

Book Twelve

Protestantism in Germany from the Augsburg Confession to the Peace of Passau.

Chapter I.

The Schmalkald League.

The Augsburg Confession—The Emperor's Hopes and Disappointments—Melancthon's Despair—Luther's Courage—Formation of Schmalkald League—The Kings of France, England, &c., invited to Enter it—The Swiss Rejected—Luther's Hesitation—The Turk Invades Europe—Charles offers Peace to the Protestants—Peace of Ratisbon—The Church has Rest Fifteen Years.

We have already traced the history of Protestantism in Germany from the day of the Theses (1517) to the day of the Augsburg Confession (1530). The interval between these two dates is short; but what a train of important and brilliant events marks its currency, and how different the Christendom of one era to the Christendom of the other! If the hammer of Luther, nailing his propositions to the door of the Schloss-kirk, sounded the knell of the Old times, the Augsburg Confession, presented only thirteen years afterwards, opens to us the gates of the New world.

Where in all history are we to look for a transition so vast, accomplished in so short a time? Of all the factors in human affairs, that which despots commonly account the weakest, and of which they sometimes take no account at all, is immeasurably the strongest—Conscience. It is more powerful than philosophy, more powerful than letters, more powerful than the sword. The schoolmen had toiled for ages to enlighten the world, but it was seen at last that their intellectual subtlety could not break the chains of the human soul. Their day faded into the night of mysticism. Next came the revival of letters, the sure prelude, it was said, of a new age. But civilisation and liberty did not come at the call of the Humanists, and after flourishing a little while letters began to retrace their steps towards the pagan tomb from which they had come. Scepticism was descending upon the world. But when the Word of God touched the conscience, the world felt itself shaken by a power mightier than that of schools or armies. It tottered upon its foundations. The veil was rent from the heart of Christendom.

We resume our narrative at the point where we broke it off—the old town of Augsburg in the year 1530. What a numerous, brilliant, and motley gathering is that which its walls now enclose! Here are all the sovereign princes, dukes, and counts of the Empire, with their courts and their men-at-arms. Here are all the great scholars and theologians of Germany, her Popish dignitaries and her Protestant Reformers. Here too, in the train of the chief personages, is much that is neither princely nor scholarly—lacqueys and men-at-arms, idlers and sight-seers from far and near, who crowd the streets, fill the taverns, and disturb the peace and quiet of the city by engaging in battles of a different kind from those

which exercise the prowess of the combatants in the Palatinate Chapel. A great place is empty in this vast gathering—that of Luther. But he is no farther off than the Castle of Coburg, where, sitting apart and maintaining a keen correspondence with his friends, he can make his spirit felt in the Diet and, unseen, guide the course of its debates.

All being gathered into Augsburg, in obedience to the summons of the emperor, at last with great pomp comes the emperor himself, Charles, master of two worlds. Behind him what a long and brilliant train! Kings, Papal legates, ambassadors, archbishops, priests, friars, and some ten thousand men-at-arms. It is Mediaevalism rising up in a power and glory unknown to it for ages, feeling instinctively that its last struggle is come with a power before which it is destined to fall.

Before crossing the Alps, Charles V. had had an interview with the Pope at Bologna, and these two potentates had come to an understanding touching the policy to be pursued towards the Lutherans. They must be required to submit to the Church. This was the summary and simple solution that awaited the problem of the age. There was, it is true, the promise of a Council in the future, and of whatever reforms that Council might be pleased to grant; but, first, the Lutherans must return to their obedience. So then the end of the heresy was near—the Pope and the emperor, the two masters of Christendom, had decreed its extirpation. The brilliant assemblage now gathered from east to west of Germany had come to witness the burial of the Lutheran revolt, and the resurrection in new glory and power of Roman Catholicism.

But how mortifying to this master of so many kingdoms! He who had been twice victorious over his great rival Francis I., who had dictated peace at almost the gates of Paris, who had bowed the Pope to his policy, was withstood, thwarted, beaten by these heretical princes and excommunicated preachers. He was compelled to hear them read their Confession in open Diet; and thus had he erected a stage, and got together an audience, for the greater *éclat* of that Lutheranism which he expected to see sink into eternal annihilation beneath the weight of his arms and the prestige of his authority. A whole winter's scheming with the Pope had suddenly collapsed.

But Charles could do something toward veiling the humiliation he could not but feel. He bade his theologians prepare an answer to the Confession of the Protestant princes and divines. Another unfortunate step. The blundering and sophistry of Dr. Eck acted as a foil to a document which combined the strength of Luther and the elegance of Melancthon. The Augsburg Confession stood higher than ever. The emperor bade the Protestants consider themselves refuted. It would seem that he himself had but small faith in this refutation, for he made haste to throw his sword in along with the pen of Dr. Eck against the Protestants. On the 19th of November, 1530, he issued a decree,¹ addressed to the Protestant princes, States and cities, commanding them, under peril of his displeasure, to return to their obedience to the See of Rome, and giving them till the next spring (15th of April) to make their choice between submission and war. Dr. Eck was rewarded for his services at the Council by the Bishopric of Vienna, which gave occasion to the witty saying of Erasmus, that “the poor Luther had made many rich.”²

¹ Sleidan, bk. vii., pp. 135—137.

² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

The edict of the emperor forbade from that hour all further conversions to Protestantism, under pain of forfeiture of goods and life; it further enacted that all which had been taken from the Roman Catholics should be restored; that the monasteries and religious houses should be rebuilt; that the old ceremonies and rites should be observed; and that no one who did not submit to this decree should sit in the Imperial Chamber, the supreme court of judicature in the Empire; and that all classes should assist with their lives and fortunes in carrying out this edict.³ The edict of Spires was directed mainly against Luther; the ban of Augsburg was wider in its scope; it fell on all who held his opinions in Germany—on princes, cities, and peasants.

Melancthon was overwhelmed with dismay. He was “drowned,” says Sleidan, “with sighs and tears.”⁴ Happily, Luther yet lived. His magnanimity and faith rose to the occasion. He looked the great emperor and his persecuting edict in the face, and in a characteristic publication foretold that the edict would be a failure, and that even the emperor’s sword, strong as it was, was not strong enough to extinguish the light and bring back the darkness.

The spirit of Luther fired the princes. At Christmas, 1530, they met at Schmalkald to deliberate on the steps to be taken. That their religion and liberties must be defended at all costs was with them an axiom. The only question then was, How? They formed the League, known in history as the League of Schmalkald, engaging to stand by one another in the defence of their faith and their liberties, and in particular to resist any attempt that might be made by arms to carry out the Edict of Augsburg.⁵ For this purpose they were to maintain, each of them, for the space of six years, a military force ready to assist any principality or town which might be attacked by the imperial arms.

It was not the question of their religious liberties only that made it seem expedient for the Protestant princes to form this confederacy. To this were added political considerations of no small weight. Recent successes had greatly increased the power, and widened in the same proportion the ambition, of Charles V. The emperor was at this moment revolving schemes dangerous to the constitution and civil liberties of Germany. He had made his brother Ferdinand of Austria be elected King of the Romans. To elect a King of the Romans was to designate the future Emperor of Germany. This was a violation of the Golden Bull of Charles IV., inasmuch as it was a manifest attempt on the part of Charles to vest the imperial crown in his family, and to render that dignity hereditary which the Golden Bull declared to be elective. The Protestant princes saw revolution in all this. The emperor was making himself master. They must resist this usurpation in time; hence the Schmalkald League, made first at Christmas, 1530, and renewed a year after, at Christmas, 1531, with the addition of a great many princes and cities. They wrote to the Kings of France, England, Denmark, and to the maritime towns in the north of Germany, to enter the League, or otherwise assist in their enterprise. The answers returned were in every case favourable, though considerations of policy made the writers postpone joining the League for the present.

³ Sleidan, bk. vii., pp. 139, 140. Mosheim, cent. xvi., sec. i., chap. 3; Glas., 1831.

⁴ Sleidan, bk. vii., p.140. Seckendorf, lib. ii., p. 180.

⁵ Sleidan, bk. vii., p. 142. Robertson, bk. v., p. 175.

This bold step failed at first to meet Luther's approval. It looked like war, and he shuddered at anything that threatened to bring war and the Gospel into contact. But when it was explained to him that the League was purely defensive; that it was meant to attack no one; that it was simply an arrangement for enabling its members to exercise unitedly, and therefore more successfully, their natural rights of self-defence, on behalf of what was dearer to them and to their countrymen than life itself; he acquiesced in the League of the princes.

