saw Protestantism fully established in Zurich, and partially in the cantons named above; but the man who had had the honour to begin the work was not to have the honour of completing it; his brilliant career was soon to close; already there were signs of tempest upon the summit of the Helvetian mountains; by-and-by the storm will burst and obscure for a time—not destroy—the great work which the Reformer of Zurich had originated. The catastrophe which is but a little way before us must be our second stage in the Swiss Reformation.

The last time Zwingle came before us was at Marburg in 1529, where we find him maintaining against Luther the spirituality of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Before resuming our narrative of events it becomes necessary to explain the position of Zwingle, with reference to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and this requires us to consider the views on this head held by Luther and Calvin. It is possible clearly to perceive the precise doctrine of the Sacrament taught by any one of these great men only when we have compared the views of all three.

The Lord's Supper began early to be corrupted in the primitive Church. The simple memorial was changed into a mystery. That mystery became, century by century, more awful and inexplicable. It was made to stand apart from other ordinances and services of the Church, not only in respect of the greater reverence with which it was regarded, but as an institution in its own nature wholly distinct, and altogether peculiar in its mode of working. A secret virtue or potency was attributed to it, by which, apart from the faith of the recipient, it operated mysteriously upon the soul. It was no longer an ordinance, it was now a spell, a charm. The spirit of ancient paganism had crept back into it, and ejecting the Holy Spirit, which acts through it in the case of all who believe, it had filled it with a magical influence. The Lord's Supper was the institution nearest the cross, and the spirit of reviving error in seizing upon it was actuated doubtless by the consideration that the perversion of this institution was the readiest and most effectual way to shut up or poison the fountain of the world's salvation. The corruption went on till it issued, in 1215, in the dogma of transubstantiation. The bread and wine which were set upon the Communion tables of the first century became, by the fiat of Innocent III., flesh and blood on the altars of the thirteenth.

Despite that the dogma of transubstantiation is opposed to Scripture, contradicts reason, and outrages all our senses, there is about it, we are compelled to conclude, some extraordinary power to hold captive the mind. Luther, who razed to the ground every other part of the Romish system, left this one standing. He had not courage to cast it down; he continued to his life's end to believe in consubstantiation—that is, in the presence of the flesh and blood of Christ with, in, or under the bread and wine. He strove, no doubt, to purify his belief from the gross materialism of the Romish mass. He denied that the Lord's Supper was a sacrifice, or that the body of Christ in the elements was to be worshipped; but he maintained that the body was there, and was received by the communicant. The union of the Divinity with the humanity in Christ's person gave to His glorified body, he held, new and wholly unearthly qualities. It made it independent of space, it endowed it with ubiquity; and when Zwingle, at Marburg, argued in reply that this was opposed to all the laws of matter, which necessitated a body to be in only one place at one time, Luther scouted the objection as being merely mathematical. The Reformer of Wittenberg did not seem to perceive that fatal consequences would result in other directions, from asserting such a change upon the body of Christ as he maintained to be wrought upon it in virtue of its union with the Divinity, for undoubtedly such a theory imperils the reality of the two great acts which are the foundations of the Christian system, the death and the resurrection of our Lord.

Nor was it Luther only who did homage to this dogma. A yet more powerful intellect, Calvin namely, was not able wholly to disenthral himself from its influence. He believed, it is true, neither in transubstantiation nor in consubstantiation, but he hesitated to admit the thorough, pure spirituality of the Lord's Supper. He teaches that the communicant receives Christ, who is spiritually present, only by his faith; but he talks vaguely, withal as if he conceived of an emanation or influence radiated from the glorified humanity now at the Right Hand, entering into the soul of the believer, and implanting there the germ of a glorified humanity like to that of his risen Lord. In this scarcely intelligible idea there may be more than the lingering influence of the mysticism of bygone ages. We can trace in it a desire on the part of Calvin to approximate as nearly as possible the standpoint of the Lutherans, if so he might close the breach which divided and weakened the two great bodies of Protestants, and rally into one host all the forces of the Reformation in the face of a yet powerful Papacy.

Zwingle has more successfully extricated the spiritual from the mystical in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper than either Luther or Calvin. His sentiments were a recoil from the mysticism and absurdity which, from an early age, had been gathering round this Sacrament, and which had reached their height in the Popish doctrine of the mass.

Some have maintained that the recoil went too far, that Zwingle fell into the error of excessive simplicity, and that he reduced the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to a mere memorial or commemoration service. His earliest statements (1525) on the doctrine of the Sacraments, and especially the Eucharist, may be open to this objection; but not so his latter teachings (1530), we are disposed to think. He returned to the golden mean, avoiding both extremes—neither attributing to the Sacrament a mystical or magical efficacy, on the one hand, nor making it a bare and naked sign of a past event on the other.

In order to understand his views, and see their accordance with Scripture, we must attend a moment to the nature and design of the Lord's Supper as seen in its institution. The primary end and significance of the Lord's Supper is a commemoration: "Do this in remembrance of me." But the event commemorated is of such a kind, and our relation to it is of such a nature, that the commemoration of it necessarily implies more than mere remembrance. We are commemorating a "death" which was endured in our room, and is an expiation of our sin; we, therefore, cannot commemorate it to the end in view but *in faith*. We rest upon it as the ground of our eternal life; we thus receive his "flesh and blood"—that is, the spiritual blessings his death procured. Nay, more, by a public act we place ourselves in the ranks of his followers. We promise or vow allegiance to him. This much, and no more, is done on the human side.

We turn to the Divine side. What is signified and done here must also be modified and determined by the nature of the transaction. The bread and wine in the Eucharist, being the representatives of the body and blood of Christ, are the symbols of an eternal redemption. In placing these symbols before us, and inviting us to partake of them, God puts before us and offers unto us that redemption. *We* receive it by faith, and *he* applies it to us and works it in us by his Spirit. Thus the Supper becomes at once a sign and a seal. Like the "blood" on the door-post of the Israelite, it is a "token" between God and us; for from the Passover the Lord's Supper is historically descended, and the intent and efficacy of the former, infinitely heightened, live in the latter. This, in our view, exhausts, both on the Divine and on the human side, all which the principles of the Word of God warrant us to hold in reference to the Eucharist; and if we attempt to put more into it, that more, should we closely examine it, will be found to be not spiritual but magical.

Zwingle's grand maxim as a Reformer eminently was the authority of Holy Scripture. Luther rejected nothing in the worship of God unless it was condemned in the Bible: Zwingle admitted nothing unless it was enjoined. Following his maxim, Zwingle, forgetting all human glosses, Papal edicts, and the mysticism of the schools, came straight to the New Testament, directed his gaze steadfastly and exclusively upon its pages, and gathered from thence what the Lord's Supper really meant. He found that on the human side it was a "commemoration" and a "pledge," and on the Divine side a "sign" and "seal." Further, the instrumentality on the part of man by which he receives the blessing represented is *faith*; and the agency on the part of God, by which that blessing is conveyed and applied, is the Holy Spirit.

Such was the Lord's Supper as Ulric Zwingle found it in the original institution. He purged it from every vestige of mysticism and materialism; but he left its spiritual efficacy unimpaired and perfect.

Chapter II.

Disputation at Baden and its Results.

Alarm of the Romanists—Resolve to Strike a great Blow—They propose a Public Disputation—Eck chosen as Romanist Champion—Zwingle Refused Leave to go to Baden—Martyrs—Arrival of the Deputies—Magnificent Dresses of the Romish Disputants—The Protestant Deputies—Personal Appearance of Eck and Oecolampadius—Points Debated—Eck Claims the Victory—The Protestants Gather the Fruits—Zwingle kept Informed of the Progress of the Debate—Clever Device—A Comedy—Counsels Frustrated—Eck and Charles V. Helping the Reformation.

The victories that we narrated in a foregoing Book of this History (Book VIII.) caused the utmost alarm among the partizans of the Papacy. The movement, first despised by them, and next half welcomed as holding out the hope of a little pleasurable excitement, had now grown to such a head that it threatened to lay in the dust the whole stately fabric of their riches and power. They must go wisely to work, and strike such a blow as would sweep Zwingle and his movement from the soil of Helvetia. This, said they, making sure of their victory before winning it, will react favourably on Germany. The torrent once stemmed, the waters of heresy will retreat to the abyss whence they issued, and the “everlasting hills” of the old faith, which the deluge threatened to overtop, will once more lift up their heads stable and majestic as ever.

An event that happened in the political world helped yet further to impress upon the Romanists the necessity of some instant and vigorous step. The terrible battle of Pavia projected a dark shadow upon Switzerland, but shed a gleam of popularity on Zwingle, and indirectly on the Reformation. A numerous body of Swiss mercenaries had fought on that bloody field. From five to six thousand of their corpses swelled its slain, and five thousand were taken alive and made prisoners. These were afterwards released and sent home, but in what a plight! Their arms lopped off, their faces seamed and scarred; many, through hunger and faintness, dying by the way, and the rest arriving in rags. Not only was it that these spectacles of horror wandered over the land, but from every city and hamlet arose the wail of widow and the cry of orphan. What the poet said of Albion might now be applied to Helvetia

Our isle be made a nourish of salt tears,
And none but women left to wail the dead.”¹

In that day of their sore calamity the people remembered how often Zwingle had thundered against the foreign service from the pulpit. He had been, they now saw, their best friend, their truest patriot; and the Popish cantons envied Zurich, which mainly through Zwingle’s influence had wholly escaped, or suffered but slightly, from a stroke which had fallen with such stunning force upon themselves.

The Romanists saw the favourable impression that was being made upon the popular sentiment, and bethought them by what means they might counteract it. The wiser among them reflected, on the one hand, how little progress they were making in the suppression

¹ Shakespeare, 1 *Henry VI.*, act i., scene 1.

of Lutheranism by beheading and burning its disciples; and, on the other, how much advantage Zwingli had gained from the religious disputation at Zurich. "They deliberated," says Bullinger, "day and night," and at last came to the conclusion that the right course was to hold a public disputation, and conquer the Reformation by its own weapons—leaving its truth out of their calculations. They would so arrange beforehand as to make sure of the victory, by selecting the fitting place at which to hold the disputation, and the right men to decide between the controversialists. The scheme promised to be attended with yet another advantage, although they took care to say nothing about it, unless to those they could absolutely trust. Zwingli, of course, would come to the conference. He would be in their power. They could condemn and burn him, and the death of its champion would be the death of the movement.²

Accordingly at a Diet held at Lucerne, the 15th January, 1526, the Five Cantons—Lucerne, Uri, Schwitz, Appenzell, and Friburg—resolved on a disputation, and agreed that it should take place at Bern. The Bernese, however, declined the honour. Basle was then selected as the next most suitable, being a university seat, and boasting the residence within it of many learned men. But Basle was as little covetous of the honour as Bern. After a good deal of negotiating, it was concluded to hold the disputation at Baden on the 16th May, 1526.³

This being settled, the cantons looked around them for powerful champions to do battle for the old faith. One illustrious champion, who had figured not without glory on the early fields of the Reformation, still survived—Dr. Eck, Vice-Chancellor of Ingolstadt. Our readers have not forgotten the day of Leipsic, where Eck encountered Luther, and foiled him, as he boasted; but finding Luther perversely blind to his defeat, he went to Rome, and returned with the bull of Leo X. to burn the man who had no right to live after having been confuted by Eck. Dr. Eck was a man of undoubted learning, of unrivalled volubility—in short, the best swordsman Rome had then at her service. The choice of the Popish cantons unanimously fell on this veteran.

Eck was to reap from this passage-at-arms more solid laurels than mere fame. On the side of Rome the battle had begun to be maintained largely by money. The higher clergy in Suabia and Switzerland piously taxed themselves for this laudable object. The Suabian League and the Archduke of Austria raised money to hire the services of men willing and able to fight in these campaigns. There was no reason why the doctor of Ingolstadt should give his time, and endanger, if not life, yet those hard-won honours that made life sweet, without a reasonable recompense. Eck was to be handsomely paid;⁴ for, says Bullinger, quoting a very old precedent, "he loved the wages of unrighteousness." The doctor of Ingolstadt accepted the combat, and with it victory, its inseparable consequence as he deemed it. Writing to the Confederate deputies at Baden, Dr. Eck says, "I am full of confidence that I shall, with little trouble, maintain against Zwingli our old true Christian faith and customs to be accordant with Holy Scripture," and then with, a scorn justifiable, it may be, in so great a personage as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt,

² Christoffel, p. 224.

³ Ruchat, tom. i., p. 275.

⁴ Christoffel, p. 225.

when descending into the arena to meet the son of the shepherd of the Tockenbourg, he says, "Zwingle no doubt has milked more cows than he has read books."⁵

But Dr. Eck was not to encounter Zwingle at Baden. The Council of Zurich refused leave to their pastor to go to the conference. Whispers had come to the ears of their Excellencies that the Romanists intended to employ other weapons besides argument. The place where the conference was to be held was of evil omen; for at Baden the blood of the Wirths⁶ was yet scarcely dry; and there the Popish cantons were all-powerful. Even Eck, with whom Zwingle was to dispute, had proclaimed the futility of fighting against such heretics as the preacher of Zurich with any other weapons than "fire and sword."⁷ So far as the "fire" could reach him it had already been employed against Zwingle; for they had burned his *books* at Friburg and his *effigy* at Lucerne. He was ready to meet at Zurich their entire controversial phalanx from its Goliath downwards, and the magistrates would have welcomed such meeting; but send him to Baden the council would not, for that was to send him, not to dispute, but to die.

In coming to this conclusion the lords of Zurich transgressed no law of charity, and their conclusion, hard though it was, did the Romanists of Switzerland no wrong. Wherever at this hour they looked in the surrounding cantons and provinces, what did they see? Stakes and victims. The men who were so eager to argue at Baden showed no relish for so tedious a process where they could employ the more summary one of the sack and rope. At Lucerne, Henry Messberg was thrown into the lake for speaking against the nuns; and John Nagel was burned alive for sowing "Zwinglian tenets." At Schwitz, Eberhard Polt of Lachen, and a priest of the same place, suffered death by burning for speaking against the ceremonies. At the same time Peter Spengler, a Protestant minister, was drowned at Friburg by order of the Bishop of Constance. Nor did the man who had won so many laurels in debate, disdain adding thereto the honours of the executioner. But a short week before the conference at Baden, Eck presided over a consistory which met in the market-place of Mersburg, and condemned to the flames as a heretic, John Hugel, the Pastor of Lindau. The martyr went to the stake singing the *Te Deum*, and was heard amid the fires offering the prayer, "Father, forgive them."⁸

When the appointed day came the deputies began to arrive. Twelve cantons of the Confederacy sent each a representative. Zurich had received no invitation and sent no deputy. The Bishops, of Constance, of Coire, of Lausanne, and of Basic were also represented at the conference. Eck came attended by Faber, the college companion of Zwingle,⁹ and Thomas Murner, a monk of the order of the Carmelites. The list of Protestant controversialists was a modest one, embracing only the names of Oecolampadius from Basle, and Hailer from Bern. In neither of these two cities was the Reformation as yet (1526) established, but the conference just opening was destined to give a powerful impulse to Protestantism in both of them. In Bern and Basle it halted meanwhile; but from this day the Reformation was to resume its march in these cities, and

⁵ Zwing. *Opp.*, tom. ii., p. 405.

⁶ See *ante*, bk. viii., chap. 15.

⁷ Ruchat tom. i., p. 276.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 278. Christoffel, p. 229.

⁹ See *ante*, bk. viii., chap. 5.

pause only when it had reached the goal. Could the Romanists have foreseen this result, they would have been a little less zealous in the affair of the conference. If the arguments

could be no question with whom would remain the victory. Eck and his following of

gold chains round their necks; crosses reposed softly and piously on their breasts; their fingers glittered and burned with precious jewels; and their measured step and uplifted countenances were such as

dramatist had been then in existence, and if the men now assembling at Baden had been a troupe of tragedians, who had been hired to act them, nothing could have been in better

the selection and adoption of those principles on which the Churches and kingdoms of the

with the men in damask, were but as a company of mendicants. The two were not more different in dress than in their way of living.

parsonage, where the wine, provided by the Abbot of Wettingen, was excellent. It was
¹¹ padius put up at the Inn. His meals were quickly dispatched, and the landlord, wondering how he occupied his time in

“but a pious one withal.”

Eck was still the same man we saw him at Stentorian, and his manner as violent. If the logic of his argument a vigorous stamp of his foot, and, as a contemporary poet of Bern relates, an occasional oath. In striking contrast to his porter-like figure, was the tall, thin, dignified form of his
 Oecolampadius Bullinger, could not help wishing that the “sallow man,” so calm, yet so firm and so majestic, were on “their side.”

putation. The ground traversed was the same which had been repeatedly gone over. The points debated were those of the real

images, and purgatory, with a few minor questions.¹²

“Every day the clergy of Baden,” says Ruchat, “walked in solemn procession, and chanted
¹³ revelled in the combat, and when it had ended he claimed the victory, and took care to have the great news published

restoration of the old faith to its former glory. But the question is, who gathered the spoils? We can have no difficulty in answering that question when we think of the fresh

they and other cities advanced to the establishment of their Reformation.

Eck felt the weight of The Popish party, having appointed four secretaries to make a faithful record of the

¹⁰ *Chron.*, tom. i., p. 351.

Ibid.

Ruchat, tom. i., p. 281.

Ibid.,

conference, prohibited all others from taking notes of the debate, under no less a penalty than death. Yet, despite this stern law, evening by evening Zwingle was told how the fight had gone, and was able, morning by morning, to send his advice to his friends how to set the battle in order for the day. It was cleverly done. A student from the Vallais, Jerome Walsch, who professed to be using the baths of Baden, attended the conference, and every evening wrote down from memory the course the argument had taken that day. Two students did the office of messenger by turns. Arriving at Zurich overnight, they handed Walsch's notes, together with the letters of Oecolampadius, to Zwingle, and were back at Baden next morning with the Reformer's answer. To lull the suspicions of the armed sentries at the gates, who had been ordered to keep a strict watch, they carried on their heads baskets of poultry. Even theologians, they hinted, must eat. If Dr. Eck, and the worthy divines with him, should go without their dinner, they would not be answerable for what might happen to the good cause of Romanism, or to those who should take it upon them to stop the supplies. Thus they came and went without its being suspected on what errand they journeyed.

After the serious business of the conference, there came a little comedy. In the train of the doctor of Ingolstadt, as we have already said, came Thomas Murner, monk and lecturer at Lucerne. The deputies of the cantons had just given judgment for Eck, to the effect that he had triumphed in the debate, and crushed the Zwinglian heresy. But Murner, aspiring to the honour of slaying the slain, rose, in presence of the whole assembly, and read forty charges, which, putting body and goods in pledge, he offered to make good against Zwingle. No one thought it worth while to reply. Whereupon the Cordelier continued, "I thought the coward would come, but he has not shown face. I declare forty times, by every law human and divine, that the tyrant of Zurich and all his followers are knaves, liars, perjurers, adulterers, infidels, thieves, sacrilegers, gaol-birds, and such that no honest man without blushing can keep company with them."¹⁴ Having so spoken he sat down, and the Diet was at an end.

Thus we behold, at nearly the same moment, on two stages widely apart, measures taken to suppress Protestantism, which, in their results, help above all things to establish it. In the little town of Baden we see the deputies of the cantons and the representatives of the bishops assembling to confute the Zwinglians, and vote the extinction of the Reform movement in Switzerland. Far away beyond the Pyrenees we see (March, 1526) the Emperor Charles sitting down in the Moorish Alcazar at Seville, and inditing a letter to his brother Archduke Ferdinand, commanding him to summon a Diet at Spires, to execute the Edict of Worms. The disputation at Baden led very directly, as we shall immediately see, to the establishment of Protestantism in the two important cantons of Bern and Basle. And the Diet of Spires (1526), instead of an edict of *proscription*, produced, as we have already seen, an edict of *toleration* in favour of the Reformation. The Chancellor of the University of Ingolstadt and the head of the Holy Roman Empire, acting without concert, and certainly not designing what they accomplish, unite their powerful aids in helping onward the cause of the world's emancipation. There is One who overrules their counsels, and makes use of them to overthrow that which they wish to uphold, and protect that which they seek to destroy.

¹⁴ Ruchat. tom. i., p. 287. Christoffel, p. 231.

Chapter III.

Outbreak and Suppression of Anabaptism in Switzerland.

Rise of Anabaptism in Switzerland—Thomas Munzer—His First Disciples, Grebel and Manx—Summary of their Opinions—Their Manners and Morals—Zwingle Commanded to Dispute with them—Coercive Measures—Anabaptism extends to ether Cantons—John Schuker and his Family—Horrible Tragedy—Manx—His Seditious Acts— Sentenced to be Drowned in the Lake of Zurich—Execution of Sentence— These Severities Disapproved of by Zwingle—The Fanaticism Extinguished by the Gospel—A Purification of the Swiss Church—Zwingle’s Views on Baptism Matured thereby.

The river of Reform was rolling its bounteous floods onward and diffusing verdure over the barren lands, when suddenly a foul and poisoned rivulet sought to discharge itself into it. Had this latter corrupted the great stream with which it seemed on the point of mingling, death and not life would have been imparted to the nations of Christendom. Zwingle foresaw the evil, and his next labour was to prevent so terrible a disaster befalling the world; and his efforts in this important matter claim our attention before proceeding to trace the influence of the Baden disputation on the two powerful cantons of Bern and Basle.

Zwingle was busy, as we have seen, combating the Papal foe in front, when the Anabaptist enemy suddenly started up and attacked him in the rear. We have already detailed the deplorable tragedies to which this fanatical sect gave birth in Germany.¹ They were about to vent the same impieties and enact the same abominable excesses on the soil of Switzerland which had created so much misery elsewhere. This sect was rather an importation than a native growth of Helvetia. The notorious Thomas Munzer, thrown upon the Swiss frontier by the storms of the peasant-war in Germany, brought with him his peculiar doctrines to sow them among the followers of Zwingle. He found a few unstable minds prepared to receive them, in particular Conrad Grebel, of an ancient Swiss family, and Felix Manx, the son of a prebend. These two were Munzer’s first disciples, and afterwards leaders of the sect. They had been excellently educated, but were men of loose principles and licentious lives. To these persons others by-and-by joined themselves.²

These men came to Zwingle and said to him, “Let us found a Church in which there shall be no sin.” Grebel and Manx had a way peculiar to themselves of forming an immaculate society. Their method, less rare than it looks, was simply to change all the vices into virtues, and thus indulgence in them would imply no guilt and leave no stain. This was a method of attaining sinlessness in which Zwingle could not concur, being unable to reconcile it with the Gospel precept which says that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present evil world.” “In whatever crime or vice they are taken,” said Zwingle, “their defence is ever the same: I have not sinned; I am no more in the flesh, but in the spirit; I am dead to the flesh, and the

¹ See *ante*. bk. ix.

² Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 231, 232. Christoffel, pp. 249, 250.

flesh is dead to me.” The wisdom of Zwingli’s reply to Grebel’s proposal was as great as its words were few. “We cannot,” said he, “make a heaven upon earth.”³

Re-baptism was rather the badge than the creed of this sect. Under the spiritual pretext of emancipation from the flesh, they denied the office and declined the authority of the pastors of the Church and of the magistrates of the State.⁴ Under the same pretext of spirituality they claimed a release from every personal virtue and all social obligations. They dealt in the same way with the Bible. They had a light within which sufficed for their guidance, and made them independent of the Word without. Some of them threw the book into the fire saying, “The letter killeth.” “Infant baptism,” said they, “is a horrible abomination, a flagrant impiety, invented by the evil spirit and Pope Nicholas of Rome.”⁵

The freaks and excesses in which they began to indulge were very extraordinary, and resembled those of men whose wits are disordered. They would form themselves in a ring on the street, dance, sing songs, and tumble each other about in the dust. At other times, putting on sackcloth, and strewing ashes on their heads, they would rush through the streets, bearing lighted torches, and uttering dismal cries, “Woe! woe! yet forty days and Zurich shall be destroyed.”⁶ Others professed to have received revelations from the Holy Spirit. Others interrupted the public worship by standing up in the midst of the congregation and proclaiming aloud, “I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” They held from time to time nocturnal revels, at which psalms and jovial ballads were sung alternately, and this they called “setting up the Lord’s table.” Fourteen of their number were apprehended by the magistrates, contrary to Zwingli’s advice, shut up in the Heretics’ Tower, and fed on bread and water. On the fourteenth day “an angel opened their prison door and led them forth.”⁷ Contrary to what happened in Peter’s case, with which they compared their deliverance, the angel found it necessary to remove certain planks before he could effect their liberation.

The magistrates, alarmed for the public peace, ordered Zwingli to hold a disputation with them. The conference took place on the 17th January, 1525. Zwingli’s victory was complete, and the magistrates followed it up by an edict, ordering all infants to be baptised within eight days.⁸ The fanatics no more gave obedience to the command of the magistrates than submission to the arguments of Zwingli. They neither brought their children to be baptised nor abjured their opinions. A second disputation was enjoined by the council. It was held in the March of the same year, but with the same results. Victory or defeat came alike to men who had resolved to adhere to their beliefs whatever arguments might be brought in refutation of them.

Severer measures were now adopted against them. Some were imprisoned; others were banished from the canton. Zwingli disapproved of these coercive remedies, and the event justified his wisdom. Persecution but inflamed their zeal, and their dispersion carried the fire to other cantons. In St. Gall their numbers were reckoned at 800; in the canton of

³ *Zwing. Opp.*, tom. ii., p. 231, and tom. iii., p. 362.

⁴ Ruchat, tom. i., p. 234.

⁵ Hottinger, tom. iii., p. 219. Ruchat, tom. i., p. 232.

⁶ Ruchat, i., pp. 232, 233.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

Appenzell at 1,200. They extended also to Schaffhausen and the Grisons, where they gave rise to disorders. Two of the sect undertook to go and preach in the Popish canton of Schwitz; the unhappy creatures were seized and burned. They died calling on the name of the Saviour.⁹

In some cases fanaticism developed into madness; and that madness gave birth to atrocious deeds which did more to open the eyes of the people, and banish this sect from the soil of Switzerland, than all the punishments with which the magistrates pursued it. One melancholy and most revolting instance has come down to us. In a solitary house in the canton of St. Gall there lived an aged farmer, John Schuker, who, with his family and servants, had received the “new baptism.” Two of his sons were specially noted for the warmth of their zeal. On Shrove Tuesday the father killed a calf and invited his Anabaptist friends to the feast. The company, the wine, the fanatical harangues and visionary revelations in which the night was spent, would seem to have upset the reason of one of the sons. His features haggard, his eyes rolling wildly, and speaking with hollow voice, he approached his brother, Leonard, with the gall of the calf in the bladder, and thus addressed him, “Bitter as gall is the death thou shalt die.” He then ordered him to kneel down. Leonard obeyed. A presentiment of evil seized the company. They bade the wretched man beware what he did. “Nothing will happen,” he replied, “but the will of the Father.” Turning to his brother, who was still kneeling before him, and hastily seizing a sword, he severed his head from his body at a single blow. The spectators were horror-struck. The headless corpse and the blood-stained maniac were terrible sights. They had witnessed a crime like that of Cain. Groans and wailings succeeded to the fanatical orisons in which the night had been spent. Quickly over the country flew the news of the awful deed. The wretched fratricide escaping from the house, half naked, the reeking sword in his hand, and posting with rapid steps through hamlet and village to St. Gall, to proclaim with maniac gestures and frenzied voice “the day of the Lord,” exhibited in his own person an awful example of the baleful issues in which the Anabaptist enthusiasm was finding its consummation. It was now showing itself to men with the brand of Cain on its brow. The miserable man was seized and beheaded.¹⁰

This horrible occurrence was followed by a tragedy nearly as horrible. We have mentioned above the name of Manx, one of the leaders of the fanatics. This man the magistrates of Zurich sentenced to be drowned in the lake. In adjudging him to this fate they took account, not of his views on baptism, or any opinions strictly religious, but of his sentiments on civil government. Not only did he deny the authority of magistracy, but he gave practical effect to his tenets by teaching his followers to resist payment of legal dues, and by instigating them to acts of outrage and violence. He had been repeatedly imprisoned, but always returned to his former courses on being set at liberty. The popular indignation against the sect, intensified by the deed we have just narrated, and the danger in which Switzerland now stood, of becoming the theatre of the same bloody tragedies which had been enacted in Germany the year before, would no longer permit the council to wink at the treasonable acts of Manx. He was again apprehended, and this time his imprisonment was followed by his condemnation. The sentence was carried out with due

⁹ Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 234, 235.

¹⁰ Bullinger, *Chron.*, tom. i., p. 324—*apud* D’Aubigné, bk. xi., chap. 10. Christoffel, p. 285.

formality. He was accompanied to the water's edge by his brother and mother, now an old woman, and the unacknowledged wife of the prebend. They exhorted him to constancy, but indeed he exhibited no signs of shrinking. They saw the executioner lead him into the boat; they saw him rowed out to deep water; they saw him taken up and flung into the lake; they heard the sullen plunge and saw the water close over him. The brother burst into tears, but the mother stood and witnessed all with dry eyes.¹¹

In these proceedings Zwingle had no share. This fanatical outburst had affected him with profound sorrow. He knew it would be said, "See what bitter fruits grow on the tree of Reform." But not only did he regard the reproach as unjust, he looked to the Gospel as the only instrumentality able to cope with this fanaticism. He pleaded with the magistrates to withhold their punishments, on the ground that the weapons of light were all that were needed to extirpate the evil. These Zwingle plied vigorously. The battle against Anabaptism cost him "more sweat," to use his own expression, than did his fight with the Papacy. But that sweat was not in vain. Mainly through his labours the torrent of Anabaptist fanaticism was arrested, and what threatened fatal disaster at the outset was converted into a blessing both to Zwingle and to the Protestant Church of Switzerland. The latter emerged from the tempest purified and strengthened. Instead of an accusation the Anabaptist outbreak was a justification of the Reformation. Zwingle's own views were deepened and purified by the controversy. He had been compelled to study the relation in which the Old and New Testaments stand to one another, and he came to see that under two names they are one book, that under two forms they are one revelation; and that as the transplanting of trees from the nursery to the open field neither alters their nature nor changes their uses, so the transplanting of the institutions of Divine revelation from the Old Testament, in the soil of which they were first set, into the New Testament or Gospel dispensation where they are permanently to flourish, has not in the least changed their nature and design, but has left them identically the same institutions: they embody the same principles and subserve the same ends. Baptism, he argued in short, is circumcision, and circumcision was baptism, under a different outward form.

Proceeding on this principle, the sum of what he maintained in all his disputations with the Anabaptists, and in all that he published from the press and the pulpit, was that inasmuch as circumcision was administered to infants under the Old Testament, it is clear that they were regarded as being, by their birth, members of the Church, and so entitled to the seal of the covenant. In like manner the children of professing parents under the New Testament are, by their birth, members of the Church, and entitled to have the Sacrament of baptism administered to them: that the water in baptism, like the blood in circumcision, denotes the removal of an inward impurity and the washing by the Spirit in order to salvation; and that as circumcision bound to the observance of God's ordinances, so baptism imposes an obligation to a holy life.¹²

¹¹ Hottinger, tom. iii., p. 385—*apud* D'Aubigné, bk. xi., chap. 10. Ruchat, tom. i., p. 332. Christoffel, p. 285.

¹² Ruchat, tom. i., p. 237. Christoffel, pp. 272, 273.

Chapter IV.

Establishment of Protestantism at Bern.

Bern prepares to Follow up the Baden Disputation—Resolves to institute a Conference—Summoned for January, 1528—Preparations and Invitations—The Popish Cantons Protest against holding the Conference—Charles V. Writes Forbidding it—Reply of the Bernese German Deputies—Journey of Swiss Deputies—Deputies in all 350—Church of the Cordeliers—Ten Theses—Convert at the Altar—Fête of St. Vincent—Matins and Vespers Unsung—The Magnificat Exchanged for a Mourning Hymn—Clergy Subscribe the Reformed Propositions—Mass, &c., Abolished—Reforming Laws—Act of Civic Grace—The Lord's Supper.

The disputation at Baden had ended in the way we have already described. The champions engaged in it had returned to their homes. Eck, as his manner was, went back singing his own praises and loudly vaunting the great victory he had won. Oecolampadius had returned to Basle, and Haller to Bern, not at all displeased with the issue of the affair, though they said little. While the Romanist champions were filling Switzerland with their boastings, the Protestants quietly prepared to gather in the fruits.

The pastors, who from various parts of Switzerland had been present at the disputation, returned home, their courage greatly increased. Moreover, on arriving in their several spheres of labour they found a fresh interest awakened in the cause. The disputation had quickened the movement it was meant to crush. They must follow up their success before the minds of men had time to cool down. This was the purpose now entertained especially by Bern, the proudest and most powerful member of the Swiss Confederacy.