The measure undoubtedly was right in itself, and was demanded by the circumstances of extreme peril in which Protestantism was now apparently placed. It linked the Protestant States of Germany into one confederation, under the aegis of which the Protestant faith might be preached, and its doctrines professed, without terror of the stake. Further, we recognise in the Schmalkald League a decided step in the progress of Protestantism. Protestantism as a principle or doctrine was developed in the teaching of the Reformers. But Protestantism was never meant to remain a mere principle. Its mission was to create around it a new political, social, and intellectual world. At the centre of that world the Protestant principle took its place, sitting there as on a throne, or rather dwelling in it as its soul, and in times of peril calling to its defence all those forces—arts, letters, free constitutions—which itself had created. The beginning of this new political world was at Schmalkald.

A great many princes and free cities, in addition to the original confederates, had subscribed the League, and now its attitude was a somewhat imposing one. The Swiss Protestant cantons held out their hand, but were repulsed. They were held to be disqualified by their sentiments on the Lord's Supper.⁶ This was a grave error. It was nearly as great an error on the other side when the Kings of France and England, who could hardly be more orthodox in the eyes of the Germans than were the Zwinglians, were invited to join the League.⁷ Happily these monarchs sent replies which saved the Leaguers from the political entanglements in which an alliance with these scheming and selfish potentates would have been sure to land them.⁸ This was the very danger that Luther had feared. He foresaw the League growing strong and beginning to lean on armies, neglecting the development of the religious principle in whose vitality alone would consist the consolidation, power, and success of their federation. If the rampart should smother the heavenly fire it was meant to enclose, both would perish together.

When the spring of 1531 came, the emperor, in stead of beginning hostilities, paused. The sword that was to have swept German Protestantism from the face of the earth, and which was already half drawn, was thrust back into its sheath. Besides the Schmalkald League, other things had arisen to convince the emperor of the extreme hazard of attempting at this moment to enforce the Edict of Augsburg. France, whose monarch was still smarting from the memories of Pavia and the imprisonment at Madrid, threatened to break the peace and commence hostilities against him. The irrepressible Turk was again appearing in the east of Europe. Further, the emperor had given umbrage to the Popish princes of Germany by making his brother Ferdinand be elected King of the Romans, and

⁶ Sleidan, bk. viii., p. 151.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145. Robertson, bk. v., p. 176.

⁸ Sleidan, bk. viii., pp. 149—150.

so could not count on the aid of his own party. Thus, even as Charles put his hand upon his sword's hilt, a new difficulty started up to prevent him drawing it. It must have seemed, even to himself, as if a greater power than the Schmalkald Confederacy were fighting against him.

The issue was that Charles, on a survey of his position, found that he must postpone the enforcing of the Edict of Augsburg to a more convenient time, and meanwhile he must come to an understanding with the Protestants. Accordingly, after tedious and difficult negotiations, a peace was agreed upon at Nuremberg, July 23rd, and ratified in the Diet at Ratisbon, August 3rd, 1532. In this pacification the emperor granted to the Lutherans the free and undisturbed exercise of their religion, until such time as a General Council or an Imperial Diet should decide the religious question; and the Protestants—now seven princes and twenty-four cities—promised to aid the emperor in his war against the Turk.⁹ Thus the storm that looked so dark rolled away without inflicting any harm on those over whom it had lowered so ominously. The finest army which united Christendom had yet raised marched against the Turks; “and the emperor,” says the Abbé Millot, “who had not yet appeared at the head of his troops (a thing surprising in an age of heroism), on this occasion took the command. He had the glory of disconcerting a formidable enemy, whose forces are said to have amounted to three hundred thousand men.”¹⁰ Solyman, intimidated by this display of force, withdrew his devastating hordes without coming to a battle; and the emperor leaving Germany in order to superintend the vast military projects he was now setting on foot in other countries, the Church had rest from persecution, and the period of her tranquillity was prolonged for well-nigh a decade and a half.

⁹ Robertson, bk. v., p. 176. Mosheim, cent. xvi., sec. 1, chap. 3. Sleidan, bk. viii., p. 160.

¹⁰ Abbé Millot, *Elements of General History* (translated from the French), vol. iv., pp. 286, 287; Lond., 1779.

Chapter II.

The German Anabaptists, or the “Heavenly Kingdom.”

Peace in the Church: in the World Distress—Its Four Great Rulers—Troubles of Henry VIII.—Mortifications of Francis I.—Labours of Charles V.—Griefs of Clement VII.—A Contrast—The Anabaptist Prophets—Matthias the Baker—The New “Mount Zion”—Morals of the Sect—Buckholdt the Tailor—The “Heavenly Kingdom”—Buckholdt the King of the “Heavenly Kingdom”—Nominates Twelve Apostles—Sends out Twenty-eight Evangelists—Their Instructions and Departure—Their Fate—Marriage Abolished—Münster, the Den of this Crew, Besieged and Taken—Buckholdt put to Death—Lesson.

If the Church had rest, society around it was terribly convulsed—“on the earth” was “distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.” What miserable and distracted lives were those which were led by the four great potentates that governed Europe! Cares, perplexities, and disappointments came crowding in upon them, and filled up every hour of every day of their outwardly brilliant, but inwardly most unhappy existences.

Henry of England had commenced his great divorce. The delays and doublings of the Vatican kept him in a perpetual fume, and when at length his suit reached its final issue in the Papal court, the haughty monarch was thrown into a paroxysm of rage, which shaped itself ultimately into a course of crime. His impetuous and choleric temper could as little brook the opposition he was meeting with from the Protestants of his own kingdom, who had thrown off Popery while he had thrown off only the Pope, and aimed at stepping into his vacant place in the consciences of his subjects.

Francis I. of France was every year becoming a guiltier and a more wretched man. His rival, Charles V., had robbed him of the laurels he had won in his earlier campaigns. To the anger and shame which his imprisonment in Madrid left rankling in his soul were added the loss of the Italian duchies, and the recent humiliating peace of Cambray. Francis gave himself no rest, if haply he might wipe out these disgraces and humble the haughty man who had inflicted them upon him. He intrigued to sow dissension between Clement and the emperor; he toiled to raise new armaments in the hope that past defeats would be forgotten in the splendour of new victories; but all that he reaped from these harassing labours was only to add thereby to the weight of his subjects’ burdens, and to the list of his own embarrassments and disappointments.

The career of Charles V. was outwardly more prosperous, but at the heart of his glory were labour and sorrow. Raised above all other men in point of worldly state, the emperor was in hourly terror of falling from the dazzling pinnacle on which he stood, and in order to maintain himself was compelled to have continual resort to fresh levies, new battles, and the expenditure of yet more millions of gold crowns, till at length the gulf was dug into which himself and his kingdom finally descended. Not to speak of Francis, who was a thorn in his side; nor of Clement, whose fickle alliance gave him little satisfaction, the emperor had no faith in the order of things which he had established in Italy and Germany, and laboured under continual apprehensions of his system falling in pieces around him. But worst of all he was haunted by the spectre of Lutheranism, which a true instinct told him would one day rob him of his Empire; nor could he understand how it should happen that

every time he raised his sword to make an end of that detested thing, the Turk unexpectedly presented himself, and seemed with menacing gestures to forbid the blow.

As regards the fourth great power of the age, Clement VII. of Rome, these were not times when Popes any more than temporal monarchs could sleep in peace. His ghostly empire was falling in pieces; kings and nations were escaping from under the tiara, and neither anathemas nor concessions—and both were tried by turns—could bring them back. Germany had revolted from its obedience; half the Swiss cantons had lifted up the heel of heretical pravity; Sweden and Denmark were going the same downward road, and England was following fast after them. There never before had been so unfortunate a Pontificate, and there have been few so anxious, perplexed, and unhappy Popes, though there have been many more vicious ones. Nor was Clement more happy in the sovereigns that remained with him than in those that had deserted him. The most Christian King of France and his most Catholic Majesty of Spain were fully as troublesome as useful to him. Instead of the two pillars of his throne, they rather resembled two colossal swords suspended above it, which threatened ever and anon to fall and crush it. Much artifice and management did it require on the part of Clement to poise the one against the other. At no time did the views and interests of all three coincide. On one object only were they able to agree—the overthrow of Protestantism; but even here their jealousies and rivalships prevented their acting in concert. Their conflicting passions drew them into a whirl of excitement and of war against one another, which wasted their years, burdened their treasuries, and devastated their kingdoms.

Compared with the spectacles we have been contemplating, how truly sublime the position of Luther and his fellow-Reformers! From their closets they wield a far mightier power than Charles and Francis do from their thrones. Not armies to ravage, but ideas to enlighten the earth do they send forth. By the silent but majestic power of truth they are seen dethroning errors, pulling down tyrannies, planting the seeds of piety and liberty, and nursing the infancy of arts and letters, and free States, which are destined to remain the fruit of their labours and the monument of their wisdom when the victories of Charles and of Francis have been forgotten, and the fabric of their political greatness has mouldered into dust.

The Church of Germany, during these years of peace, extended on every side. All her great teachers were still spared to her. Luther, Melancthon, and the band of eminent men around them, still unbroken, were guiding her counsels and propagating her doctrines. By her side stood the League warding off the sword of Charles, or whoever might wish to attack her. The timid found courage to avow their convictions, and ranged themselves on the Protestant side. Whole districts in Northern and Central Germany came over. Anhalt and Pomerania, Augsburg, Frankfort, Hanover, and Kempten were among the new accessions. This did not escape the notice of the emperor, but, meanwhile, it was not in his power to prevent it—he dared hardly show his displeasure at it.

The prosperity of these peaceful days was, alas! disturbed by a most deplorable outbreak of lawless passion and horrible fanaticism. We have already narrated the tumults and bloodshed of which the provinces of Upper Germany were the scene about a decade before, caused by the efforts of men who had espoused principles that converted the liberty of the Gospel into worse than pagan licentiousness. The seeds of these evils were

still in the soil, and the days of peace brought them to the surface a second time. In 1533, two Anabaptist prophets—John Matthias, a baker of Haarlem, and John Buckholdt, a tailor in Leyden—with a body of their followers, seized upon the city of Münster, in Westphalia,¹ judging it a convenient spot from which to propagate their abominable tenets. They gave out that God had commissioned them to put down all magistracy and government, and establish the kingdom of heaven, which from its centre in Münster, or Mount Zion, as they styled it, was to reign over all the nations of the earth. Matthias, the baker, was the first monarch of this new kingdom. His talent for enterprise, his acts of sanctity, and his fervid enthusiasm fitted him for his difficult but impious project. He abolished all distinctions of rank, proclaimed a community of goods, made all eat at a common table, and abrogating marriage, permitted a plurality of wives, himself setting the example, which his followers were not slow to imitate.²

Matthias, the baker, soon died, and was succeeded by John Buckholdt, the tailor. It was now that the new “heavenly kingdom” shone forth in all its baleful splendour. Buckholdt gave out that it was the will of God, made known to him by special revelation, that he should sit upon the throne of his father David, and discharge the august office of universal monarch of the world. He ordered a crown and sceptre, both of the best gold, to be prepared for him; and he never appeared abroad without these insignia of his sovereignty. He dressed himself in the most sumptuous garments, had a Bible and naked sword carried before him, and coined money stamped with his own image.

He fell into a sleep of three days, and on awakening, calling for pen and ink, he wrote down on a slip of paper the names of twelve men of good family in Münster, whom he nominated heads of “the twelve tribes of Israel.” He had a high throne erected in the market-place, covered with cloth of gold, where, attended by his officers of state, his guards, and his wives, of whom one bore the title of queen, he heard complaints and administered justice.³

He had, moreover, a body of missionaries, whose office it was to proclaim the “true doctrine.” Twenty-eight of these men were sent forth to preach in the cities around, and to say that the “kingdom of heaven” had been set up at Münster; that John of Leyden had been commissioned by God to govern all the nations of the world; that the time was come when the meek should inherit the earth, and the wicked be rooted out of it; and that the most terrible judgments would fall on all who should refuse to enter the “heavenly kingdom.” One only of these twenty-eight deputies returned to “Mount Zion,” to tell what acceptance their message had met with.

Of the sending out of these missionaries Sleidan gives the following graphic description:—“One day,” says he, “Buckholdt sounded a trumpet through all the streets, and commanded the citizens to meet him armed at the gate of the cathedral. When they came to the place of rendezvous they found a supper prepared. They are ordered to sit down, being about 4,000 of them; afterwards about a thousand more sit down, who were on duty while the first number were at supper. The king and the queen, with their

¹ Sleidan, bk. x., p. 193. Robertson, bk. v., p. 180.

² Sleidan, bk. x., pp. 194, 195.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 196. Robertson, bk. v., pp. 181, 182. Mosheim, cent. xvi., sec. i., chap. 3.

household servants, wait at the table. After they had eaten, and supper was almost done, the king himself gives every one a piece of bread, with these words *Take eat, shew forth the Lord's death*. The queen in like manner, giving them a cup, bids them *Shew forth the Lord's death*. When this was over, the prophet before-mentioned gets into the pulpit, and asks them if they would obey the *Word of God*? When they all told him, Yes: *It is the command of the Heavenly Father*, says he, *that we should send out about twenty-eight teachers of the Word*, who are to go to the four quarters of the world, and publish the doctrine which is received in this city. Then he repeats the names of his missionaries, and assigns them all their respective journeys. Six are sent to Osenburg, six to Vardendorp, eight to Soest, and as many to Coesfeld. Afterwards the king and queen and the waiters sat down to supper with those who were designed for this expedition.

After supper, those eight-and-twenty men we mentioned are sent away by night. To every one, besides provision by the way, was given a crown in gold, which they were to leave in those places that refused to believe their doctrine, as a testimony of their ruin and eternal destruction, for rejecting that peace and saving doctrine which they had been offered. These men went out accordingly, and when they had reached their respective posts they cry out in the towns that *men must repent, otherwise they would shortly be destroyed*. They spread their coats upon the ground before the magistrates, and throw down their crowns before them, and protest they were sent by the Father to offer them peace if they would receive it. They command them to let all their fortunes be common; but if they refused to accept it, then this gold should be left as a token of their wickedness and ingratitude. They added 'that these were the times foretold by all the prophets in which God would make righteousness flourish all the world over; and when their king had fully discharged his office, and brought things to that perfection, so as to make righteousness prevail everywhere, then the time would be come in which Christ would deliver up the kingdom to the Father.'

"As soon as they had done their speech," says Sleidan, "they were apprehended, and examined, first in a friendly manner, but afterwards upon the rack, concerning their faith, and way of living, and how the town (Münster) was fortified. Their answer was that they only taught the true doctrine, which they were ready to maintain with the hazard of their lives; for since the times of the apostles the Word of God was never rightly delivered, nor justice observed. That there were but four prophets, whereof two were righteous, David and John of Leyden; the other two wicked, viz., the Pope and Luther, and this latter the worst."⁴

Buckholdt combined the duties of missionary with those of universal sovereign. Not only did he press upon his preachers to exhort their hearers to use the liberty wherewith the Gospel had invested them, more especially in the matter of marriage; he would himself at times ascend his throne in the market-place, and turning it into a pulpit, would harangue the people on the propriety of following his example in the matter of taking to themselves more wives. This was surely an unnecessary labour, considering that the passions of the citizens were no longer restrained either by the authority of laws or by the sense of decency. In the wake of lust, as always happens, came blood.

⁴ Sleidan, bk. x., pp. 196, 197.

Münster, the den of this filthy crew, stank in the nostrils of Papist and Protestant alike. It was a thing so supremely offensive and disgusting that it was not possible to live in the same country with it. No matter whether one believed in the mass or in Protestantism, this “heavenly kingdom” was more than either religion could tolerate; and must, in the name of that common humanity of which it was the reproach, be swept away. The princes of the Rhine Provinces in 1535 united their forces and marched against the city—now strongly fortified. They besieged and took it. Buckholdt was led about in chains and exhibited in several German towns. He was finally brought back to Münster, the scene of his grandeur and crimes, and there subjected to an agonising death.⁵ The body of the prophet was—after death—put into an iron cage; and the dead bodies of two of his followers being similarly dealt with, all three were hung at the top of the city-tower, as a public spectacle and warning—Buckholdt in the midst, and on either side a companion.