Bern had been halting for some time between two opinions. Ever as it took a few paces forward on the road of Reform, it would stop, turn round, and cast lingering and regretful looks toward Rome. But now it resolved it would make its choice once for all between the Pope and Luther, between the mass and the Protestant sermon. In November, 1527, it summoned a Diet to debate the question. "Unhappy Helvetia," said some, "thus torn by religious opinions and conflicts. Alas the hour when Zwingle introduced these new doctrines." But was the state of Switzerland so very sad that it might justly envy the condition of other countries? As the Swiss looked from his mountains he beheld the sky of Europe darkened with war-clouds all round. A fierce tempest had just laid the glory of Rome in the dust. Francis I. and Henry of England, with Milan, Venice, and Florence, were leaguings against the emperor. Charles was unsheathing his sword to spill more blood while that of recent battles was scarcely dry. The deep scars of internecine conflict and hate were yet fresh on the soil of Germany. Ferdinand of Austria was claiming the crowns of Bohemia and Hungary, and fighting to rescue the provinces and inhabitants of Eastern Europe from the bloody scimitar of the Turk. Such was the state of Europe when the lords and citizens of Bern assembled in their Great Council on the Sabbath after Martinmas, 1527, resolved to institute in the beginning of the coming year a conference on religion, after the model of Zurich, to the intent "that the truth might not be concealed, but that the ground of Divine truth, of Christian intelligence, and of saving health might be discovered,

and that a worship in conformity with the Holy Scriptures might be planted and observed.”¹

The preparations were on a scale commensurate with the rank of the city and the gravity of the affair. Invitations were sent to the four Bishops of Lausanne, Basle, Constance, and Sion, who were asked to be present either in person or by deputy, under penalty of the loss of all rights and revenues which they claimed within the canton of Bern in virtue of their episcopal dignity.

The Bernese sent to all the cantons and free towns of the Helvetic Confederacy, desiring them to send their theologians and learned men of both parties to the conference, to the end that, freely and without compulsion to any one, their common Confederacy might make profession of a common faith. They further ordered that all the pastors and curés in the canton should repair to Bern on the first Sunday of January, and assist at the conference from its opening to its close, under pain of deprivation of their benefices. Addressing the learned men of the State, “Come,” said the lords of Bern, “we undertake for your safety, and guarantee you all liberty in the expression of your opinions.”

One man was honoured with a special invitation, Thomas Murner namely, who, as our readers may recollect, gave so comic a close to the conference at Baden. His pleasantries threatened to become serious things indeed to the Swiss. He was daily scattering among the cantons the most virulent invectives against the Zwinglians, couched in brutal language, fitted only to kindle the fiercest passions and plunge the Confederacy into war. Their Excellencies did well in giving the Cordelier an opportunity of proving his charges in presence of the conference. Murner did not come himself but took care to send a violent philippic against the Bernese.²

The adherents of the old faith, with one accord, entered their protest against the holding of such a conference. They claimed to have won the victory at Baden, but it would seem they wished no more such victories. The four bishops came first with a strong remonstrance. The seven Popish cantons followed suit, conjuring the Bernese to desist from a project that was full of danger, and abide by a Church in which their fathers had been content to live and die. Even the Emperor Charles wrote exhorting them to abandon their design and await the assembling of a General Council. “The settlement of the religious question,” he added, “does not pertain to any one city or country, but to all Christians”³—that is, practically to himself and the Pope. There could not possibly be stronger proofs of the importance the Romanists attached to the proposed conference, and the decisive influence it was likely to exert on the whole of Switzerland. The reply of the Bernese was calm and dignified.

“We change nothing in the twelve articles of the Christian faith; we separate not from the Church whose head is Christ; what is founded on the Word of God will abide for ever; we shall only not depart from the Word of God.”⁴

¹ Ruchat, tom. i., p. 361. Christoffel, p. 188.

² Ruchat, tom. i., p. 362.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 363—368.

⁴ Christoffel, p. 189.

All eyes were turned on Zwingli. From far and near clergy and learned men would be there, but Zwingli must take command of the army, he must be the Achilles of the fight. The youthful Haller and the grey-headed Kolb had done battle alone in Bern until now, but the action about to open required a surer eye and a sturdier arm. Haller wrote in pressing terms to this “best-beloved brother and champion in the cause of Christ,” that he would be pleased to come. “You know,” he said, “how much is here at stake, what shame, mockery, and disgrace would fall upon the Evangel and upon us if we were found not to be competent to the task. My brother, fail not.”⁵

To this grand conference there came deputies not from Switzerland only, but from many of the neighbouring countries. On New Year’s Eve, 1528, more than a hundred clergy and learned men assembled at Zurich from Suabia, invitations having been sent to the towns of Southern Germany.⁶ The doctors of St. Gall, Schaffhausen, Glarus, Constance, Ulm, Lindau, Augsburg, and other places also repaired to the rendezvous at Zurich. On the following morning they all set out for Bern, and with them journeyed the deputies from Zurich—Zwingli, Burgomaster Roist, Conrad Pellican,⁷ Sebastien Hoffmeister, Gaspard Grossmann, a great number of the rural clergy, Conrad Schmidt, Commander of Kussnacht; Pierre Simmler, Prior of Kappel; and Henry Bullinger, Regent in the college of the same place.⁸

At the head of the cavalcade rode the Burgomaster of Zurich, Roist. By his side were Zwingli and several of the councillors, also on horseback. The rest of the deputies followed. A little in advance of the company rode the town herald, but without his trumpet, for they wished to pass on without noise. The territory to be traversed on the way to Bern was owned by the Popish cantons. The deputies had asked a safe-conduct, but were refused. “There will be abundance of excellent game abroad,” was the news bruited through Popish Switzerland; “let us go a-hunting.” If they seriously meant what they said, their sport was spoiled by the armed escort that accompanied the travellers. Three hundred men with arquebuss on shoulder marched right and left of them.⁹ In this fashion they moved onwards to Bern, to take captive to Christ a proud city which no enemy had been able to storm. They entered its gates on the 4th of January, and found already arrived there numerous deputies, among others Oecolampadius of Basle, and Bucer and Capito of Strasburg.

The Bernese were anxious above all things to have the question between the two Churches thoroughly sifted. For this end they invited the ablest champions on both sides, guaranteeing them all freedom of debate. They heard of a worthy Cordelier at Grandson, named De Marie Palud, a learned man, but too poor to be able to leave home. The lords of Bern dispatched a special messenger with a letter to this worthy monk, earnestly urging him to come to the conference, and bidding the courier protect his person and defray his

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁶ Christoffel, p. 189.

⁷ Superior of the Franciscans at Basle, and afterwards Professor of Divinity at Zurich. His exegetical powers enabled him to render great service to the Reformation.

⁸ Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 368, 369.

⁹ *Ibid.* Christoffel, p. 189. D’Aubigné, bk. xv., chap. 2.

expenses on the road.¹⁰ If Eck and the other great champions of Rome were absent, it was because they chose not to come. The doctor of Ingolstadt would not sit in an assembly of heretics where no proof, unless drawn from the Word of God, would be received, nor any explanation of it admitted unless it came from the same source. Did any one ever hear anything so unreasonable? asked Eck. Has the Bible a tongue to refute those who oppose it? The roll-call showed a great many absentees besides Eck. The names of the Bishops of Basle, Sion, Constance, and Lausanne were shouted out in accents that rung through the church, but the echoes of the secretary's voice were the only answer returned. The assemblage amounted to 350 persons—priests, pastors, scholars, and councillors from Switzerland and Germany.

The Church of the Cordeliers was selected as the place of conference. A large platform had been erected, and two tables placed on it. At the one table sat the Popish deputies, round the other were gathered the Protestant disputants. Between the two sat four secretaries, from whom a solemn declaration, tantamount to an oath, had been exacted, that they would make a faithful record of all that was said and done. Four presidents were chosen to rule in the debate.¹¹

The disputation lasted twenty consecutive days, with the single interruption of one day, the fête of St. Vincent, the patron saint of Bern. It commenced on the 6th January, and closed on the 27th. On Sunday as on other days did the conference assemble. Each day two sessions were held—one in the morning, the other after dinner; and each was opened with prayer.¹²

Ten propositions¹³ were put down to be debated. They were declarations of the Protestant doctrine, drawn so as to comprehend all the points in controversy between the two Churches. The discussion on the mass occupied two whole days, and was signalled at its close by a dramatic incident which powerfully demonstrated where the victory lay. From the Church of the Cordeliers, Zwingli passed to the cathedral, to proclaim from its pulpit, in the hearing of the people, the proofs he had maintained triumphantly in the debate. At one of the side altars stood a priest, arrayed in pall and chasuble and all necessary sacerdotal vestments for saying mass. He was just about to begin the service when Zwingli's voice struck upon his ear. He paused to listen. "He ascended into heaven," said the Reformer in a slow and solemn voice, reciting the creed; "and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty," pausing again; "from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." "These three articles," said Zwingli, "cannot stand with the mass." The words flashed conviction into the mind of the priest. His resolution was taken on the spot. Stripping off his priestly robes and flinging them on the altar, he turned his eyes in the direction of Zwingli, and said in the hearing of all in the cathedral; "If the mass rest on no better foundation, I will neither read it now, nor read it more."¹⁴ This victory at the very foot of the altar was hailed as an omen of a full triumph at no great distance.

¹⁰ Ruchat, tom. i., p. 369.

¹¹ Ruchat, tom. i., p. 371.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Subdivided into twenty in the course of the discussion. Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 373, 374.

¹⁴ Christoffel, p. 190.

Three days thereafter was the fête of St. Vincent. The canons of the college waited on the magistrates to know the pleasure of their Excellencies respecting its celebration. They had been wont to observe the day with great solemnity in Bern. "Those of you," said the magistrates to the canons, "who can subscribe the 'ten Reformed propositions' ought not to keep the festival; those of you who cannot subscribe them, may." Already the sweet breath of toleration begins to be felt. On St. Vincent's Eve all the bells were tolled to warn the citizens that tomorrow was the festival of the patron saint of their city. The dull dawn of a January morning succeeded; the sacristans made haste to open the gates of the cathedral, to light the tapers, to prepare the incense, and to set in order the altar-furniture; but, alas there came neither priest nor worshipper at the hour of service. No matins were sung under the cathedral roof that morning.

The hour of vespers came. The scene of the morning was renewed. No evensong broke the silence. The organist was seated before his instrument, but he waited in vain for the coming of canon to mingle his chant, as the wont was, with the peal of the organ. When he looked about him, half in terror, and contrasted the solitude around him with the crowd of vested canons and kneeling worshippers, which used on such occasions to fill choir and nave of the cathedral, and join their voices with the majestic strains of the *Magnificat*, his heart was full of sadness; the glory had departed. He began to play on the organ the Church's mourning hymn, "O wretched Judas, what hast thou done that thou hast betrayed thy Lord?" and the music pealed along roof and aisle of the empty church. It sounded like a dirge over the fall of the Roman worship. "It was the last piece," says Ruchat, "that was played on that organ, for soon thereafter it was broken in pieces."¹⁵ The conference was at an end. The Reformers had won an easy victory. Indeed Zwingle could not help complaining that Eck and other practised champions on the Roman side had not been present, in order to permit a fuller development of the strength of the Protestant argument.¹⁶ Conrad Treger of Friburg, Provincial of the Augustines, did his best, in the absence of the doctor of Ingolstadt, to maintain the waning glory and tottering authority of Rome; but it is not surprising that he failed where Eck himself could not have succeeded. The disputants were restricted to Scripture, and at this weapon Zwingle excelled all the men of his time.¹⁷

The theologians had done their part: their Excellencies of Bern must now do theirs. Assembling the canons and ecclesiastics of the city and canton, the magistrates asked them if they wished to subscribe the Reformed theses. The response was hearty. All the canons subscribed the articles, as did also the Prior and Sub-Prior of the Dominicans, with six of their brethren, and fifty-two curés and other beneficed clergy of the city as well as the rural parts.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 453, 454.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

¹⁷ "This beast," so writes a Papistical hearer, "is in truth more learned than I had believed. The malapert Oecolampadius may understand the prophets and Hebrew better, and in Greek he may equal him, but in fertility of intellect, in force and perspicuity of statement, he is very far behind him. I could make nothing of Capito. Bucer spoke more than he did. Had Bucer the learning and linguistic acquirements of Oecolampadius and Zwingle, he would be more dangerous than either, so quick is he in his movements and so pleasantly can he talk." (Christoffel, p. 190.)

¹⁸ Ruchat, tom. i., p. 475.

Having dismissed the members of the conference with honour, defraying the expenses of those they had specially invited, and appointing a guard of 200 armed men to escort the Zurich deputies through the territory of the Five Cantons, the magistrates set about bringing the worship into conformity with the Reformed creed which the clergy had so unanimously subscribed. The lords in council decreed that the observance of the mass should cease in Bern, as also in those landward parishes whose curés had adopted the Reformed confession. The sacrifice abolished, there was no further need of the altar. The altars were pulled down. A material object of worship stands or falls with a material sacrifice; and so the images shared the fate of the altars. Their fragments, strewed on the porch and floor of the churches, were profanely trodden upon by the feet of those whose knees had so recently been bent in adoration of them. There were those who witnessed these proceedings with horror, and in whose eyes a church without an altar and without an image had neither beauty nor sanctity. “When the good folks of the Oberland come to market,” said these men, “they will be happy to put up their cattle in the cathedral.”

An august transaction did that same building—albeit its altars were overturned and its idols demolished—witness on the 2nd of February, 1528. On that day all the burgesses and inhabitants of Bern, servants as well as masters, were assembled in the cathedral, at the summons of the magistrates, and swore with uplifted hands to stand by the council in all their measures for the Reformation of religion.¹⁹ Secured on this side, the magistrates published an edict on the 7th of February, in thirteen articles, of which the following are the chief provisions:—

1st. They approved and confirmed the “ten propositions,” ordaining their subjects to receive and conform themselves to them, and taking God to witness that they believed them to be agreeable to the Word of God. 2nd. They released their subjects from the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Basle, Constance, Sion, and Lausanne. 3rd. They discharged the deans and chapters from their oath of obedience, the clergy from their vow of celibacy, and the people from the law of meats and festivals. 4th. The ecclesiastical goods they apportioned to the payment of annuities to monks and nuns, to the founding of schools and hospitals, and the relief of the poor. Not a penny did they appropriate to their own use.²⁰ 5th. Games of chance they prohibited; the taverns they ordered to be closed at nine o’clock; houses of infamy they suppressed, banishing their wretched inmates from the city.²¹

Following in the steps of Zurich, they passed a law forbidding the foreign service. What deep wounds had that service inflicted on Switzerland! Orphans and widows, withered and mutilated forms, cowardly feelings, and hideous vices had all entered with it! Henceforward no Bernese was to be at liberty to sell his sword to a foreign potentate, or shed his own or another’s blood in a quarrel that did not belong to him. In fine, “they

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, tom. i., p. 478.

²⁰ Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 479—481.

²¹ *Ibid.*

made an inscription,” says Sleidan, “in golden letters, upon a pillar, of the day and the year when Popery was abolished, to stand as a monument to posterity.”²²

The foreign deputies did not depart till they had seen their Excellencies of Bern honour the occasion of their visit by an act of civic clemency and grace. They opened the prison doors to two men who had forfeited their lives for sedition. Further, they recalled all the exiles. “If a king or emperor,” said they, “had visited our city, we would have released the malefactors, exhorting them to amendment. And now that the King of kings, and the Prince who owns the homage of our hearts, the Son of God and our Brother, has visited our city, and has opened to us the doors of an eternal prison, shall we not do honour to him by showing a like grace to those who have offended against us?”²³

One other act remained to seal the triumph which the Gospel had won in the city and canton of Bern. On Easter Sunday the Lord’s Supper was celebrated after what they believed to be the simple model of primitive times. “That Sunday was a high day.” Bern for centuries had been in the tomb of a dark superstition; but Bern is risen again, and with a calm joy she celebrates, with holy rites, her return from the grave. Around the great minster lies the hushed city; in the southern sky stand up the snowy piles of the Oberland, filling the air with a dazzling brightness. The calm is suddenly broken by the deep tones of the great bell summoning the citizens to the cathedral. Thither all ranks bend their steps; dressed with ancient Swiss simplicity, grave and earnest as their fathers were when marching to the battle-field, they troop in, and now all are gathered under the roof of their ancient minster: the councillor, the burgess, the artizan; the servant with his master, and by the side of the hoar patriarch the fresh form and sparkling eye of youth. On that cathedral floor is now no altar; on its wall no image. No bannered procession advances along its aisles, and no cloud of incense is seen mounting to its roof; yet never had their time-honoured temple—the house where their fathers had worshipped— appeared more venerable, and holy, than it did in the eyes of the Bernese this day.