Luther sought to make his countrymen understand the lesson taught them by these deplorable occurrences. The Gospel, he said, was the only safe path between two abysses. Rome by usurping authority over the moral law had opened one abyss, the prophets of Münster, by abrogating that law had opened another. The Gospel, by maintaining the supremacy of that law, placed the conscience under the authority of God, its rightful Ruler, and so gave man liberty without licentiousness; and if the world would avoid falling headlong into the gulf that yawned on either hand, it must go steadily forward in the road of Protestantism. Rome and Münster might seem wide apart, but there was a point where the two met. From the indulgence-box of Tetzels came an immunity from moral obligation, quite as complete as that of the “heavenly kingdom” of the Anabaptist prophet of Münster.

⁵ Sleidan, bk. x., p. 202. Robertson, bk. v., p. 183.

Chapter III.

Accession of Princes and States to Protestantism.

Wurtemberg—Captivity of Duke Christopher—Escape—Philip of Hesse takes Arms to Restore the Duke—His Success—The Duke and Wurtemberg Join the Protestants—Death of Duke George—Accession of Albertine-Saxony to Protestantism—All Central and Northern Germany now Protestant—Austria and Bavaria still Popish—Protestant Movements in Austria—Petition of Twenty-four Austrian Nobles—Accession of the Palatinate—The Elector-Archbishop of Cologne embraces Protestantism—Expelled from his Principality—Barbarossa—Dissimulation of the Emperor—Purposes War.

We turn to Protestantism, which, as we have said above, was continually multiplying its adherents and enlarging its area. At this hour a splendid addition was unexpectedly made to its territorial domain. In the year 1519, Duke Ulrich of Wurtemberg had been expelled his dominions, having made himself odious to his subjects by his profligate manners and tyrannical dispositions.¹ The emperor, Charles V., seized on his territory, gave it to his brother Ferdinand of Austria, who occupied it with his troops; and to make all sure the emperor carried off Christopher, the son of the duke, in his train. The young captive, however, contrived to give his majesty the slip. The imperial cavalcade was slowly winding up the northern slopes of the Alps. It might be seen disappearing this moment as it descended into some gorge, or wound round some spur of the mountain, and coming fully into view the next as it continued its toilsome ascent toward the summit of the pass. The van of the long and brilliant procession now neared the snows of the summit while its rear was only in mid-ascent. The young duke, who meditated flight—watching his opportunity—fell behind. The vigilance of the guards was relaxed; a friendly rock interposed between him and the imperial cavalcade. He saw that the moment was come. He turned his horse's head and, followed by a single attendant whom he had let into the secret, fled, while the emperor continued his progress upward.² When at length his flight was known the pursuit began in hot haste. But it was all in vain. The pursuers returned without him; and it was given out that the young Duke of Wurtemberg, in crossing the mountains, had been slain by brigands, or had perished by accident.

Years wore on: the duke was believed to be dead. Meanwhile the Wurtembergers found the yoke of Austria—under which the emperor had placed them—more unbearable than that of Ulrich, which they had cast off, and began to sigh for their legitimate ruler. It was now the year 1532. It came to be known that the young Christopher was still alive; that he had been all the while in hiding with his relations on the confines of Alsace and Burgundy; and that he had embraced the Reformed faith in his retirement. As these same opinions had been spreading in Wurtemberg, the desire was all the stronger on the part of the inhabitants of that territory to have the son of their former sovereign, the young duke, back as their prince.

The advantage of strengthening the League of Schmalkald and enlarging the Protestant area by so splendid an addition as Wurtemberg was obvious to the Protestant princes. But

¹ Robertson, bk. v., p. 184.

² Sleidan, bk. ix., p. 174.

this could not be done without war. Luther and Melancthon recoiled from the idea of taking arms. The League was strictly defensive. Nevertheless, Philip of Hesse, one of its most active members, undertook the project on his own responsibility. He set about raising an army in order to drive out the Austrians and restore Christopher to his dukedom.

Further, the Landgrave of Hesse came to a secret arrangement with the King of France, who agreed to furnish the money for the payment of the troops. It was the moment to strike. The emperor was absent in Spain, Ferdinand of Austria had the Turk on his hands, Francis I.—ever ready to ride post between Rome and Wittemberg—had sent the money, and Protestant Germany had furnished the soldiers.

The landgrave began the campaign in the end of April: his first battle was fought on the 13th of May, and by the end of June he had brought the war to a successful issue. Ferdinand had to relinquish the dukedom, Ulrich and his son Christopher were restored,³ and with them came liberty for the new opinions. A brilliant addition had been made to the Schmalkald League, and a Protestant wedge driven into Southern Germany.

Nor did this close the list of Protestant successes. Among the German princes was no more restless, resolute, and consistent opponent of Lutheranism than George, Duke of Albertine-Saxony. His opposition, based on a sincere belief in the doctrines of Romanism, was inflamed by personal antipathy to Luther. He raged against the Reformer as a fire-brand and revolutionist; and the Reformer in his turn was at no pains to conceal the contempt in which he held the duke, whom he commonly styled the “clown.” On the 24th of April, 1539, George, Duke of Saxony, died. By his death without issue—for his two sons had predeceased him—his succession fell to his brother Henry, whose attachment to Protestantism was as zealous as had been that of his deceased brother to Popery. Duke George ordered in his last will that his brother should make no change in the religion of his States, and failing fulfilment of this condition he bequeathed his kingdom to the emperor and Ferdinand of Austria. Henry on the first news of his brother’s death hastened to Dresden, and disregarding the injunction in the will on the matter of religion, he took possession of the kingdom by making himself be proclaimed, not only in the capital, but in Leipsic and other great towns. Luther was invited to preach a course of sermons at Leipsic, to initiate the people into the doctrines of the Reformed faith; and in the course of a few weeks the ancient rites were changed and the Protestant worship was set up in their room. The change was hailed with joy by the majority of the inhabitants, some of whom had already embraced the Reformed opinions, but were restrained from the avowal of them by the prisons and executioners of Duke George. The accession of this powerful dukedom to the Schmalkald League converted what had heretofore been a danger—lying as it did in the heart of the Lutheran States—into a buttress of the Protestant cause.⁴

In Brandenburg were thousands of Protestants, but secretly for fear of Elector Joachim. In 1539, Joachim I. died, with him fell the mass, and on its ruins rose the Protestant

³ Sleidan, bk. ix., pp. 172, 173. Robertson, bk. v., p. 184.

⁴ Sleidan, bk. xii., pp. 249, 250.

worship. Brunswick followed in 1542.⁵ A chain of Protestant States now extended, in an almost unbroken line, from the shores of the Baltic to the banks of the Rhine.

The whole of Central and Northern Germany was now Protestant. On the side of the old faith there remained only Austria, Bavaria, the Palatinate, and the ecclesiastical principalities of the Rhine. Nor did it seem that these States would long be able to resist the advances of Protestantism. In all of them a religious movement was already on foot, and if peace should be prolonged for a few years they would, in all likelihood, be permanently added to the side of the Reform. On the 13th of December, 1541, a petition was presented to Ferdinand, in the name of the nobility and States of Austria, praying for the free exercise of religion.⁶ The petition was signed by twenty-four nobles and ten cities, among which was Vienna. The neighbouring provinces of Styria and Carniola joined in the request for freedom of conscience. Referring to the miseries of their times, the wars, pestilences, and famines which these sixteen years had witnessed, and the desolations which the Turk had inflicted, the petitioners pointed to the corruption of religion as the cause which had drawn this terrible chastisement upon them. "In the whole body politic," say they, "there is nothing pure or sound; all discipline both public and private is laid aside. . . . We truly know no other medicine, most dread sovereign, than that the Word of God be truly taught, and the people stirred up to amendment of life, that in confidence thereof they may withstand the violences of the Turks, for in the true worshipping of God all our safety consists. . . . Wherefore we humbly beseech your Majesty to give command that the Gospel be purely taught, especially that point of doctrine which relates to justification, viz., that our sins are pardoned through Christ alone. In the next place, that men be exhorted to the practice of charitable and good works, which are as it were the fruit and signs of faith. In like manner that they who desire it may have the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper given them according to the custom of the primitive Church; that injunction be also laid upon the bishops, that according to the late decree of the Empire, that they reform what is amiss in the Church, that they appoint able ministers to instruct the people, and not to turn out sound preachers as they have always done hitherto."⁷

To this request King Ferdinand would fain have said peremptorily and roundly, "No;" but with Hungary pressing him on the one side, and the Turk on the other, he dared not use such plainness of speech. He touched, in his reply, on the efforts he had made to have "the Word of God rightly preached, according to the traditions of the Fathers, and the interpreters of the Church;" he spoke sanguinely of the coming Council which was to compose all differences about religion, and exhorted them meanwhile to "avoid innovations, and follow in the footsteps of their fathers, and walk in the old way of their religion."⁸

In Bavaria, the call for Reform was met by the appointment of a Church visitation into the state of the clergy. The investigation had proceeded but a short way when it became evident to what that road would lead, and the business was wound up with all the

⁵ *Ibid.*, bk. xiv., p. 298.

⁶ *Sleidan*, bk. xiv., p. 285.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 287.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

expedition possible, before the Roman Church should be utterly discredited, and her cause hopelessly damaged in the eyes of the people.

In the Palatinate the movement bore fruit. The elector provided Protestant preachers for the churches; permitted the Sacrament to be dispensed in both kinds; gave the priests leave to marry; and on January 1546, Divine service, in the tongue of the people, was celebrated in room of the mass in the Cathedral-church of Heidelberg.⁹

The ecclesiastical electorate of Cologne caused more uneasiness to the emperor and the Pope than all the rest. It was at this hour trembling in the balance. Its prince-bishop had come to be persuaded of the truth of Protestantism, and was taking steps to reform his principality. He invited Bucer to preach in Bonn and other towns, and he had prevailed on Melancthon to come to Cologne, and assist in drawing up a scheme of Reformation. The secession from the Roman ranks of one who held a foremost place among the princes of Germany would, it was foreseen, be a terrible blow both to the Popedom and the Empire. The Archbishop of Cologne was one of the four ecclesiastical electors, the other three being the Archbishops of Mainz, Trèves, and Salzburg, and his conversion would make a radical change in the electoral college. The majority would be shifted to the Protestant side, and the inevitable consequence would be the exclusion of the House of Austria from the Empire. This could not but alarm Charles.

But the evil would not end there. There was a goodly array of ecclesiastical principalities—some half-a-hundred—scattered over Germany. Their bishops were among the most powerful of the German magnates. They wielded the temporal as well as the spiritual jurisdiction, the sword was as familiar to their hand as the crosier, and they were as often in the field, at the head of armies, as in the chapter-house, in the midst of their clergy. They were, as may be believed, the firmest pillars of the Popedom in Germany. If so influential an electorate as that of Cologne should declare for Lutheranism, it was hard to say how many of these ecclesiastical principedoms would follow suit. Those in Northern Germany had already gone over. The Rhenish electorates had till now remained firm; only Cologne, as yet, had wavered. But the danger was promptly met. The Pope, the emperor, the chapter, and the citizens of Cologne, all combined to resist the measures of the elector-bishop, and maintain the faith he appeared on the point of abandoning. The issue was that the archbishop, now an old man, was obliged to succumb.¹⁰ Under pressure of the Pope's ban and the emperor's arms he resigned his electorate, and retired into private life. Thus Cologne remained Popish.

The emperor clearly saw how matters were going. The progress of Lutheranism had surpassed even his fears. Principality after principality was going over to the Schmalkald League; each new perversion was, he believed, another prop of his power gone; thus was the Empire slipping from under him. He could hardly hope that even his hereditary dominions would long be able to resist the inroads of that heresy which had overflowed the countries around them. He must adopt decisive measures. From this time (January, 1544) his mind was made up to meet the Protestants on the battle-field.

⁹ Sleidan, bk. xvi., p. 356.

¹⁰ Sleidan, bk. xv., p. 313; bk. xvi., pp. 340—351.

But the emperor was not yet ready to draw the sword. He was on the eve of another great war with France. To the growing insolence and success of Solyman in Eastern Europe was now added an irruption of the Turks in the South. The fleet of Barbarossa was off the harbour of Toulon, and waited only the return of spring to carry terror and desolation to the coast of Southern Europe. While these obstacles existed the emperor wore peace on his lips, though war was in his heart. He ratified at Ratisbon and Spires the Decree of Nuremberg (1532), which gave substantial toleration to the Protestants. He dangled before their eyes the apple with which he had so long tempted them—the promise of a Council that should heal the schism; and thus for two years he lulled them into security, till he had settled his quarrels with Francis and Solyman, and completed his preparations for measuring swords with the League, and then it was that the blow fell under which the Protestant cause in Germany was for awhile all but crushed.

Chapter IV.

Death and Burial of Luther.

Preparations for War—Startling Tidings—Luther's Journey to Eisleben—Illness on the Road—Enters Eisleben—Preaches—His Last Illness—Death—His Personal Appearance—Varillas' Estimate of him as a Preacher—The Supper-table in the Augustine Convent—Luther's Funeral—The Tomb in the Schloss-kirk.

The man of all others in Germany who loved peace was Luther. War he abhorred with all the strength of his great soul. He could not conceive a greater calamity befalling his cause than that the sword should be allied with it. Again and again, during the course of his life, when the opposing parties were on the point of rushing to arms the Reformer stepped in, and the sword leapt back into its scabbard. Again war threatens. On every side men are preparing their arms: hosts are mustering, and mighty captains are taking the field. We listen, if imply that powerful voice which had so often dispersed the tempest when the bolt was ready to fall shall once more make itself heard. There comes instead the terrible tidings—Luther is dead!

In January, 1546, the Reformer was asked to arbitrate in a dispute between the Counts of Mansfeld, touching the line of their boundaries. Though not caring to meddle in such matters he consented, moved chiefly by the consideration that it was his native province to which the matter had reference, and that he should thus be able to visit his birthplace once more. He was taken ill on the road, but recovering, he proceeded on his journey. On approaching Mansfeld he was met by the counts with a guard of honour, and lodged at their expense in his native town of Eisleben. "He was received by the Counts of Mansfeld and an escort of more than one hundred horsemen, and entered the town," writes Maimbourg, "more like a prince than a prophet, amidst the salute of cannon and the ringing of the bells in all the churches."

Having dispatched to the satisfaction of the counts the business that took him thither, he occasionally preached in the church and partook of the Communion; but his strength was ebbing away. Many signs warned him that he had not long to live, and that where he had passed his morning, there was he spending his eve—an eve of reverence and honour more than kingly. "Here I was born and baptised," said he to his friends, "what if I should remain here to die also?" He was only sixty-three, but continual anxiety, ceaseless and exhausting labour, oft-recurring fits of nervous depression, and cruel maladies had done more than years to waste his strength.

On the 17th of February he dined and supped with his friends, including his three sons—John, Martin, and Paul—and Justus Jonas, who had accompanied him. "After supper," says Sleidan, "having withdrawn to pray, as his custom was, the pain in his stomach began to increase. Then, by the advice of some, he took a little unicorn's horn in wine, and for an hour or two slept very sweetly in a couch in the stove. When he awoke he retired to his chamber, and again disposed himself to rest."¹ Awakening after a short

¹ Sleidan, bk. xvi., p. 362.

slumber, the oppression in his chest had increased, and perceiving that his end was come he addressed himself to God in these words:—

“O God, my heavenly Father, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God of all consolation, I give thee thanks that thou hast revealed unto me thy Son Jesus Christ, in whom I have believed; whom I have confessed; whom I have loved; whom I have declared and preached; whom the Pope of Rome, and the multitude of the ungodly, do persecute and dishonour; I beseech thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, receive my soul. O heavenly Father, though I be snatched out of this life; though I must now lay down this body; yet know I assuredly that I shall abide with thee for ever, and that no man can pluck me out of thy hands.”

His prayer had winged its way upward: his spirit was soon to follow. Three times he uttered the words, his voice growing fainter at each repetition, “Into thy hands I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth!” and, says Sleidan, “he in a manner gently slept out of this life, without any bodily pain or agony that could be perceived.”²

Thus does that sun go down whose light had filled for so many years, not the skies of Germany only, but those of all Christendom. The place left empty in the world by Luther’s departure was like that which the natural sun leaves void in the firmament when he sets in the west. And, further, as the descent of the luminary of day is followed by the gathering of the shades and the deepening of the darkness around the dwellings of men, so too was the setting of this other sun. No sooner was Luther laid in his grave than the shadows began to gather round Germany, and soon they deepened into a night of calamity and war. We are not sure that the brilliance which departed when the tomb closed over the Reformer has to this day fully returned to the Fatherland.