Over the vast assembly rises the pulpit; on it lies the Bible, from which Berthold Haller is to address to them the words of life. Stretching from side to side of the building is the Communion table, covered with a linen cloth: the snows of their Alps are not whiter. The bread and the cup alone are seen on that table. How simple yet awful these symbols! How full of a gracious efficacy, and an amazing but blessed import, presenting as they do to the faith of the worshipper that majestic Sufferer, and that sublime death by which death has been destroyed! The Mighty One, he who stood before Pilate, but now sitteth on the right hand of God, is present in the midst of them, seen in the memorials of his passion, and felt by the working of his Spirit.

The sermon ended, Haller descends from the pulpit, and takes his stand, along with the elders of the flock, at the Communion table. With eyes and hands lifted up he gives thanks for this memorial and seal of redemption. Then a hymn, sung in responses, echoes through

²² Sleidan, bk. vi., p. 112. Ruchat insinuates a doubt of this, on the ground that Sleidan is the only historian who records the fact, and that no trace of the monument is known. But we know that a similar pillar was erected at Geneva to commemorate the completion of its Reformation, and afterwards demolished, although the inscription it bore has been preserved.

²³ Christoffel, p. 191. Ruchat, tom. i., pp. 485, 486.

the building. How noble and thrilling the melody when with a thousand tongues a thousand hearts utter their joy! The song is at an end; the hushed stillness again reigns in aisle and nave of the vast fabric. Haller takes the bread, and breaking it in the sight of all, gives it to the communicants, saying, "This is my body; take, eat." He takes the cup, and says, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you; drink ye all of it." Within that "sign" lies wrapped up, to their faith, the Divine and everlasting "thing signified." They receive, with the bread and wine, a full forgiveness, an eternal life—in short, Christ and the benefits of his redemption. Faith opens the deep fountains of their soul, their love and sorrow and joy find vent in a flood of tears; scarcely have these fallen when, like the golden light after the shower, there comes the shout of gladness, the song of triumph: "They sing a new song, saying, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: for thou hast redeemed us unto God with thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."²⁴ Such was the worship that succeeded the pantomimic rites and histrionic devotion of the Romish Church.

²⁴ Rev. v. 9, 10, 12.

Chapter V.

Reformation Consummated in Basle.

All Switzerland Moved—The Oberland—Surprise and Anger of its Herdsmen—Basle—Its Importance—Oecolampadius—Protestants of Basle Petition for Abolition of Mass—Popular Conflicts—Temporising Policy of Council—Citizens take Arms—New Delays by the Council—New Demands of the People—The Night of the 8th of February—The City Barricaded—Two Thousand Men in Arms—The Senate's Half-concession—The Idols Broken—Idols of Little Basle—Edict of Senate Establishing the Reform—Ash-Wednesday—Oath of the People—Exodus of the Priests—Departure of Erasmus.

The triumph of the Gospel in Bern was felt on all sides. It gave new life to the Protestant movement in every part of the country. On the west it opened the door for the entrance of the Protestant faith into French-speaking Switzerland. Farel was already in these parts, and had commenced those labours which we shall afterwards have occasion to trace to that grand issue to which a greater was destined to conduct them. On the east, in German Helvetia, the movement, quickened by the impulse communicated from Bern, was consummated in those towns and villages where for some time it had been in progress. From the Grisons, on the Italian frontier, to the borders of the Black Forest, where Basle is washed by the waters of the Rhine, the influence of Bern's accession was felt, and the Protestant movement quickened.

The great mountains in the centre of the land, where the glaciers have their seat, and the great rivers their birth-place, were alone unmoved. Not unmoved indeed, for the victory at Bern sent a thrill of surprise and horror through the Oberland. Shut up with their flocks in the mists and gorges of their mountains, living apart from the world, spending their days without books, untrained to reflect, nor ever coming in contact with a new idea, these mountaineers so brave, so independent, but so ignorant and superstitious, had but one aim, even to abide steadfast to the traditions of their fathers, and uphold Rome. That Switzerland should abandon the faith it had held from immemorial times they accounted a shameful and horrible thing. They heard of the revolution going on in the plains with indignation. A worship without mass, and a church without an image, were in their eyes no better than atheism. That the Virgin should be without matins or vespers was simply blasphemy. They trembled to dwell in a land which such enormities were beginning to pollute. They let drop ominous threats, which sounded like the mutterings of the thunder before the storm bursts and discharges its lightnings and hailstones on the plains below. Such a tempest was soon to break over Switzerland, but first the work of Reformation must proceed a little further.

Next to Zurich and Bern, Basle was the city of greatest importance in the Swiss Confederacy. Its numerous and rich foundations, its university, founded as we have said by Aeneas Sylvius, nearly a century before, its many learned men, and its famous printing-presses enabled it to wield a various and powerful influence. It was the first spot in all Helvetia on which the Protestant seed had been cast. So early as 1505, we saw Thomas Wittembach entering its gates, and bringing with him the knowledge of the sacred tongues, and of that Divine wisdom of which these tongues have been made the vehicle. A few years later we find Zwingle and Leo Juda sitting at his feet, and listening to his not yet

fully comprehended anticipations of a renovated age and a restored faith.¹ The seed that fell from the hand of Wittebach was reinforced by the writings of Luther, which the famous printer Frobenius scattered so plentifully on this same soil. After this second sowing came the preacher Capito, to be succeeded by the eloquent Hedio, both of whom watered that seed by their clear and pious expositions of the Gospels. In 1522, a yet greater evangelist settled in Basle, Oecolampadius, under whom the Reformation of this important city was destined, after years of waiting and conflict, to be consummated. Oecolampadius, so scholarly, so meek and pious, was to the prompt and courageous Zwingle what Melancthon was to Luther.

With all his great parts, Oecolampadius was somewhat deficient in decision and courage. We have seen him combatting alone at Baden in 1526, and at Bern by the side of Zwingle in 1528, yet all the while he had not taken the decisive step in his own city. Not that he felt doubt on the question of doctrine; it was the dangers that deterred him from carrying over Basle to the side of Protestantism. But he came back from Bern a stronger man. The irresolute evangelist returned the resolved Reformer; and the learned Basle is now to follow the example of the warlike Bern.

At this time (1528) the Lutherans were in a great majority in Basle. They were 2,500 against 600 Roman Catholics.² Tumults were of frequent occurrence, arising out of the religious differences. On the 23rd December the Reformed assembled without arms, to the number of 300 and upwards, and petitioned the magistrates to abolish the observance of the mass, saying that it was “an abomination before God,” and asking why “to please the priests they should draw down his anger on themselves and their children.” They further craved of the magistrates that they should interdict the Pope’s preachers, till “they had proved their doctrine from the Word of God,” and they offered at the same time to take back the mass as soon as the “Roman Catholics had shown from the Scriptures that it was good,” which sounded like a promise to restore it at the Kalends of April. The Roman Catholics of Little Basle, which lay on the other bank of the Rhine, and was mostly inhabited by Romanists, assembled in arms, and strove to obstruct the passage of the petitioners to the town hall. The Senate, making trial of soft words, advised both parties to retire to their homes, and—the hour we presume being late—“go to sleep.”³ The council affected to be neutral, the spirit of Erasmus pervading the higher ranks of Basle. Two days thereafter, being Christmas Day, both parties again assembled. This time the Reformed came armed as well as the Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholics were the first to stir; the terrible news that they were arming circulated from house to house, and brought out the Lutherans, to the number of about 800. The alarm still flying from door to door roused others, and at last the number amounted to 3,000.⁴ Both parties remained under arms all night. After four days’ deliberation, during which the streets were in a state of tumult, and all the gates were closed except two, which were strongly guarded, the Senate hit on an expedient which they thought would suffice to restore the peace between the two parties. They enacted that the “Evangel” should be preached in all churches, and as regarded mass

¹ See *ante*, bk. viii., chap. 5.

² Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 74.

³ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 75.

⁴ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 76.

that every man should be at liberty to act as his conscience might direct; no one would be prevented giving attendance on it, and no one would be compelled to do so.

This ordinance made the scales incline on the side of the Reformers. It was a step in the direction of free preaching and free worship; the Reformed, however, refused to accept it as a basis of peace. The agitation still continued. Basle wore the appearance of a camp, which a sudden blow from either side, or a rash word, might at any moment change into a battle-field.

News of what was going on in Basle flew through the Confederation. From both the Reformed and Popish cantons came deputies to offer their mediation. It was whispered among the Roman Catholics that the Lutherans were bringing in their confederates to fight for them. This rumour raised their fury to a yet higher pitch. A war of hearths seemed imminent.

The Senate made another attempt to restore the peace. They decreed that a public disputation on the mass should take place on the second Sabbath after Pentecost, and that meanwhile in three of the churches only should mass be celebrated, and that only one mass a day should be said, high mass namely.⁵ Now, thought the magistrates, we have found the means of restoring calm to the agitated waters. Basle will resume its lettered quiet.

These hopes were doomed to be disappointed. The publication of the edict evoked a greater tempest than ever. On the reading of it, loud and vehement cries resounded on both sides. “No mass—no mass—not even a single one—we will die sooner.”⁶ Counter-shouts were raised by the Romanists. “We are ready to die for the mass,” cried they, waving their arms menacingly to add to the vehemence of their voices; “if they reject the mass—to arms to arms!”⁷

The magistrates were almost at their wit’s end. Their temporising, instead of appeasing the tempest, was but lashing it into greater fury. They hit on another device, which but showed that their stock of expedients was nearly exhausted. They forbade the introduction of the German psalms into those churches where it had not been the wont to sing them.⁸ It was hardly to be expected that so paltry a concession would mollify the Roman Catholics.

The Romish party, fearing that the day was going against them, had recourse to yet more violent measures. They refused the decree to hold a disputation on the mass after Pentecost. One thing was clear to them, that whether the mass was founded on the Word of God or not, it attracted to Basle large sums from the Popish districts, every penny of which would be cut off were it abolished. Seeing then, if its proof were dubious, its profit was most indubitable, they were resolved to uphold it, and would preach it more zealously than ever. The pulpits began to thunder against heresy; Sebastien Müller, preacher in the Cathedral of St. Peter, mounted the pulpit on the 24th January, 1529, and losing his head, at no time a cool one, in the excess of his zeal, he broke out in a violent harangue, and poured forth a torrent of abusive epithets and sarcastic mockeries against the Reformed.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁶ Zwingle, *Epp.*, ii., p. 225—D’Aubigné, bk. xv., ch. 5.

⁷ Zwingle, *Epp.*, ii., p. 225.

⁸ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 78.

His sermon kindled into rage the mass of his hearers, and some Lutherans who were present in the audience were almost in risk of being torn in pieces.⁹

This fresh outbreak quickened the zeal on the other side, not indeed into violence, but activity. The Reformed saw that the question must be brought to an issue, either for or against the mass, and that until it was so their lives would not be safe in Basle. They, accordingly, charged their committee to carry their complaint to the Senate, and to demand that the churches should be provided with “good preachers” who would “proclaim to them the pure Word of God.” Their Excellencies received them graciously, and promised them a favourable answer. The magistrates were still sailing on two tacks.¹⁰

Fifteen days passed away, but there came no answer from the Senate. Meanwhile, a constant fire of insults, invectives, and sanguinary menaces was kept up by the Roman Catholics upon the Reformed, which the latter bore with wonderful patience seeing that they formed the vast majority of the citizens, and that those who assailed them with these taunts and threatenings were mostly the lower orders from the suburb of the Little Basle. The Reformed began to suspect the Senate of treachery; and seeing no ending to the affair but a bloody encounter, in which one of the two parties would perish, they convoked an assembly of the adherents of the Reformation. On the 8th February, 800 men met in the Church of the Franciscans, and after prayer to God, that he would direct them to those measures that would be for his glory, they entered on their deliberations. To the presence of “the fathers and relatives of the priests” in the council they attributed that halting policy which had brought Basle to the edge of an abyss, and resolved, as the only effectual cure, that the council should be asked to purge itself.¹¹ They agreed, moreover, that the election of the senators henceforward should be on a democratic basis—above-board, and in the hands of the people.

“To-morrow,” said the council, somewhat startled, we will give you an answer.”

“Your reply,” rejoined the citizens, “must be given to-night.”

No eyes were to be closed that night in Basle. The Senate had been sitting all day. There was time for an answer, yet none had been forthcoming. They had been put off till to-morrow. What did that mean? Was it not possible that the intervening night would give birth to some dark plot which the Senate might even now be hatching against the public safety? They were 1,200 men, all well armed. They sent again to the council-hall to say, “To-night, not to-morrow, we must have your answer.” It was nine of the evening. The Senate replied that at so late an hour they could not decide on a matter of so great moment, but that to-morrow they should without fail give their answer, and meanwhile they begged the citizens to retire in peace to their homes.¹²

The citizens resolved not to separate. On the contrary they sent once more, and for the last time, to the Senate, to demand their answer that very night. Their Excellencies thought good no longer to trifle with the armed burghers. Longer delay might bring the

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.78, 79.

¹¹ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 79.

¹² Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 80.

whole 1,200 warriors into the Senate House. To guard against an irruption so formidable, they sent a messenger when near mid-night to say that all members of Senate who were relatives of priests would be excluded from that body, and as to the rest of their demands, all things touching religion and policy would be regulated according to their wish.¹³

The answer was so far satisfactory; but the citizens did not view it as a concession of their demands in full. Their enemies might yet spring a mine upon them; till they had got something more than a promise, they would not relax their vigilance or retire to their dwellings. Dividing themselves into three companies they occupied three different quarters of the city. They planted six pieces of cannon before the Hôtel de Ville; they barricaded the streets by drawing chains across them; they took possession of the arsenal; they posted strong guards at the gates and in the towers on the wall and kindling immense torches of fir-trees, they set them on high places to dispel with their flickering beams the darkness that brooded over the city. So passed the night of the 8th February, 1529, in Basle.

The leaders of the Romanists began to quail before the firm attitude of the citizens. The burgomaster, Henry Meltinger, with his son-in-law, and several councillors, stole, under cover of the darkness, to the Rhine, and embarking in one of the boats that lay moored on its banks, made their escape on its rapid current. Their flight which became known overnight, increased the popular uneasiness and suspicion. "They are gone to fetch the Austrians," said the people. "Let us make ready against their return." When day broke they had 2,000 men in arms.¹⁴

At eight in the morning the Senate sent to the committee of the citizens to say that they had designated twelve senators, who were to absent themselves when religious affairs were treated of, but that the men so designated refused to submit unconditionally, and had appealed their cause for a hearing before the other cantons. The citizens were willing to meet them there, but on this condition, that the appellants paid their own expenses, seeing they were prosecuting their own private quarrel, whereas the citizens defending the cause of the commonwealth and posterity were entitled to have their charges defrayed from the public treasury.¹⁵ On this point the Senate sat deliberating till noon without coming to any conclusion. Again the cry of treachery was raised. The patience of the burghers was exhausted. They sent a detachment of forty men to inspect all the posts in the city in case of surprise. The troops marched straight to the Cathedral of St. Peter. One of them raising his halberd struck a blow with all his force on a side door. It was that of a closet in which the idols had been stowed away. The door was shivered; one of the images tumbled out, and was broken in pieces on the stony floor. A beginning having been made, the idols, one after another, were rolled out, and soon a pile of fragments— heads, trunks, and limbs— covered the floor. Erasmus wondered that "they wrought no miracle to save themselves, for if all accounts were true, prodigies had been done on more trivial occasions.