Luther’s career had been a stormy one, yet its end was peace. He had waged incessant battle, not with the emperor and the Pope only, but also with a more dreadful foe, who had often filled his mind with darkness. Yet now he dies expressing his undimmed joy and his undying trust in his Saviour. It is also very remarkable that the man whose life had been so often sought by Popes, kings, priests, and fanatics of every grade, died on his bed. Luther often said that it would be a great disgrace to the Pope if he should so die. “All of you, thou Pope, thou devil, ye kings, princes, and lords, are Luther’s enemies and yet ye can do him no harm. It was not so with John Huss. I take it there has not been a man so hated as I these hundred years.” During the last twenty-five years of his life—that is, ever since his appearance at the Diet of Worms—the emperor’s ban and the Pope’s anathema had hung about him; yet there fell not to the ground a hair of his head. The great sword of the emperor, which conquered Francis and chastised the Turk, could not approach the doctor of Wittemberg. The Reformer lived in his little unarmed Saxon town all his days; he rose up and lay down in peace; he toiled day by day forging his bolts and hurling them with all his might at the foe; and that foe dreaded his pen and tongue more than the assault of whole armies. To be rid of him Rome would have joyfully given the half of her kingdom; but not a day, not an hour of life was she able to take from him. The ancient command had gone forth, “Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm.” And

² *Ibid.*, p. 363.

so we find Luther finishing his course, as the natural sun, after a day of tempest, is sometimes seen to finish his, amid the golden splendours of a calm eventide.³

It were vain, and superfluous to boot, to attempt drawing a character of Luther. He paints himself, and neither needs nor will permit any other, whether friend or foe, to draw his portrait. Immeasurably the greatest spirit of his age, his colossal figure filled Christendom. But we cannot be too often reminded whence his greatness sprang; and happily it can be expressed in a single word. It was his Faith—faith in God. There have been men of as commanding genius, of as fearless courage, of as inflexible honesty, of as persuasive popular eloquence, and as indefatigable in labour and unchangeable in purpose, who yet have not revolutionised the world. It was not this assemblage of brilliant qualities and powers which enabled Luther to achieve what he did. They aided him, it is true, but the one power in virtue of which he effected the Reformation was his faith. His faith placed him in thorough harmony with the Divine mind and the Divine government; the wisdom with which he spake was thus the wisdom of God, and it enlightened the world; the object he aimed at was what God had purposed to bring to pass, and so he prospered in his great undertaking. This is the true mystic potency of which priests in all ages have pretended, though falsely, to be possessed; it descended in all its plenitude upon Luther, but what brought it down from its native source in the skies was not any outward rite, but the power of faith.

There is one quality of the illustrious Reformer of which we have said little, namely, his eloquence in the pulpit. Of the extraordinary measure in which he possessed this gift we shall permit two Popish witnesses to bear testimony. Varillas says of him: “In him nature would appear to have combined the spirit of the Italian with the body of the German; such are his vivacity and his industry, his vigour and his eloquence. In the study of philosophy and scholastic theology he was surpassed by none; and at the same time none could equal him in the art of preaching. He possessed in perfection the highest style of eloquence; he had discovered the strong and the weak sides of the human understanding, and knew the ways by which to lay hold of both; he had the art of sounding the inclinations of his hearers, however various and eccentric they might be; he knew how to rouse or allay their passions, and if the topics of his discourse were too high and incomprehensible to convince them, he could carry all before him by a forcible attack on the imagination through the vehemence of his imagery. Such was Luther in the pulpit; there he tossed his hearers into a tempest and calmed them down again at his pleasure. But when he descended from the pulpit it was only to exercise a still more absolute reign in his private conversation. He stirred men’s minds without discomposing them, and inspired them with

³ A monument in memorial of the great Reformer has been erected at Worms. This monument, so noble as a work of art, and so interesting from what it commemorates, occupied nine years in the execution, and is said to have cost £17,000. The central figure is Luther’s statue in bronze, eleven feet in height. He holds a Bible in his left hand, to which he points with the right, while his gaze is directed upwards. At his feet sit four of the greatest among the precursors of the Reformation. In front are Huss on the right and Savonarola on the left. At the back are Wicliffe on the right and Peter Waldo on the left. On the side pedestals in front are Philip the Magnanimous on the right and Frederick the Wise on the left. At the back are Melancthon on the right and Reuchlin on the left. On lower pedestals are allegorical figures of the towns of Magdeburg, Augsburg, and Spire, and between these are the arms of the twenty-four towns of Germany which were the first to embrace the Reformation.

his sentiments by a mode of which none could discover either the action or the traces. In short, he triumphed by the elegance of his German style over those who had been struck with his eloquence and captivated by his conversation; and as nobody spoke or wrote his native language so well as he, none have ever since spoken or written it with so much purity.”

Another writer, hostile to Luther and the Reformation—Florimond de Raemond—speaking of his eloquence says: “When declaiming from the pulpit, as if smitten by a frenzy, with action suited to the word, he struck the minds of his hearers in the most marvellous manner, and carried them away in a torrent wherever he would—a gift and power of speech which is seldom found among the nations of the North.”

There could hardly be a greater contrast than that between Luther in public, where his temper appeared so imperious and his onsets were so fierce and overwhelming, and Luther in private, where he was gentle as a child. In men like Luther the love of truth, which in public kindles into passion and vehemency in the face of opposition, becomes mildness and love in the midst of the congenial circle. “Whoever has known him and seen him often and familiarly,” writes Melancthon of him, “will allow that he was a most excellent man, gentle and agreeable in society, not in the least obstinate and given to disputation, yet with all the gravity becoming his character. If he showed any great severity in combating the enemies of the true doctrine, it was from no malignity of nature, but from ardour and enthusiasm for the truth.”⁴ Communion with God through his Word, and in prayer, were the two chief means by which he nourished his faith, and by consequence his strength. “I have myself;” says Melancthon, “often found him shedding bitter tears, and praying earnestly to God for the welfare of the Church. He devoted part of each day to the reading of the Psalms and to invoking God with all the fervour of his soul.”⁵ His sublime task was to draw forth the light of the Word from its concealment, and replace it in the temple, in the school, and in the dwelling.

His personal appearance has been well sketched by one of his biographers: “In stature he was not much above the ordinary height, but his limbs were firmly set; he had an open, right valiant countenance; a broad German nose, slightly aquiline; a forehead rather wide than lofty, with beetling brows; large lips and month; eyes full of lustre, which were compared to the eagle’s or the lion’s; short curling dark hair, and a distinguishing wart on the right cheek. In the early part of his career his figure was emaciated to the last degree, subsequently it filled out, and in his latter years inclined to corpulency. His constitution was naturally of the strongest cast; one of the common mould must have sunk under his unparalleled energy; and he was never better than with plenty of toil and study, and a moderate diet, such as his accustomed herring and pease.”⁶

As the patriarchs of old sat in the door of their tent to bid the wayfarer welcome to its shade and hospitality, so dwelt Luther in the Augustine convent. Its door stood open to all. Thither came the poor for alms, the sick for medicine, and distinguished strangers from all parts of Europe to see and converse with its illustrious occupant. The social meal was

⁴ Ukert, tom. ii., p. 12.

⁵ Ukert, tom. ii., p. 7.

⁶ Worsley, *Life of Martin Luther*, vol. ii., p. 391.

the supper. Luther would come to the table, weary with the labours of the day, not unfrequently holding a book in his hand, in which he would continue for some time reading. All kept silent till he had lifted his eyes from the page. Then he would inquire the news; this was the signal for conversation, which soon became general. Around his board would be gathered, it might be, some of his fellow-professors; or old friends from a distance, as Link from Nuremberg, or Probst from Bremen; or eminent scholars from distant lands; or statesmen and courtiers, who chanced to be travelling on some embassy. Men of every rank and of all professions found their way to the supper-table in the Augustine convent, and received an equal welcome from the illustrious host.

In those days news travelled slowly, for the newspaper was not then in being, and the casual traveller was often the first to bring the intelligence to Wittemberg, that some great battle had been fought, or that the Turk had again broken into Christendom, or that a new Pope had to be sought for the vacant chair of St. Peter. No likelier place was there to get early information of what was passing in the world than at the supper-table in the Augustine. If the guests were delighted, the traveller too was rewarded by hearing Luther's comments on the news he had been the first to retail. How often were statesmen astonished at the deeper insight and truer forecast of the Reformer in matters belonging to a province which they deemed exclusively their own! With terrible sagacity he could cut right into the heart of a policy, and with characteristic courage would tear the mask from kings. Or it might happen that some distinguished scholar from a distant land was a guest in the Augustine. What an opportunity for ascertaining the true translation of some word, which had occurred, it might be, in a passage on which the Reformer had been occupied that very day! If the company at table was more promiscuous, so, too, was the conversation. Topics grave and gay would come up by turns. Now it was the scheme of the monarch, and now the affairs of the peasant that were passed in review. Shrewd remarks, flashes of wit, bursts of humour, would enliven the supper-room. The eye of Luther would begin to burn, and with beaming face he would look round on the listeners as he scattered amongst them his sayings, now serious, now playful, now droll, but always embodying profound wisdom. Supper ended, Aurifaber, or some other of the company, would retire and commit to writing the more notable things that had just fallen from the Reformer, that so in due time what had been at first the privilege of only a few, might become the property of all in *Luther's Table Talk*. A Latin chant or a German hymn, sung by a chorus of voices, in which Luther's tenor was easily distinguishable, would close the evening.

Luther was dead: where would they lay his dust? The Counts of Mansfeld would fain have interred him in their own family vault; but John, Elector of Saxony, commanded that where his labours had been accomplished, there his ashes should rest. Few kings have been buried with such honours. Setting out for Wittemberg, relay after relay of princes, nobles, magistrates, and peasants joined the funeral procession, and swelled its numbers, till it looked almost like an army on its march, and reminded one of that host of mourners which bore the patriarch of Old Testament story from the banks of the Nile to his grave in the distant Machpelah. As the procession passed through Halle and other towns on its route, the inhabitants thronged the streets so as almost to stop the cortége, and sang, with voices thrilling with emotion, psalms and hymns, as if instead of a funeral car it had been the

chariot of a conqueror, whose return from victory they were celebrating with paeans. And truly it was so. Luther was returning from a great battle-field, where he had encountered the powers and principalities of spiritual despotism, and had discomfited them by the sword of the spirit. It was meet, therefore, that those whom he had liberated by that great victory should carry him to his grave, not as ordinary men are carried to the tomb, but as heroes are led to the spot where they are to be crowned. On the 22nd of February, the cavalcade reached Wittenberg. As it drew near the gates of the town the procession was joined by Catherine von Bora, the wife of Luther. The carriage in which she was seated, along with her daughter and a few matrons, followed immediately after the body, which, deposited in a leaden coffin covered with black velvet, was carried on a car drawn by four horses. It was taken into the Schloss-kirk,⁷ and some funeral hymns being sung, Pomeranus ascended the pulpit and gave an appropriate address. Melancthon next delivered an eloquent oration, after which the coffin was lowered into the grave by certain learned men selected for the purpose, amid the deep stillness, broken only by sobs, of the princes, magistrates, pastors, and citizens gathered round the last resting-place of the great Reformer.⁸

⁷ Not in the Cathedral, as is often stated, but in the Schloss-kirk, or Castle-church, adjoining the eastern gate of Wittenberg, the same on the door of which Luther nailed his Theses. There his grave is seen at this day. A little in advance of the pulpit are the tombs of the two electors, Frederick and John; and some four yards or so beyond these are the graves of Luther and Melancthon. Lovely in their lives, they are not divided in the tomb. Over the grave of Luther is the following inscription in Latin:—"Here lies interred the body of Martin Luther, Doctor of Divinity, who died at Eisleben, the place of his birth, on the 18th of February, in the year of Christ 1546; having lived 63 years, 3 months, and 10 days."

⁸ See Seckendorf, lib. iii., sec. 133.

Chapter V.

The Schmalkald War, and Defeat of the Protestants.

The Emperor's League with Pope Paul III.—Charles's Preparations for War—His Dissimulation—The Council of Trent—Its Policy—The Pope's Indiscretion—The Army of the Schmalkald League—Treachery of Prince Maurice—The Emperor's Ban—Vacillation of the Protestants—Energy of the Emperor—Maurice Seizes his Cousin's Electorate—Elector John Returns Home—Landgrave Philip Defeated—The Confederates Divide and Sue for Pardon—Charles Master.

For two years war had lowered over Germany, but while Luther lived the tempest was withheld from bursting. The Reformer was now in his grave, and the storm came on apace. The emperor pushed on his preparations more vigorously than ever, He arranged all his other affairs, that he might give the whole powers of his mind, and the undivided strength of his arms, to the suppression of Lutheranism. He ended his war with France. He patched up a truce with the Turk, his brother Ferdinand submitting to the humiliation of an annual payment of 50,000 crowns to Solymán. He recruited soldiers in Italy and in the Low Countries, and he made a treaty with the Pope, Paul III. There were points in which the policy of these two potentates conflicted; but both agreed that all other matters should give place to that one which each accounted the most important.

What the object was, which held the first place in the thoughts of both, was abundantly clear from the treaty now concluded between the Pope and the emperor, the main stipulation of which was as follows:—"The Pope and the emperor, for the glory of God, and the public good, but especially the welfare of Germany, have entered into league together upon certain articles and conditions; and, in the first place, that the emperor shall provide an army, and all things necessary for war, and be in readiness by the month of June next ensuing, and by force and arms compel those who refuse the Council, and maintain those errors, to embrace the ancient religion and submit to the Holy See."¹ The Pope, in addition to 100,000 ducats which he had already advanced, stipulated to deposit as much more in the Bank of Venice toward defraying the expense of the war; to maintain at his own charge, during the space of six months, 12,000 foot and 500 horse; to grant the emperor for this year one-half of the Church revenues all over Spain; to empower him to alienate as much of the abbeylands in that country as would amount to 500,000 ducats; and that both spiritual censures and military force should be employed against any prince who might seek to hinder the execution of this treaty.² "Thus did Charles V.," says the Abbé Millot, "after the example of Ferdinand the Catholic, make a mock of truth, and use the art of deceiving mankind as an instrument for effecting his purposes."³

Another step toward war, though it looked like conciliation, was the meeting of the long-promised and long-deferred Council. In December previous, there had assembled at the little town of Trent some forty prelates, who assumed to represent the Universal Church, and to issue decrees which should be binding on all the countries of Christendom,

¹ Sleidan, bk. xvii., p. 381.

² Sleidan, bk. xvii., p. 382. Pallavicino, lib. viii., cap. 1, p. 541.

³ Millot, vol. iv., p. 313.

although Italy and Spain alone were as yet represented in the Council. Hitherto, the good Fathers had eschewed everything like business, but now the emperor's preparations being nearly completed, the Council began "to march." Its first decrees showed plainly the part allotted to it in the approaching drama. "They were an open attack," says the Abbé Millet, "on the first principles of Protestantism."⁴ The Council, in its third session, decreed that the traditions of the Fathers are of equal authority with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and that no one is to presume to interpret Scripture in a sense different from that of the Church.⁵ This was in reality to pre-judge all the questions at issue, and to render further discussion between the two parties but a waste of time. Obviously the first step toward the right settlement of the controversy was to agree on the rule according to which all matters in dispute were to be determined. The Protestants affirmed that the one infallible authority was the Word of God. They made their appeal to the tribunal of Holy Scripture; they could recognise no other judge. The sole supremacy of Scripture was in fact the corner-stone of their system, and if this great maxim were rejected, their whole cause was adjudged and condemned.

But the Council of Trent began by repudiating this maxim, which is comprehensive of all Protestantism. The tribunal, said the Council, to which you must submit yourselves and your cause is Tradition and the Scriptures, *as interpreted by the Church*. This was but another way of saying, "You must submit to the Church." This might well amaze the Protestants. The controversy lay between them and the Church, and now they were told that they must accept their opponent for their judge. Every one knew how the Church interpreted the questions at issue. The first decree of the Council, then, embraced all that were to follow; it secured that nothing should emanate from the Council save a series of thoroughly Popish decisions or dogmas, all of them enjoined like the first under pain of anathema.

It was clear that the Fathers had assembled at Trent to pass sentence on the faith of the German people as heresy, and then the emperor would step in with his great sword and give it its death-blow.