The priests raised an outcry, and attempted resistance, but this only hastened the consummation they deplored. The people came running to the cathedral. The priests fled before the hurricane that had swept into the temple, and shutting themselves up in the

¹³ Ruchat. tom. ii., p. 81.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 82. Gerdesius, *Hist. Evan. Renov.*, tom. ii., p.371; Gron. and Brem., 1746.

vestry, listened with dismay and trembling, as one and another of the idols was overturned, and crash succeeded crash; the altars were demolished, the pictures were torn down, and the fragments being carried out and piled up, and set on fire in the open squares, continued to burn till far in the evening, the citizens standing round and warming their hands at the blaze in the chilly air. The Senate thinking to awe the excited and insurgent citizens, sent to ask them what they did. "We are doing in an hour," said they, "what you have not been able to do in three years."¹⁶

The iconoclasts made the round of Basle, visiting all its churches, and destroying with pike and axe all the images they found. The Romanists of Little Basle, knowing the storm that was raging on the other side of the Rhine, and fearing that it would cross the bridge to their suburb, so amply replenished with sacred shrines, offered to purge their churches with their own hands. The images of Little Basle were more tenderly dealt with than those of St. Peter's and other city churches. Their worshippers carried them reverently to upper rooms and garrets, and hid them, in the hope that when better times returned they would be able to bring them out of the darkness, and set them up in their old places. The suburban idols thus escaped the cremation that overtook their less fortunate brethren of St. Ulric and St. Alban.¹⁷

The magistrates of Basle, deeming it better to march in the van of a Reform than be dragged at the tail of a revolution, now granted all the demands of the citizens. They enacted, 1st, that the citizens should vote in the election of the members of the two councils; 2ndly, that from this day the idols and mass should be abolished in the city and the canton, and the churches provided with good ministers to preach the Word of God. 3rdly, that in all matters appertaining to religion and the commonweal, 260 of the members of the guilds should be admitted to deliberate with the Senate.¹⁸ The people had carried the day. They had secured the establishment of the Protestant worship, and they had placed the State on a constitutional and popular basis. Such were the triumphs of these two eventful days. The firmness of the people had overcome the neutrality of the Senate, the power of the hierarchy, the disfavour of the learned, and had achieved the two liberties without shedding a drop of blood. "The commencement of the Reformation at Basle," says Ruchat, "was not a little tumultuous, but its issue was happy, and all the troubles that arose about religion were terminated without injury to a single citizen in his life or goods."

The third day, 10th of February, was Ash-Wednesday. The men of Basle resolved that their motto that day should be "Ashes to ashes." The images that had escaped cremation on the evening of the 8th were collected in nine piles and burned on the Cathedral Square.¹⁹ The Romanists, Oecolampadius informs us, "turned away their eyes, shuddering with horror." Others remarked, "the idols are keeping their Ash-Wednesday." The idols had the mass as their companion in affliction, fragments of the demolished altars having been burned in the same fires.

¹⁶ Ruchat, tom. ii., pp. 82, 83. Gerdesius, tom. ii., p. 372.

¹⁷ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 83.

¹⁸ Gerdesius, tom. ii., p. 372. Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 84. Sleidan, bk. vi., p. 117.

¹⁹ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 84. Gerdesius, tom. ii., p. 372. Sleidan, bk. vi., p. 117.

On Friday, 12th of February, all the trades of the city met and approved the edict of the Senate, as an “irrevocable decree,” and on the following day they took the oath, guild by guild, of fidelity to the new order of things. On next Sunday, in all the churches, the Psalms were chanted in German, in token of their joy.²⁰

This revolution was followed by an exodus of priests, scholars, and monks. The rushing Rhine afforded all facilities of transport. No one fled from dread of punishment, for a general amnesty, covering all offences, had set all fears at rest. It was dislike of the Protestant faith that made the fugitives leave this pleasant residence. The bishop, carrying with him his title but not his jurisdiction, fixed his residence at Poirentu. The monks peaceably departed “with their harems”²¹ to Friburg. Some of the chairs in the university were vacated, but new professors, yet more distinguished, came to fill them; among whom were Oswald Myconius, Sebastien Munster, and Simon Grynaeus. Last and greatest, Erasmus too departed. Basle was his own romantic town; its cathedral towers, its milky river, the swelling hills, with their fir-trees, all were dear to him. Above all, he took delight in the society of its dignified clergy, its polite scholars, and the distinguished strangers who here had gathered round him. From Basle this monarch of the schools had ruled the world of letters. But Protestantism had entered it, and he could breathe its air no longer. He must endure daily mortifications on those very streets where continual incense had been offered to him; and rather than do so he would leave the scene of his glory, and spend the few years that might yet remain to him elsewhere. Embarking on the Rhine in presence of the magistrates and a crowd of citizens, who had assembled to do him honour, he spoke his adieu to his much-loved Basle as the boat was unmooring: “Jam Basilea vale!”²² (Basle, farewell, farewell!) and departed for Friburg, in Brisgau.²³

²⁰ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 84. Gerdesius, tom. ii., p. 372. Sleidan, bk. vi., p. 117.

²¹ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 86.

²² *Ibid.* Gerdesius, tom. ii., p. 374.

²³ The tomb of Erasmus is to be seen in the Cathedral-church at Basle, in front of the choir. The epitaph does not give the year of his death, simply styling him a “septuagenarian.”

Chapter VI.

League of the Five Cantons with Austria—Switzerland Divided.

The Light Spreading—The Oberland in Darkness—The Gospel Invades the Mountains—League of the Five Cantons with Austria—Persecution Begun—Martyrdom of Pastor Keyser—The Christian Co-burghery—The Breach among the Swiss Cantons Widening—Dean Bullinger—The Men of Gaster—Idols that won't March—Violence of the Popish Cantons—Effort of Zurich to Avert War—The Attempt Abortive—War Proclaimed—Zwingle's Part in the Affair—Was it Justifiable?

It is a great crime to force an entrance for the truth by the sword, and compel unwilling necks to bow to it. It is not less a crime to bar its path by violence when it is seeking to come in by legitimate and peaceable means. This was the error into which the five primitive cantons of Switzerland now plunged. Their hardy inhabitants, as they looked down from under the overhanging glaciers and icy pinnacles of their great mountains, beheld the new faith spreading over the plains at their feet. It had established itself in Zurich; the haughty lords of Bern had welcomed it; Schaffhausen and St. Gall had opened their gates to it; and even Basle, that abode of scholars, had turned from Plato and Aristotle, to sit at the feet of apostles. Along the chain of the Jura, by the shores of the Leman, to the very gates of a city as yet immersed in darkness, but destined soon to become the brightest luminary in that brilliant constellation, was the light travelling. But the mountains of the Oberland, which are the first to catch the natural day, and to flash their early fires all over Switzerland, were the last to be touched with the Reformed dawn now rising on Christendom. With the light brightening all round, they remained in the darkness.

The herdsmen of these cantons saw with grief and alarm the transformation which was passing upon their country. The glory was departing from it. They felt only horror as messenger after messenger arrived in their mountains and told them what was transacting on the plains below; that the altars at which their fathers had worshipped were being cast down; that the images to which they had bent the knee were being flung into the flames; that priest and monk were being chased away; that the light of holy taper was being extinguished, and that silence was falling on those holy orisons whose melodies welcomed the morn and greeted the departure of the day; that all those rites and customs, in short, which were wont to beautify and sanctify their land were being abolished, and a defiling and defiant heresy was rearing its front in their stead.

The men of the Forest Cantons learned with yet greater indignation and dismay that this pestilent faith had come to their very gates, and was knocking for admission. Nay, it was even penetrating into their grand valleys. This was not to be borne. They must make haste, for soon their own altars would be overturned, their crucifixes trampled in the mire, and the light of their holy tapers extinguished. They resolved to oppose the entrance of the Reformation as they would that of the plague but they could oppose it by the only means of resistance which they understood—the faggot and the sword.

Their alarm was intensified when they learned that Protestantism, performing a flank movement, was attacking them in the rear. It had crossed the Alps, and was planting itself

in Italy. There was at that time (1530) a little band of Carmelite monks in Locarno, on the fertile and lovely shores of Lake Maggiore, who had come to the knowledge of a free salvation, and who, under the protection of Zurich, whose suzerainty then extended to that part of Italy, were labouring to initiate the Reformation of their native land. The men of the Five Cantons saw themselves about to be isolated, shut up in their mountains, cut off even from Italy, the cradle of their faith. They could sit still no longer.

But whither shall they turn? They could not wage war themselves against the Reformed cantons. These cantons were superior in men and money, and they could not hope to cope successfully with them. They must seek other allies. By doing so they would break the league of brotherhood with the other cantons, for they had resigned the right of forming new alliances without the consent of all the other members of the Federation; but they hoped to conduct the negotiations in secret. They turned their eyes to Austria. This was the last quarter from which a Swiss canton might have been expected to seek help. Had they forgotten the grievous yoke that Austria had made them bear in other days? Had they forgotten the blood it cost their fathers to break that yoke? Were they now to throw away what they had fought for on the gory fields of Morgarten and Sempach? They were prepared to do this. Religious antipathy overcame national hatred; terror of Protestantism suspended their dread of their traditional foe. Even Austria was astonished, and for awhile was in doubt of the good faith of the Five Cantons. They were in earnest, however, and the result was that a league was concluded, and sworn to on both sides, the 23rd of April, 1529, at Waldshut.¹ The Switzer of Unterwalden and Uri mounted the peacock's feather, the Austrian badge, and grasped in friendship the hands of the men with whom his fathers had contended to the death. The leading engagement in the league was that all attempts at forming new sects in the Five Cantons should be punished with death, and that Austria should give her aid, if need were, by sending the Five Cantons 6,000 foot-soldiers, and 400 horse, with the proper complement of artillery. It was further agreed that, if the war should make it necessary, the Reformed cantons should be blockaded, and all provisions intercepted.²

Finding Austria at their back, the men of the Five Cantons had now recourse, in order to defend the orthodoxy of their valleys, to very harsh measures indeed. They began to fine, imprison, torture, and put to death the professors of the Reformed faith. On the 22nd May, 1529, Pastor Keyser was seized as he was proceeding to the scene of his next day's labour, which lay in the district between the lakes of Zurich and Wallenstadt, and carried to Schwitz. He was condemned; and although the cities of Zurich and Glarus interceded for him, he was carried to the stake and burned. When he heard his sentence he fell a-weeping; but soon he was so strengthened from above that he went joyfully to the stake, and praised the Lord Jesus in the midst of the flames for accounting him worthy of the honour of dying for the Gospel.³

Thus did the men of the mountains fling down their defiance to the inhabitants of the plains. The latter had burned dead idols, the former responded by burning living men. This was the first-fruits of the Austrian alliance. You must stop in your path, said Unterwalden

¹ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 103.

² Christoffel, p. 235. Bullinger, *Chron.*, tom. ii., pp. 49—59.

³ Christoffel, p. 420.

to Zurich, you must set up the altars you have cast down, recall the priests you have chased away, rekindle the tapers you have extinguished, or take the penalty. The Forest Cantons were resolved to deal in this fashion, not only with all Protestants caught on their own territory, but also with the heresy of the plains. They would carry the purging sword to Zurich itself. They would smother the movement of which it was the centre in the red ashes of its overthrow. Fiercer every day burned their bigotry. The priests of Rome and the pensioners of France and Italy were exciting the passions of the herdsmen. The clang of arms was resounding through their mountains. A new crusade was preparing: in a little while an army of fanatics would be seen descending the mountains, on the sanguinary but pious work of purging Zurich, Bern, and the other cantons from the heresy into which they had sunk.

Zwingle had long foreseen the crisis that had now arisen. He felt that the progress of the religious Reform in his native land would eventually divide Switzerland into two camps. The decision of the Forest Cantons would, he felt, be given on the side of the old faith, to which their inhabitants were incurably wedded by their habits, their traditions, and their ignorance; and they were likely, he foresaw, to defend it with the sword. In the prospect of such an emergency, he thought it but right to themselves and to their cause that the Reformed cantons should form a league of self-defence. He proposed (1527) a *Christian Co-burghery*, in which all the professors of the Reformed faith might be united in a new Reformed federation. The suggestion approved itself to the great body of his co-patriots. Constance was the first city to intimate its adhesion to the new state; Bern, St. Gall, Mulhausen, Basle, Schaffhausen, and Strasburg followed in the order in which we have placed them. By the end of the year 1529 this new federation was complete.

Every day multiplied the points of irritation between the Reformed and the Popish cantons. The wave of Reformed influence from Bern had not yet spent itself, and new towns and villages were from time to time proclaiming their adhesion to the Reformed faith. Each new conversion raised the alarm and animosity of the Five Cantons to a higher pitch of violence. In Bremgarten the grey-haired Dean Bullinger thus addressed his congregation from the pulpit, February, 1529: "I your pastor have taught you these three-and-thirty years, walking in blind darkness, what I myself have learned from blind guides. May God pardon my sin done in ignorance, and enlighten me by his grace, so that henceforth I may lead the flock committed to me into the pastures of his Word." The town council, which a year before had promised to the Five Cantons to keep the town in the old faith, deposed the dean from his office. Nevertheless, Bremgarten soon thereafter passed over to the side of Protestantism, and the dean's son, Henry Bullinger, was called to fill his father's place, and proved an able preacher and courageous champion of the Reformed faith.⁴

The men of Gaster, a district which was under the joint jurisdiction of Popish Schwitz and Protestant Glarus, in carrying out their Reform, threw a touch of humour into their iconoclastic acts, which must have brought a grim smile upon the faces of the herdsmen and warriors of the Oberland when told of it. Having removed all the images from their churches, in the presence of the deputies from Schwitz sent to prevail on them to abide in

⁴ Christoffel, p. 413.

the old religion, they carried the idols to a point where four roads crossed. Setting them down on the highway, “See,” said they, addressing the idols, “this road leads to Schwitz, this to Glarus, this other to Zurich, and the fourth conducts to Coire. Take the one that seems good unto you. We will give you a safe-conduct to whatever place you wish. But if you do not move off we tell you that we will burn you.” The idols, despite this plain warning, refused to march, and their former worshippers, now their haters, taking them up, threw them into the flames.⁵

The deputies from Schwitz, who had been witnesses of the act, returned to tell how they had been affronted. Schwitz haughtily commanded the men of Gaster to abandon the heresy they had embraced and re-establish the mass. They craved in reply to have their error proved to them from the Holy Scriptures. To this the only answer was a threat of war. This menace made the Protestants of Gaster cast themselves for help on Zurich; and that protection being accorded, matters became still more embroiled between Zurich and the Five Cantons.

These offences on the side of the Reforming cantons were altogether unavoidable, unless at the expense of suppressing the Reform movement. Not so the acts in which the Popish cantons indulged by way of retaliation: these were wholly gratuitous and peculiarly envenomed. Thomas Murner, the ribald monk, whom we have already met at Bern, laboured zealously, and but too successfully, to widen the breach and precipitate the war in which so much blood was to be shed. He published daily in his “Black Calendar” lampoons, satires, and caricatures of the Protestants. A master of what is now known as “Billingsgate,” he spared no abusive epithet in blackening the men and maligning their cause. The frontispiece that garnished his “Calendar” represented Zwingli suspended from a gallows; underneath which were the words, “Calendar of the Lutheran-Evangelical Church Robbers and Heretics.” The followers of the Reformation were compendiously classified in the same elegant publication as “impotent unprincipled villains, thieves, lick-spittles, dastards, and knaves;” and he proposed that they should be disposed of in the following summary fashion, even “burned and sent in smoke to the devil.”⁶ These insults and ribaldries, instead of being discouraged, were hailed by the Five Cantons and widely diffused, although in so doing they were manifestly scattering “firebrands, arrows, and death.”

Zurich and the Reformed cantons saw war at no great distance, nevertheless they resolved to make another effort to avert it. In a Diet (21st April, 1529) held in Zurich, without the Five Cantons, it was resolved to call on these cantons to withdraw from their league with Austria, to cease murdering the Reformed pastors, and to silence the shameful vituperations of Murner. They appointed further an embassy to proceed to these cantons and entreat them not to violate the federal compact. The deputies as they went the round of the Five Cantons with the olive-branch were only scoffed at. “No preaching” shouted the men of Zug. “We wish the new faith eternally buried,” said those of Uri. “Your seditious parsons,” said Lucerne, “undermine the faith as erst in Paradise the serpent swung his folds round Adam and Eve. We will preserve our children, and our

⁵ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 107.

⁶ Christoffel, p. 233.

children's children, from such poison." "We," said they in Unterwalden, "and the other Wald towns, are the true old confederates, the real Swiss." As he was leaving the place the deputy saw on the house of the town-clerk a gallows painted, on which the arms of Zurich, Bern, Basle, and Strasburg were suspended. At Schwitz only did the council admit the ambassadors to an audience.⁷ Thus the proffered conciliation of their brethren was rudely and arrogantly put away by the Five Cantons. Everywhere the Reformed deputies were insulted and sent back.

It was evident that the Popish cantons were bent on quarrelling. But we shall mistake if we suppose that they were animated by a chivalrous and high-minded attachment to the faith of their fathers. A greed of the foreign pensions, quite as much as devotion to the "Holy Father," swayed them in adopting this course. The deterioration of manners consequent on the foreign service was visible in every part of Switzerland, in Zurich as well as Unterwalden; but it was in the Five Cantons that this corruption was the deepest, because these were the cantons most addicted to this disgraceful warfare. The preaching of the Gospel revealed the evils and iniquities of this practice, and threatened to put an end to it, and of course to the gold that flowed from it; hence the fierce hostility of the men of the Oberland to the Reformation.⁸ Not only their idols and altars, but their purses also were at stake.

The patience of the Reformed cantons was well-nigh exhausted. There was no end of insults, provocations, and lampoons. The maltreatment and murder of their brethren in the faith, the return of their deputies shamefully used, and now the burning pile of Keyser—here was enough to fill up the cup. Zwingli thought that, the question of religion apart, the public order demanded that these outrages should be stopped. He was told, moreover, that the mountaineers were arming, that the Austrian auxiliaries on the frontier were enlisting soldiers, that war was determined on the Popish side, and that it would be wise in the interests of peace to strike the first blow. Let us, said Zwingli, attack the Five Cantons on several points at once. Let us convince them that resistance is useless. Our present peace is only war, with this difference, that it is the blood of one side only that is being spilt. Our war will be *peace*. Zwingli hoped thus the campaign would be bloodless. The Council of Zurich on the 3rd of June resolved on war, proclaiming it in the first instance against Schwitz.⁹

The Reformer's conduct in this affair has been much criticised. Some historians of great name have blamed him, others have not less warmly defended him. Let us look a little at what he did, and the reasons that appear to justify and even necessitate the line of action he adopted. While taking a leading part in the affairs of the State at this crisis, he continued to labour as indefatigably as ever in preaching and writing. He sought, in doing what he now did, simply to take such means as men in all ages of the world, and in all stages of society, guided by the light of reason and the laws which the Creator has

⁷ Ruchat, tom. ii., pp. 109, 110. Christoffel, p. 416.

⁸ The deteriorating influence of the foreign service was felt in Germany, though in less degree than in Switzerland. Morals, patriotism, and public order it undermined. We find the German States complaining to Maximilian II. that the mercenaries on returning from foreign service were guilty of the greatest enormities.

⁹ Ruchat, tom. ii., pp. 113, 114. Christoffel, p. 420.

implanted in the race, have taken to defend their lives and liberties. The members of that Confederation were Christians, but they were also citizens. Christianity did not annihilate, it did not even abridge the privileges and powers of their citizenship. If while they were Romanists they had the right to defend their lives, their homes, and their possessions against all assailants, whether within or without Switzerland; and if, further, they had the right of protecting their fellow-citizens who, guilty of no crime, had been seized, and in violation of inter-cantonal law were threatened with a cruel death, surely they retained the same rights as professors of the Reformed faith. But it may be said—nay, it has been said—that it was Church federation and not State federation that ought to have been had recourse to. But at that time the State and the Church were inextricably mingled in Switzerland: their separate action was not at that moment possible; and, even though it had been possible, pure Church action would not have met the case; it would have been tantamount to no action. The Forest Cantons, impelled by their bigotry and supported by Austria, would have fallen sword in hand upon the professors of the Gospel in Helvetia and rooted them out.

Besides, does not the Gospel by its Divine efficacy rear around it, sooner or later, a vast number of powerful and valuable forces? It nourishes art, plants courage, and kindles the love of liberty. For what end? For this among others, to be, under the providence of God, a defence around itself. When Christians are utterly without human succour and resource, they are called to display their faith by relying wholly on God, who, if it is his purpose to deliver them, well knows how to do so. Then their faith has in it reason as well as sublimity. But if means are laid to their hand, and they forbear to use them, on the plea that they are honouring God by showing their trust in him, they are not trusting but tempting God, and instead of exercising faith are displaying fanaticism.

Zwingle, it has been further said, was a pastor, and the call to combine and stand to the defence of their liberties now addressed to the Reformed cantons ought to have come from another than him. But Zwingle was a citizen and a patriot as well as a pastor. His wonderfully penetrating, comprehensive, and forecasting intellect made him the first politician of his country; he could read the policy of its enemies better than any one else; he had penetrated their purposes; he saw the dangers that were gathering round the Reformed cantons; and his sagacity and experience taught him the measures to be adopted. No other man in all Switzerland knew the matter half so well. Was he to stand aloof and withhold the counsel, the suggestion, the earnest exhortation to action, and let his country be overwhelmed, on the plea that because he was in sacred office it did not become him to interfere? Zwingle took a different view of his duty, and we think justly. When the crisis came, without in the least intermitting his zeal and labours as a minister, he attended the meetings of council, he gave his advice, he drew plans, he thundered in the pulpit, he placed even his military experience acquired in Italy at the service of his countrymen; combining, in short, the politician, patriot, and pastor all in one, he strove to kindle the same ardent flame of patriotism in the hearts of his fellow-citizens that burned so strongly in his own, and to roll back the invasion which threatened all that was of value in the Swiss Confederation with destruction. The combination was an unusual one, we admit, but the times and the emergency were also unusual. That Zwingle may have always preserved the golden mean when the parts he had to act were so various, and the

circumstances so exciting, we are not prepared to maintain. But we do not see how his policy in the main can be impugned, without laying down the maxim that when civil liberty only is at stake is it right to have recourse to arms, and that when the higher interests of faith and religious liberty are mixed up with the quarrel, we are bound to do nothing—to stand unarmed and inactive in the presence of the enemy.

Chapter VII.

Arms—Negotiations—Peace.

Zurich Girds on the Sword—Mustering in the Popish Cantons—4,000 Warriors March from Zurich—Encamp at Kappel—Halt—Negotiations—Peace—Zwingle Dislikes it—Zwingle's Labours—His Daily Life—His Dress, &c.—Arrangement of his Time—His Occupations—Amusements—Writings.

First came the startling news to the Swiss Reformers that the Five Cantons had struck a league with Austria. Next came the flash of Keyser's martyr-pile. This was succeeded by the clang of military preparations. Zurich saw there was not a moment to be lost. The council of the canton met; it was resolved to support religious liberty, and put a stop to the beheadings and burnings which the Popish cantons had commenced. But to carry out this resolution they must gird on the sword. Zurich declared war.¹

From Zug sounded forth the summons to arms on the other side. There was a mustering of warriors from all the valleys and mountains around. From the rich meadows of Uri, which the footsteps of Tell had made for ever historic from that lovely strand where rise the ramparts of Lucerne, reflected on its noble lake, and shaded by the dark form of the cloud-capped Pilatus; from those valleys of Unterwalden, whose echoes are awakened by the avalanches of the Jungfrau; from the grassy plains of Schwitz on the east, armed men poured forth prepared to fight for the faith of their fathers, and to quench in blood the new religion which Zwingle and Zurich had introduced, and which was spreading like an infection over their country. The place of rendezvous was the deep valley where the waters of Zug, defended all round by mighty mountains, and covered by their shadows, lie so still and sluggish in their bed.

On the 9th of June, 4,000 picked soldiers, fully armed, and well furnished with artillery and provisions, under the command of Captain George Berguer, with Conrad Schmidt, Pastor of Kussnacht, as their chaplain, issued from the gates of Zurich, and set out to meet the foe.² The walls and towers were crowded with old men and women to witness their departure. Among them rode Zwingle, his halberd across his shoulder,³ the same, it is said, he had carried at Marignano. Anna, his wife, watched him from the ramparts as he rode slowly away. Crossing the Albis Alp, the army of Zurich encamped at Kappel, near the frontier of the canton of Zug.

It was nine of the evening when the Zurich warriors encamped at Kappel. Next morning, the 10th of June, they sent a herald at daybreak with a declaration of war to the army of the Five Cantons assembled at Zug. The message filled the little town with consternation. The sudden march of the Zurich army had taken it unawares and found it unprepared; its armed allies were not yet arrived; the women screamed; the men ran to and

¹ Sleidan, bk. vi., p. 120.

² Ruchat, tom. ii., pp. 114, 115. Christoffel, p. 421.

³ The Swiss field-chaplains carried a weapon on service up till the most recent time. Zwingle's halberd, which he had already used in the battle of Marignano, had no other significance than the later side-weapon of the field-preacher. (Christoffel, p. 421.)

from collecting what weapons they could, and dispatching messengers in hot haste to their Confederates for assistance.

In the camp of the Zurichers preparations were making to follow the herald who had carried the proclamation of hostilities to Zug. Had they gone forward the enemy must have come to terms without striking a blow. The van-guard of the Zurichers, marshalled by its commander William Toenig, was on the point of crossing the frontier. At that moment a horseman was observed spurring his steed uphill, and coming towards them with all the speed he could. It was Landamman Oebli of Glarus. "Halt!" he cried, "I come from our Confederates. They are armed, but they are willing to negotiate. I beg a few hours' delay in hopes that an honourable peace may be made. Dear lords of Zurich, for God's sake prevent the shedding of blood, and the ruin of the Confederacy." The march of the Zurich warriors was suspended.⁴

Landamman Oebli was the friend of Zwingle. He was known to be an honourable man, well disposed towards the Gospel, and an enemy of the foreign service. All hailed his embassy as a forerunner of peace. Zwingle alone suspected a snake in the grass. He saw the campaign about to end without the loss of a single life; but this halt inspired him with melancholy and a presentiment of evil. As Oebli was turning round to return to Zug, Zwingle went up to him, and earnestly whispered into his ear the following words, "God-son Amman,⁵ you will have to answer to God for this mediation. The enemy is in our power, and unarmed, therefore they give us fair words. You believe them and you mediate. Afterwards, when they are armed, they will fall upon us, and there will be none to mediate." "My dear godfather," replied Oebli "let us act for the best, and trust in God that all will be well." So saying he rode away.

In this new position of affairs, messengers were dispatched to Zurich for instructions, or rather advice, for it was a maxim in the policy of that canton that "wherever the banner waves, there is Zurich." Meanwhile the tents of the soldiers were spread on the hill-side, within a few paces of the sentinels of the Five Cantons. Every day a sermon was preached in the army, and prayers were offered at meals. Disorderly women, who followed the armies of that age in shoals, were sent away as soon as they appeared. Not an oath was heard. Cards and dice were not needed to beguile the time. Psalms, national hymns, and athletic exercises filled up the hours among the soldiers of the two armies. Animosity against one another expired with the halt. Going to the lines they chatted together, ate together, and, forgetting their quarrel, remembered only that they were Swiss. Zwingle sat alone in his tent, oppressed by a foreboding of evil. Not that he wished to shed a drop of blood; it was his eagerness to escape that dire necessity that made him grudge the days now passing idly by. All had gone as he anticipated up till this fatal halt. Austria was too seriously occupied with the Turks to aid the Popish cantons just at this moment; and had the answer sent back by Landamman Oebli been the unconditional acceptance of the terms of Zurich or battle, it was not to be doubted that the Five Cantons would have preferred the former. The opportunity now passing was not likely to return; and a heavy price would be exacted at a future day for the indolence of the present hour.

⁴ Christoffel, p. 423. Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 115.

⁵ While Pastor of Glarus, Zwingle had become Godfather of the Landamman.

After a fortnight's negotiations between Zurich and the Five Cantons, a peace was patched up.⁶ It was agreed that the Forest Cantons should abandon their alliance with Austria, that they should guarantee religious liberty to the extent of permitting the common parishes to decide by a majority of votes which religion they would profess, and that they should pay the expenses of the war. The warriors on both sides now struck their encampments and returned home, the Zurichers elate, the Romanists gloomy and sullen. The peace was in favour of Protestantism. But would it be lasting? This was the question that Zwingli had put to himself. When the army re-entered Zurich, he was observed, amid the acclamations that resounded on every side, to be depressed and melancholy. He felt that a golden opportunity had been lost of effectually curbing the bigotry and breaking the power of the Popish cantons, and that the peace had been conceded only to lull them asleep till their opponents were better prepared, when they would fall upon them and extinguish the Reform in blood. These presentiments were but too surely fulfilled.

This peace was due to the energy and patriotism of Zurich. Bern had contributed nothing to it; her warriors, who had often gone forth on a less noble quarrel, abode within their walls, when the men of Zurich were encamped on the slopes of the Albis, in presence of the foe. This want of firm union was, we apprehend, the main cause of the disastrous issue of Zwingli's plan. Had the four Reformed cantons—Basle, Zurich, Bern, and St. Gall—stood shoulder to shoulder, and presented an unbroken front, the Romanists of the mountains would hardly have dared to attack them. Division invited the blow under which Reformed Switzerland sank for awhile.

The Reformer of Zurich is as yet only in mid-life, taking the "three-score and ten" as our scale of reckoning, but already it begins to draw toward evening with him. The shadows of that violent death with which his career was to close, begin to gather round him. We shall pause, therefore, and look at the man as we see him, in the circle of his family, or at work in his study. He is dressed, as we should expect, with ancient Swiss simplicity. He wears the wide coat of the canon, and on his head is the priest's hat, or "baretta." The kindness of his heart and the courage of his soul shine out and light up his face with the radiance of cheerfulness. Numerous visitors, of all conditions, and on various errands, knock at his door, and are admitted into his presence. Now it is a bookseller, who comes to importune him to write something for an approaching book-fair; now it is a priest, who has been harshly used by his bishop, who craves his advice; now it is a brother pastor, who comes to ask help or sympathy; now it is a citizen or councillor, a friend from the country, who wishes to consult him on State affairs, or on private business. He receives all with genuine affability, listens with patience, and gives his answers in a few wise words. Sometimes, indeed, a sudden frown darkens his brow, and the lightning of his eye flashes forth, but it is at the discovery of meanness or hypocrisy. The storm, however, soon passes, and the light of an inward serenity and truthfulness again shines out and brightens his features. Towards well-meaning ignorance he is compassionate and tender.

In regard to his meals, his fare is simple. The dainties of his youth are the dainties of his manhood. Living in a city, with its luxuries at command, and sitting often at the table of its

⁶ The treaty was signed on the 26th of June, 1529, and consisted of seventeen articles. Their substance is given by Ruchat, tom. ii., pp. 116—121.

rich burghers, he prefers the milk and cheese which formed the staple of his diet when he lived among the shepherds of the Tockenburg. As to his pleasures they are not such as have a sting in them; they are those that delight the longest because the most natural and simple. His leisure—it is not much—is spent in the society of his accomplished and high-souled wife, in the education of his children, in conversation with his friends, and in music. In his college-days how often, as we have already seen, in company of his friend Leo Juda, did he awake the echoes of the valleys beside the romantic Basle with his voice or instrument! On the grander shores of the Zurcher-See he continued to cultivate the gift, as time served, with all the passion of an artist.

He is very methodical in his habits. His time is wisely divided, and none of it is frittered away by desultoriness or unpunctuality. Both in body and mind he is eminently healthy. Luther had even more than the joyous disposition of Zwingli, but not his robustness and almost uninterrupted good health. The Doctor of Wittemberg complained that “Satan tilted through his head,” and at times, for weeks together, he was unable to work or write. Calvin was still more sickly. His “ten maladies” wore away his strength; but they had power over the body only; the spirit they did not approach to ruffle or weaken, and we stand amazed at the magnificence of the labours achieved in a frame so fragile and worn. But it was not so with the Reformer of Zurich; he suffered loss neither of time nor of power from ill-health; and this, together with the skilful distribution of his time, enabled him to get through the manifold labours that were imposed upon him.

He rose early. The hours of morning he spent in prayer and the study of the Scriptures. At eight o’clock he repaired to the cathedral to preach, or to give the “Prophesying,” or to the Professorial Hall, to deliver an exegesis from the Old and New Testaments alternately. At eleven he dined. After dinner, intermitting his labours, he spent the time in conversing with his family, or in receiving visitors, or walking in the open air. At two o’clock he resumed work, often devoting the afternoon to the study of the great writers and orators of Greece and Rome. Not till after supper does he again grant himself a respite from labour in the society of his family or friends. “Sometimes,” says Christoffel, “he sups in those mediaeval society-houses or guild-rooms—as they still exist in many of the Swiss towns—in the company of his colleagues, the members of the council, and other respectable and enlightened friends of evangelical truth. The later hours of the evening, and even a part of the night itself, he employs in writing his many letters.” If business is pressing, he can dispense with his night’s rest. During the disputation at Baden, as we have seen, he received each night letters from Oecolampadius. He sat up all night to write his answer, which had to be sent off before morning; and this continued all the while the conference was in session, so that, as Zwingli himself tells us, he was not in bed all the time—that is, six weeks. But, as Bullinger informs us, on other occasions he could take the necessary amount of sleep. Thus, with the careful distribution and economy of his time, combined with an iron constitution and a clear and powerful intellect, he was able to master the almost overwhelming amount of work which the Reformation laid upon him.⁷

⁷ These details respecting the daily life and habits of the Reformer of Zurich have been collected by Christoffel. “They are taken,” he tells us, “from accounts, thoroughly consistent with themselves, of several of his friends and acquaintances, Myconius, Bullinger, and Bernhard Weiss. Myconius says, in addition, that he always studied and worked *standing*.” (Christoffel, pp. 373, 374.)

He complained that the many demands on his time did not leave him leisure to elaborate and polish his productions. The storms and emergencies of his day compelled him to write, but did not leave him time to revise. Hence he is diffuse after an unusual manner: not in style, which has the terse vigour of the ancients; nor in thinking, which is at once clear and profound; but in a too great affluence of ideas. He modestly spoke of what came from his pen as *sketches* rather than *books*. Scripture he interpreted by Scripture, and thus, in addition to a naturally penetrating intellect, he enjoyed eminently the teaching of the Spirit, which is given through the Word. Zwingli sought in converse with his friends to improve his heart; he read the great works of antiquity to strengthen his intellect and refine his taste; he studied the Bible to nourish his piety and enlarge his knowledge of Divine truth. But a higher means of improvement did he employ—converse with God. “He strongly recommended prayer,” says Bullinger, “and he himself prayed much daily.” In this he resembled Luther and Calvin and all the great Reformers. What distinguished them from their fellows, even more than their great talents, was a certain serenity of soul, and a certain grandeur and strength of faith, and this they owed to prayer.

Chapter VIII.

Proposed Christian Republic for Defence of Civil Rights.

Another Storm brewing in the Oberland—Protestantism still spreading in Switzerland—A Second Crisis—Zwingle proposes a European Christian Republic—Negotiates with the German Towns, the King of France, and the Republic of Venice—Philip of Hesse to be put at the Head of it—Correspondence between Philip and Zwingle—League for Defence of Civil Rights only—Zwingle's Labours for the Autonomy of the Helvetian Church.

The peace which negotiation had given Zurich, Zwingle felt, would be short, but it was precious while it lasted, and he redoubled his efforts to turn it to account. He strove to carry the sword of the Spirit into those great mountains whose dwellers had descended upon them with the sword of the warrior, for he despaired of the unity and independence of his country save through the Gospel. His labours resulted, during this brief space, in many victories for the faith. At Schaffhausen fell the "great god," namely, the mass. The Reformation was consummated in Glarus, in the Appenzell, and introduced into parts of Switzerland which had remained till now under the yoke of Rome. So much for the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the peace of Kappel. Every day, as the men of the Forest Cantons looked from their lofty snow-clad summits, they beheld the symbols of the Roman faith vanishing from the plains beneath them; convents deserted, the mass abolished, and village after village meeting, discussing, and by vote adopting the Protestant worship. As yet they had been able to maintain the purity of their mountains, thanks to the darkness and the foreign gold, but they were beginning to be defiled by the feet of the Protestants, and how soon their stronghold might be conquered, and the flag of the Gospel unfurled where the banner of Rome had so long and so proudly waved, they could not tell. A Popish historian of the time, describing the activity of Zwingle and his fellow-labourers, says "A set of wretched disturbers of the peace burst into the Five Cantons, and murdered souls by spreading abroad their songs, tracts, and little Testaments, telling the people they might learn the truth itself from these, and one did not require any more to believe what the priests said."¹ While they were barring their gates in front, suddenly, as we have already said, Protestantism appeared in their rear. A shout came up from the Italian plains that the Gospel had entered that land, and that Rome had begun to fall. This brought on a second crisis.

We are approaching the catastrophe. Zwingle, meditating day and night how he might advance the Reformation and overthrow that terrible power which had held the nations so long in bondage, had begun to revolve mighty plans. His eye ranged over all Christendom; his glance penetrated everything; his comprehensive and organising mind, enlarged by the crisis through which Christendom was passing, felt equal to the task of forming and directing the grandest projects. He had already instituted a Christian co-burghery in Switzerland to hold in check the Popish cantons; this idea he attempted to carry out on a grander scale by extending it to the whole of Reformed Christendom. Why should not, he said, all the Protestant States and nations of Europe unite in a holy confederation for frustrating the plans which the Pope and Charles V. are now concocting for the violent

¹ Christoffel, p. 433.

suppression of the Reformation? It was at this time that he visited Marburg, where he met Philip of Hesse, between whom and himself there existed a great harmony of view on the point in question. Both felt that it was the duty of the Protestant States to put forth their political and military strength in the way of repelling force by force. They meditated the forming of a great Christian republic, embracing the Reformed Swiss cantons, the free cities of Southern Germany, and the Protestant Saxon States in Central and Northern Germany. Zwingle even turned his eyes to Venice, where a Protestant movement of a promising kind had recently presented itself. He sent an ambassador to the republic, who came back with a secret assurance of aid in case of need. The Reformer was not without hope of enlisting France in the league. Overtures to that effect had in fact been made by Francis I., who seemed not unwilling to leave the path of violence on which he had entered, and take under his wing the Reformation of his country. This Protestant alliance was meant to extend from the Adriatic to the German Ocean, forming a Protestant power in Central Europe sufficient to protect conscience and the free preaching of the Gospel. This display of strength, Zwingle believed, would hold in check the emperor and the Pope, would be a rampart around the preachers and professors of the Protestant faith, and would prevent an Iliad of woes which he saw approaching to Christendom. The project was a colossal one.

At the head of this Protestant republic Zwingle proposed to place Philip the Magnanimous. Among the princes of that age he could hardly have made a better choice. It is probable that Zwingle communicated the project to him in his own Castle of Marburg, when attending the conference held in the autumn of that year (October, 1529) on the question of the Lord's Supper. The ardent mind of Philip would be set on fire by the proposal. He had in fact attempted to form a similar league of defence among the Reformed princes and cities of Germany. He had fretted under the restraints which Luther had imposed upon him; for ever as his hand touched his sword's hilt, to unsheathe it in defence of the friends of the Gospel, came the stern voice of the Reformer commanding him to forbear. He had been deeply mortified by the refusal of the Lutherans to unite with the Zwinglians, because it left them disunited in presence of that tremendous combination of force that was mustering on all sides against them. Now came the same thing in another form; for this new defensive alliance promised to gain all the ends he sought so far as these were political. Switzerland and South Germany it would unite; and he hoped, indeed he undertook, to induce the princes and States of North Germany also to accede to the league; and thus what time the emperor crossed the Alps with his legions—and he was now on his way northward, having shaken hands with the Pope over the proposed extermination of Lutheranism—he would find such a reception as would make him fain again to retreat across the mountains.

Zwingle's journey to Marburg had been of signal importance to him in this respect. He had correctly divined the secret policy of the emperor, but at Strasburg he had obtained information which had given him a yet surer and deeper insight into the designs of Charles. His informant was the town sheriff, James Sturm, a far-seeing statesman, devoted to the Reformed cause, and enjoying the friendship of many men of influence and position in Germany and France. Through them Sturm came into possession of important documents

disclosing the emperor's plans against the Reformers. Zwingle forwarded copies of these to the secret council of Zurich, with the remark, "These are from the right *workshop*."

The substance of these documents is probably contained in the statements which Zwingle made to those statesmen who had his confidence. "The emperor," said he, "stirs up friend against friend, and enemy against enemy, in order to force himself between them as mediator, and then he decides with a partiality that leans to the interests of the Papacy and his own power. To kindle a war in Germany he excites the Castellan of Musso² against the Grisons, the Bishops of Constance and Strasburg against the cities of Constance and Strasburg, Duke George of Saxony against John, Elector of Saxony; the Bishops of the Rhine against the Landgrave of Hesse; the Duke of Savoy against Bern, and the Five Cantons against Zurich. Everywhere he makes division and discord. When the confusion has come to a head and all things are ripe he will march in with his Spaniards, and befooling one party with fair words, and falling upon the other with the sword, he will continue to strike till he has reduced all under his yoke. Alas! what an overthrow awaits Germany and all of us under pretence of upholding the Empire and re-establishing religion."³

After his return from Marburg, Zwingle corresponded with the landgrave on this great project. "Gracious prince," wrote he on the 2nd of November, 1529, "if I write to your Grace, as a child to a father, it is because of the confidence I have that God has chosen you for great events, which I dare not utter. . . . We must bell the cat at last."⁴ To which the landgrave answered, "Dear Mr. Huldreich, I hope through the providence of God a feather will fall from Pharaoh,⁵ and that he will meet with what he little expects; for all things are in the way of improvement. God is wonderful. Let this matter touching Pharaoh remain a secret with you till the time arrives."⁶

Like a thunder-cloud charged with fire, the emperor was nearing Germany, to hold the long-announced Diet of Augsburg. The Reformer's courage rose with the approach of danger. The son of the Tockenburg shepherd, the pastor of a little town, dared to step forth and set the battle in array against this Goliath, the master of so many kingdoms. "Only base cowards or traitors," he wrote to Councillor Conrad Zwick of Constance, "can look on and yawn, when we ought to be straining every nerve to collect men and arms from every quarter to make the emperor feel that in vain he strives to establish Rome's supremacy, to destroy the privileges of the free towns, and to coerce us in Helvetia. Awake, Lindau! Arouse, ye neighbour cities, and play the men for your hearths and altars! He is a fool who trusts to the friendship of tyrants. Even Demosthenes teaches us that

² James von Medicis, a foolhardy adventurer, had seized on the Castle of Musso, at the entrance of the Veltelin, and thence harassed the inhabitants of the Grisons, the majority of whom had embraced Protestantism. His violent deeds are believed to have been prompted by the emperor, who sent him 900 Spanish soldiers, and the title of Margrave. (Christoffel.)

³ Zwingle, *Epp.*, ii., p. 429. Christoffel, pp. 404, 405. D'Aubigné, bk. xvi., chap. 4.

⁴ Zwingle, *Epp.*, ii., p. 666. Christoffel, p. 407.

⁵ The name for the emperor in the correspondence between the landgrave and Zwingle. This correspondence was carried on in cipher, which was often changed, the better to preserve the secret.

⁶ Christoffel, p. 407.

nothing is so hateful in their eyes as the *freedom of cities*. The emperor with one hand offers us bread, but in the other he conceals a stone.”⁷

Had the object aimed at been the compelling of the Romanists to abandon their faith or desist from the practice of its rites, Zwingle’s project would have been supremely execrable; but the Reformer did not for a moment dream of such a thing. He never lost sight of the great fact, that by the preaching of the Gospel alone can men be enlightened and converted. But he did not see why States, to the extent to which God had given them the power, should not resist those treacherous and bloody plots which were being hatched for the destruction of their faith and liberties. Luther disapproved of this policy entirely. Christians, he said, ought not to resist the emperor, and if he requires them to die they are to yield up their lives. It was by the stake of the martyr and not by the sword of the State, he never ceased to remind men, that the Gospel was to triumph. Luther, reared in a convent and trained in habits of submission to authority, was to a much greater extent than Zwingle a man of the past. Zwingle, on the other hand, born in a republic, with all the elements and aspirations of constitutional liberty stirring in his breast, was a man of the *present*. Hence the different policies of these two men. It is impossible to say to what extent the atrocities that darkened the following years would have been prevented, had Zwingle’s plan been universally acted upon. But the time for it was not yet come; and the Great Ruler by willing it otherwise has thrown a moral grandeur around the Reformation, which could not have belonged to it had its weapons been less spiritual and its triumph less holy.

In the midst of these negotiations for banding the Protestants in a great European confederacy for the defence of their civil and religious liberties, Zwingle did not for a moment abate his labours as a pastor. The consolidation of the Gospel in Switzerland must be the basis of all his operations. In 1530 he held synods in various parts of the country. At these measures were adopted for perfecting the autonomy of the Church: the ministers were examined; incapable and scandalous pastors were removed; superintendents to watch over morals and administer discipline were appointed; and arrangements set on foot for giving a competent salary to every minister. In February, 1531, it was agreed that whenever any difficulty should arise in doctrine or discipline an assembly of divines and laymen should be convoked, which should examine what the Word of God says on the matter, and decide accordingly.⁸

⁷ Zwingle, *Epp.*, March, 1530.

⁸ Christoffel, sec. ix. 3. D’Aubigné, bk. xvi., chap. 3.

Chapter IX.

Gathering of a Second Storm.

Persecution renewed by the Five Cantons—Activity of Zwingle—Address of the Reformed Pastors—Bern proposes Blockade of the Five Cantons—Zwingle Opposed—No Bread, &c.—Zwingle asks his Dismissal—Consents to Remain—Meeting at Bremgarten—The Comet—Alarming Portents—Zwingle's Earnest Warnings—Unheeded.

Every step of the Gospel nearer their mountains made the men of the Five Cantons only the more determined to rend the treaty in which they had bound themselves to their brethren. They had already violated its spirit. The few professors of the Reformed faith in their territory they drove out, or imprisoned, or burned. In the common parishes—that is, the communes governed now by the Reformed, and now by the Popish cantons—they committed the same atrocities when their turn of jurisdiction came. They imprisoned the preachers and professors of the Reformed faith, confiscated their goods, cut out their tongues, beheaded and burned them. Calumnies were next circulated to inflame the popular wrath against the Protestants; then followed wrathful speeches; at last was heard the clang of arms; it was evident that another tempest was brewing among the mountains of the Oberland.

A General Diet of the Swiss Confederation was convoked at Baden on the 8th of January, 1531.¹ It was unable to come to any decision. Meanwhile the provocations which the Forest Cantons were daily offering were becoming intolerable, yet how were they to be restrained? Behind those cantons stood the emperor and Ferdinand, both, at this hour, making vast preparations; and should war be commenced, who could tell where it would end? Meanwhile it was of the last importance to keep alive the patriotism of the people. Zwingle visited in person the Confederate cantons; he organised committees, he addressed large assemblies; he appealed to everything that could rouse Swiss valour. The armies of Rome were slowly closing around them; the Spaniards were in the Grisons; the emperor was in Germany; soon they would be cut off from their fellow-Protestants of other lands and shut up in their mountains. They must strike while yet they had the power. It would be too late when the emperor's sword was at their gates, and the Romanists of their own mountains had fallen like an avalanche upon them. Never had their fathers bled in so holy a cause.

The heroes of the past seemed all to live again in this one man. Wherever he passed he left behind him a country on fire.

A Diet of the Reformed cantons was held at Arau on the 12th of May, to decide on the steps to be taken. The situation, they said, was this: "The Mountain Cantons remain Roman Catholic; they divide Switzerland into two camps; they keep open the door for the armed hordes of foreign bigotry and despotism. How shall we restore Swiss unity?" they asked. "Not otherwise than by restoring unity of faith." They did not seek to compel the Five Cantons to renounce Popery, but they believed themselves justified in asking them to cease from persecuting the preachers of the Gospel in the common parishes, and to

¹ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 353.

tolerate the Reformed doctrine in their valleys. This was the demand of the four Reformed cantons.

The Pastors of Zurich, Bern, Basle, and Strasburg assembled in Zwingle's house the 5th of September, 1530, and speaking in the name of the Reformed cantons addressed to their Popish confederates the following words: "You know, gracious lords, that concord increases the power of States, and that discord overthrows them. You yourselves are a proof of the first. May God prevent you from becoming also a proof of the second. For this reason we conjure you to allow the Word of God to be preached among you. When has there ever existed, even among the heathen, a people which saw not that the hand of God alone upholds a nation? Do not two drops of quicksilver unite as soon as you remove that which separates them? Away then with that which separates you from your cities, that is, the absence of the Word of God, and immediately the Almighty will unite us as our fathers were united. Then placed in your mountains, as in the centre of Christendom, you will be an example to it, its protection and its refuge; and after having passed through this vale of tears, being the terror of the wicked and the consolation of the faithful, you will at last be established in eternal happiness.

"The minister's sermon is rather long," said some, with a yawn, in whose hearing this address was read. The remonstrance was without effect.

Zwingle earnestly counselled a bold and prompt blow—in other words, an armed intervention. He thought this the speediest way to bring the Mountain Cantons to reasonable terms. Baden, though admitting that the Five Cantons had broken the national compact, and that the atrocities they were committing in shameful violation of their own promises justified war, thought it better, nevertheless, that a milder expedient should be tried.

Uri, Schwitz, Unterwalden, Zug, and Lucerne were dependent for their daily supplies upon the markets and harvests of the plains. Shut out from these, they had no alternative but surrender or death by famine. "Let us blockade these cantons," said Bern. Zurich and Zwingle strongly disapproved of this measure. It confounded, they said, the innocent with the guilty; whereas war would smite only the latter. The blockade, however, was resolved upon and rigorously carried out. The markets of the entire region around were closed, and the roads leading to the towns blockaded. Instantaneously the Five Cantons were enclosed in a vast desert; bread, wine, and salt suddenly failed from their *châlets*, and the horrors of famine began to reign in their mountains. This calamity was the more severely felt inasmuch as the preceding year had been one of dearth, and the "sweating sickness" had visited their valleys, adding its ravages to the sufferings caused by the failure of the crops.²

A wail of suffering and a cry of indignation arose from the mountains. A General Diet was opened at Bremgarten on the 14th of June, in presence of the deputies of several foreign Powers. The Five Cantons demanded that, first of all, the blockade should be raised; till this was done they would listen to no proposition. Bern and Zurich replied: "The blockade we will not raise till you shall have ceased your persecutions, and opened

² Christoffel, pp. 445, 446.

your own valleys to the free preaching of the Gospel.” Conciliation was impossible; the conference broke up, and the breach remained unclosed.

This was a terrible complication. Nothing but a united and bold policy, Zwingli saw, could extricate them from it. But instead of this, the Council of Zurich was every day displaying greater vacillation and feebleness. The lukewarm and timid were deserting the Reform, its old enemies were again raising their heads. Courage and patriotism were lacking to meet the ire of the mountaineers, roused by the half-measures which had been adopted. Ruin was coming on apace. The burden of the State rested on Zwingli; he felt he could no longer accept a position in which he was responsible for evils which were mainly owing to the rejection of those measures he had counselled. He appeared before the Great Council on the 26th of July, 1531, and, with a voice choking with emotion, said: “For eleven years I have preached the Gospel among you, and warned you of the dangers that would threaten the Confederacy if the Five Cantons—that is to say, the party which lives by pensions and mercenary service—should gain the upper hand. All has been of no avail. Even now you elect to the council men who covet this blood-money. I will no longer be responsible for the mischief that I cannot prevent; I therefore desire my dismissal.”³ He took his departure with tears in his eyes.

Thus was the pilot leaving the ship at the moment the storm was about to strike it. The councillors were seized with dismay. Their former reverence and affection for their magnanimous and devoted leader revived. They named a deputation to wait on him and beg him to withdraw his resignation. Zwingli took three days to consider what course he should pursue. These were days of earnest prayer. At length he reappeared in the council, his eyes dimmed, and his face bearing traces of the conflict through which he had passed. “I will stay with you,” said he, “and I will labour for the safety of the *State—until death.*”

For a moment the union and courage of Zurich revived. Zwingli began again to have hope. He thought that could he rouse to action the powerful canton of Bern, all might yet be well; the gathering tempest in the mountains might be turned hack, and the iron hand that lay so heavy upon conscience and the preaching of the Gospel lifted off. He arranged a midnight meeting with the deputies of Bern at Bremgarten, and put the matter before them thus:—“What is to be done?” said he. Withdraw the blockade?—the cantons will then be more haughty and insolent than ever. Enforce it?—they will take the offensive, and if their attack succeed, you will behold our fields red with the blood of the Protestants, the doctrine of truth cast down, the Church of Christ laid waste, all social relations overthrown, our adversaries more irritated and hardened against the Gospel, and crowds of monks and priests again filling our rural districts, streets, and temples.” He paused; then solemnly added, “And yet that also will have an end.” The words of Zwingli had deeply impressed the Bernese. “We see,” said they, “all the disasters that impend over our common cause, and will do our utmost to ward them off.”

Zwingli took his departure while it was yet dark. His disciple, the young Bullinger, who was present, and relates what was said at the interview, accompanied him a little way. The parting was most sad, for the two were tenderly attached, and in the hearts of both

³ Christoffel, p. 447.

was a presentiment that they should meet no more on earth.⁴ A strange occurrence took place at the gate of the town. As Zwingle and his friends approached the sentinels, a personage in robes white as snow suddenly appeared, and threw the soldiers into panic. So the guard affirmed, for Zwingle and his friends saw not the apparition.⁵

The Council of Zurich sank down again into their former apathy. The pensioners—the foreign gold—formed the great obstacle, Zwingle felt, to the salvation of his country. It had corrupted the virtue and undermined the patriotism of the Mountain Cantons, and it had bred treachery and cowardice in even the Reformed councils. Zwingle's appeals grew more stirring every hour. "Ruin," said he, "is at the door;" but he felt that his words were spoken to dead men; his heart was almost broken.

In the August of that year a comet of unusual size appeared in the heavens.⁶ As night after night, with lengthening tail and fiercer blaze, it hung suspended in the west, it attracted the gaze and awoke the terrors of all. On the night of the 15th of August, Zwingle and his friend George Müller, the former Abbot of Wettingen, contemplated it from the burying-ground of the great minster. "What may this star signify, dear Huldreich?" inquired Müller. "It is come to light me to my grave," replied Zwingle, "and many an honest man with me."⁷ "With God's grace, no," said Müller. "I am rather short-sighted," rejoined Zwingle, "but I foresee great calamities in the future:⁸ there comes a great catastrophe; but Christ will not finally forsake us; the victory will remain with our cause."

Portent was heaped upon portent, and rumour followed rumour. Not a locality but furnished its wonder, prognosticating calamity, and diffusing gloomy forebodings over the country. At Brugg, in Aargau, a fountain, not of water, but of blood, was reported to have opened suddenly, and to be dyeing the earth with gore. The sky of Zug was illumined with a meteor in the form of a shield, and noises as of men engaged in conflict came from the hollows of the mountains. In the Brünig Pass banners were seen to wave upborne by no earthly hand, and stirred by no earthly breeze; while on the calm surface of the Lucerne Lake spectral ships were seen careering, manned with spectral warriors.⁹

There was no need of such ghostly signs; the usual symptoms of approaching disaster were but too manifest to those who chose to read them. Zwingle perceived them in the disunion and apathy of the Reformed cantons, in the growing audacity of the enemy, and in the sinister rumours which were every day brought from the mountains. He raised his voice once more; it was in vain the men who trembled before the portents which their imagination had conjured up, were unmoved by the sober words of the one man whose sagacity foresaw, and whose patriotism would have averted, the coming ruin.

⁴ Christoffel, p. 449.

⁵ Bullinger, *Chron.*, tom. iii., p. 49.

⁶ This was Halley's Comet, that makes its appearance about every seventy-six years.

⁷ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 387.

⁸ Zwingle, *Epp.*, p. 626.

⁹ Christoffel, pp. 449, 450.

Chapter X.

Death of Zwingle.

Forest Cantons decide on War—Assembling of their Army—Zurich dispatches 600 Men—Tedious Debates in the Council—A Night of Terror—Morning—The Great Banner Clings to its Staff—Depression—700 mustered instead of 4,000—Zwingle Mounts his Steed—Parting with his Wife and Children—Omens—The Battle—Bravery of the Zurichers—Overwhelmed by Numbers—The Carnage—Zwingle Mortally Wounded—Dispatched by Camp Followers—Tidings of his Death—Grief and Dismay.

In the beginning of October the preparations of the Five Cantons for war were completed. Their Diet assembled at Brunnen, on the banks of the Lake of Lucerne; a vote was taken, and the campaign was decided upon. Straightway the passes were seized that no one might tell it in Zurich.¹ The avalanche hung trembling on the mountain's brow; but a dead calm reigned in Zurich and the other Reformed cantons, for the rumours of war had suddenly ceased. It was the calm before the tempest.

On the 9th of October the mountain warriors assembled in their chapels, heard mass, and then, to the number of 8,000, began their march toward the Protestant frontier. They set up their standard at Baar, between the canton of Zug and the canton of Zurich. The men of Schwitz, Uri, Zug, Unterwalden, and Lucerne hastened to assemble round it. Their ranks were swelled by soldiers from the Italian valleys, and deserters from Zurich and Bern. Another Popish host, 12,000 strong, spread themselves over the free parishes, inflicting all the horrors of war wherever they came. Tidings reached Zurich that the bolt had fallen—the war was begun; the enemy was at Baar, on the road to Zurich.

On receiving this startling intelligence on the evening of the 9th, the council hastily assembled; but instead of sounding the tocsin, or calling the people to arms, they dispatched two councillors to reconnoitre, and then retired to rest.

At day-break of the 10th another messenger arrived at Zurich, confirming the intelligence of the previous day. The Great Council assembled in the morning, but still professed to doubt the gravity of the situation. Messenger after messenger arrived; at last came one who told them that the enemy had crossed the frontier, and seized upon Hitzkylch. On hearing this, the councillors turned pale. They were alarmed at last. It was now resolved, although only after a lengthened debate, to send forward Goeldi, with 600 men and artillery.² This was the vanguard; the main body was to follow. Crossing the Albis, Goeldi and his men arrived at Kappel during the night. He had instructions not to engage the forces of the enemy till succours arrived.

Lavatar, the commander-in-chief of the forces of the canton, earnestly counselled a levy *en masse*, and the instant dispatch of a powerful body to the frontier. There followed another tedious debate in the council; the day wore away, and it was evening before the council were able to come to the determination to send an army to defend their invaded country.

¹ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 395.

² Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 388. Christoffel, p. 452.

The sun went down behind the Albis. The city, the lake, and the canton were wrapped in darkness; with the darkness came trembling and horror. The bells were rung to summon to arms. They had hardly begun to toll when a tempest burst forth, and swept in terrific fury over Zurich and the surrounding country. The howling of the winds, the lashing of the waves of the lake, the pealing of the steeple-bells, the mustering of the land-sturm, and the earthquake, which about nine o'clock shook the city and canton, formed a scene of terror such as had seldom been witnessed. Few eyes were that night closed in sleep. In the dwellings of Zurich there were tears, and loud wailings, and hasty and bitter partings of those who felt that they embraced probably for the last time.

The morning broke; the tempest was past and gone, the mountains, the lake, and the green acclivities of the Albis were fairer than ever. But the beauty of morning could not dispel the gloom which had settled in the hearts of the Zurichers. The great banner was hoisted on the town-hall, but in the still air it clung to its staff. "Another bad omen," said the men of Zurich, as they fixed their eyes on the drooping flag.

Beneath that banner there assembled about 700 men, where 4,000 warriors ought to have mustered. These were without uniform, and insufficiently armed. The council had appointed Zwingle to be war-chaplain. He well knew the hazards of the post, but he did not shirk them. He pressed Anna, his wife, to his bruised and bleeding heart; tore himself from his children, and with dimmed eyes but a resolute brow went forth to mount his horse, which stood ready at the door. He vaulted into the saddle, but scarcely had he touched it when the animal reared, and began to retreat backwards. "He will never return," said the spectators, who saw in this another inauspicious omen.³

The little army passed out of the gates about eleven of the forenoon. Anna followed her husband with her eyes so long as he was visible. He was seen to fall behind his troop for a few minutes, and those who were near him distinctly heard him breathing out his heart in prayer, and committing himself and the Church to God. The soldiers climbed the Albis. On arriving at "The Beech-tree" on its summit they halted, and some proposed that they should here wait for reinforcements. "Hear ye not the sound of the cannon beneath us?" said Zwingle; "they are fighting at Kappel; let us hasten forward to the aid of our brethren." The troop precipitated its march.⁴

The battle between the two armies had been begun at one o'clock, and the firing had been going on for two hours when the Zurichers bearing the "great banner" joined their comrades in the fight.⁵ It seemed at first as if their junction with the van would turn the day in their favour. The artillery of Zurich, admirably served and advantageously posted, played with marked effect upon the army of the Five Cantons spread out on a morass beneath.⁶ But unhappily a wood on the left flank of the Zurich army had been left unoccupied, and the mountaineers coming to the knowledge of this oversight climbed the hill, and under cover of the trees opened a murderous fire upon the ranks of their opponents. Having discharged their fire, they rushed out of the wood, lance in hand, and

³ Christoffel, pp. 452, 453.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 453.

⁵ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 408.

⁶ *Ibid.*

furiously charged the Zurichers. The resistance they encountered was equally resolute and brave. The men of Zurich fought like lions; they drove back the enemy. The battle swept with a roar like that of thunder through the wood. The fury and heroism on both sides, the flight and the pursuit of armed men, the clash of halberds and the thunder of artillery, the shouts of combatants, and the groans of the dying, mingling in one dreadful roar, were echoed and re-echoed by the Alps till they seemed to rock the mountains and shake the earth. In their advance the Zurichers became entangled in a bog. Alas! they were fatally snared. The foe returned and surrounded them. At this moment the troop under Goeldi, a traitor at heart, fled. Those who remained fought desperately, but, being as one to eight to the men of the Five Cantons, their valour could avail nothing against odds so overwhelming. "Soon they fell thick," says Christoffel, "like the precious grain in autumn, beneath the strokes of their embittered foes, and at length were obliged to abandon the battle-field, leaving upon it more than five hundred who slept the sleep of death, or who were writhing in the agony of death-wounds." On this fatal field fell the flower of Zurich—the wisest of its councillors, the most Christian of its citizens, and the ablest of its pastors.

But there is one death that affects us more than all the others. Zwingle, though present on the field, did not draw sword: he restricted himself to his duties as chaplain. When the murderous assault was made from the forest, and many were falling around him, he stooped down to breathe a few words into the ear of a dying man. While thus occupied he was struck with a stone upon the head, and fell to the earth. Recovering in a little he rose, but received two more blows. As he lay on the ground a hostile spear dealt him a fatal stab, and the blood began to trickle from the wound. "What matters it?" said he; "they may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul." These were the last words he uttered.⁷

The darkness fell, the stars came out, the night was cold. Zwingle had fallen at the foot of a pear tree, and lay extended on the earth. His hands were clasped, his eyes were turned to heaven, and his lips moved in prayer. The camp-followers were now prowling over the field of battle. Two of them approached the place where the Reformer lay. "Do you wish for a priest to confess yourself?" said they. The dying man shook his head. "At least," said they, "call in your heart upon the Mother of God." He signified his dissent by another shake of the head. Curious to know who this obstinate heretic was, one of them raised his head, and turned it toward one of the fires which had been kindled on the field. He suddenly let it fall, exclaiming, "'Tis Zwingle!"⁸ It happened that Bockinger, an officer from Unterwalden, and one of those pensioners against whom Zwingle had so often thundered, was near. The name pronounced by the soldier fell upon his ear. "Zwingle!" exclaimed he; "is it that vile heretic and traitor Zwingle?" He had hardly uttered the words when he raised his sword and struck him on the throat. Yielding to this last blow, Zwingle died.⁹

⁷ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 412. The student of the classics will remember the words that Epaminondas addressed to his companions when dying—"It is not an end of my life that is now come, but a better beginning."

⁸ Ruchat, tom. ii., p. 412.

⁹ The pear-tree under which Zwingle died has perished. A rough massive block of stone, with a tablet, and an inscription in German and Latin, has taken its place.

It was on the field of battle that the Reformer met death. But the cause for which he yielded up his life was that of the Reformation of the Church and the regeneration of his country. He was not less a martyr than if he had died at the stake.

When the terrible tidings reached Zurich that Zwingle was dead, the city was struck with affright. The news ran like lightning through all the Reformed cantons and spread consternation and sorrow. Switzerland's great patriot had fallen. When Oecolampadius of Basle learned that the Reformer was no more, his heart turned to stone, and he died in a few weeks. The intelligence was received with profound grief in all the countries of the Reformation. All felt that a great light had been quenched; that one of the foremost champions in the Army of the Faith had fallen, at a moment when the hosts of Rome were closing their ranks, and a terrible onset on the Truth was impending.

Zurich made peace with the Five Cantons, stipulating only for toleration. In the common parishes the Reformed faith was suppressed, the altars were set up, mass restored, the monks crept back to their empty cells. Luther, when told of the death of Zwingle and Oecolampadius, remembered the days he had passed with both of these men at Marburg, and was seized with so pungent a sorrow that, to use his own words, he "had almost died himself." Ferdinand of Austria heard of the victory of Kappel, but with different feelings. "At last," he thought, "the tide has turned," and in Kappel he beheld the first of a long series of victories to be achieved by the sword of Rome. He wrote to his brother, Charles V., calling upon him to come to the aid of the Five Cantons, and beginning at the Alps, to traverse Christendom at the head of his legions, purging out heresy, and restoring the dominion of the old faith.

Zwingle had fallen; but in this same land a mightier was about to arise.