Meanwhile Charles pursued his policy of dissimulation. The more he laboured to be ready for war, the louder did he protest that he meant only peace. He cherished the most ardent wishes for the happiness of Germany, so did he affirm; he had raised only some few insignificant levies; he had formed no treaty that pointed to war; and he contrived to have an interview with Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, who, he knew, saw deepest into his heart and most suspected his designs, and by his consummate duplicity, and his earnest disavowals of all hostile intentions, he succeeded in removing from the mind of the landgrave all apprehensions that war was impending. On his return from this interview Philip communicated his favourable impressions of the situation to his confederates, and thus were the suspicions of the Protestants again lulled to sleep.

But soon they were rudely awakened. From every quarter came rumours of the armaments the emperor was raising. Seeing Charles was at war with neither Francis nor Solyman, nor any other Power, for what could he intend these preparations, except the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁵ Sleidan, bk. xviii., pp. 373, 374.

extinction of Protestantism? The Lutheran princes had warnings from their friends in Italy and England that their ruin was intended. Finally there came a song of triumph from Rome: Paul III., full of zeal, and not doubting the issue of an undertaking that inexpressibly delighted him, told the world that the overthrow of Lutheranism was at hand. "Paul himself," says the Abbé Millot, "betrayed this dark transaction. Proud of a league formed against the enemies of the Holy See, he published the articles of it in a bull, exhorting the faithful to concur in it, in order to gain indulgences."⁶ This was a somewhat embarrassing disclosure of the emperor's projects, and compelled him to throw off the mask a little sooner than he intended. But even when he avowed the intentions which he could no longer conceal, it was with an astuteness and duplicity which to a large extent disguised his real purpose. "He had address enough," says Millot, "to persuade part of the Protestants that he was sincere." True, he said, it was Germany he had in his eye in his warlike preparations; but what he sought was not to interfere with its religious opinions, but to punish certain parties who had broken its peace. The Schmalkald League was an empire within an empire, it could not consist with the imperial supremacy: besides certain recent proceedings of some of its members called for correction. This pointed unmistakably to John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, and Philip, Landgrave of Hesse.

The pretext was a transparent one, but it enabled the timid, the lukewarm, and the wavering to say, This war does not concern religion, it is a quarrel merely between the emperor and certain members of the League. How completely did the aspect the matter now assumed justify the wisdom of the man who had lately been laid in his grave in the Schloss-kirk of Wittemberg! How often had Luther warned the Protestants against the error of shifting their cause from a moral to a political basis! The former, he ever assured them, would, when the day of trial came, be found to have double the strength they had reckoned upon—in fact, to be invincible; whereas the latter, with an imposing show, would be found to have no strength at all.

Meanwhile the major part of the Protestants, being resolved to repel force by force, made vigorous preparation for war. "They solicited the Venetians," says the Abbé Millot, "the Swiss, Henry VIII., and Francis I. to support them against a despotism which, after having enslaved Germany, would extend itself over the rest of Europe. None of these negotiations succeeded, but they could dispense with foreign assistance. In a few months they levied an army of more than fourscore thousand armed men, furnished with every necessary in abundance. The Electors of Cologne and Brandenburg remained neutral, as did also the Elector Palatine."⁷ The Margrave of Misnia, and the two princes of Brandenburg, though all Protestants, declared for the emperor. The Elector of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hesse, the Duke of Wurtemberg, the princes of Anhalt, the cities of Augsburg, Ulm, and Strasburg, alone set this formidable armament on foot. The League was divided from the very commencement of the campaign; but what completed the disorganisation of the Protestant camp, and paved the way for the tragedy that followed, was the treachery of Prince Maurice of Saxony.

⁶ Millot, vol. iv., p. 313.

⁷ Millot, vol. iv., pp. 313, 314.

Maurice was the son of that William who succeeded Duke George, the noted enemy of Luther. William, a weak prince, was now dead, and his son Maurice was Duke of Albertine-Saxony. Neglected in youth, he had grown to manhood restless, shrewd, self-reliant, self-willed, with ambition as his ruling passion. He was a Protestant, but without deep religious convictions. In choosing his creed he was influenced quite as much by the advantage it might offer as by the truth it might contain. He was largely imbued with that sceptical spirit which is fatal to all strength of character, elevation of soul and grandeur of aim. The old race of German princes and politicians, the men who believing in great principles were capable of a chivalrous devotion to great causes, was dying out, and a new generation, of which Prince Maurice was the pioneer, was taking their place. In the exercise of that worldly wisdom on which he plumed himself, Maurice weighed both sides, and then chose not the greater cause but the greater man, or he whom he took to be so, even the Emperor Charles. With him, he felt assured, would remain the victory, and as he wished to share its spoils, which would be considerable, with him he cast in his lot.

On the 20th of July the blow fell. On that day the emperor promulgated his ban of outlawry against the two Protestant chiefs, John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, and Philip, Landgrave of Hesse.⁸ This step was the more bold as it ought to have been authorised by the Diet. The war, now that it had come, found the League neither united nor prepared. But notwithstanding some cowardly defections it was able to bring into the field 47,000 troops.⁹ The first question was, who should have the command? Philip of Hesse was the better soldier, but John Frederick of Saxony was the greater prince. Could a landgrave command an elector? In the settlement of this nice point much time was wasted, which had better have been devoted to fighting. The campaign, from its commencement in the midsummer of 1546, to its close in the spring of 1547, was marked, on the part of the League, by vacillation and blundering. There was no foresight shown in laying its plans, no vigour in carrying them out. The passes of the Tyrol were strangely left undefended, and the Spanish and Italian soldiers unopposed, deployed on the German plains. The troops which Charles had raised in the Low Countries in like manner were suffered to cross the Rhine without a blow being struck.¹⁰ Before the arrival of these levies, the emperor's army was not more than 10,000 strong. His camp at Ingolstadt might easily have been surprised and taken by the superior forces of the League, and the campaign ended at a blow.¹¹ While the Protestant leaders were debating whether they ought to essay this, the imperial reinforcements arrived, and the opportunity was lost. Money began to fail the League, sickness broke out in their army, and, despairing of success, the soldiers and officers began to disperse to their several homes. Without fighting a battle the League abandoned Southern Germany, the first seat of the war, leaving Wurtemberg, and the Palatinate, and the cities of Ulm, Augsburg, and others, to make what terms they could with the emperor.¹²

⁸ Sleidan, bk. xvii., p. 889. Robertson, *Hist. Charles V.*, bk. viii., p. 249.

⁹ Robertson makes the Protestant army amount to 40,000 foot, 15,000 horse, with a corresponding train of artillery. (*Hist. Charles V.*, bk. viii., p. 248.) Millot, in the passage quoted above, agrees with him, saying nearly 80,000.

¹⁰ Sleidan, bk. xviii., p. 397.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 397. Millot, vol. iv., p. 315. Robertson, bk. viii., p. 251.

¹² Sleidan, bk. xviii., p. 421. Robertson, bk. viii., p. 255.

Prince Maurice now undertook the execution of the imperial ban on the dominions of the elector. When John Frederick was informed of this, he set out from the camp of the League to defend his dukedom, now ravaged by the arms of his former ally. He was pursued by the army of the emperor, overtaken on the Elbe at Mühlberg (24th April, 1547), routed, taken captive, stripped of his electorate, and consigned to prison. The emperor parted the elector's dominions between Maurice and his brother Ferdinand.¹³

Landgrave Philip was still in the field. But reflecting that his forces were dispirited and shattered while the army of the emperor was unbroken and flushed with victory, he concluded that further resistance was hopeless. He therefore resolved to surrender. His son-in-law, Prince Maurice, used all his influence with the emperor to procure for him easy terms. Charles was inexorable; the landgrave's surrender must be unconditional.¹⁴ All that Maurice could effect was a promise from the emperor that his father-in-law should not be imprisoned. If this promise was ever given it was not kept, for no sooner had Philip quitted the emperor's presence, after surrendering to him, than he was arrested and thrown into confinement.¹⁵

So ended the Schmalkald war. It left Charles more completely master of Germany than he had ever been before. There was now no outward obstruction to the restoration of the ancient worship. The Protestants appeared to be completely in the emperor's power. They had neither sword nor League wherewith to defend themselves. They were brought back again to their first but mightiest weapon—martyrdom. If, instead of stepping down into the arena of battle, they had offered themselves to the stake, not a tithe of the blood would have been shed that was spilt in the campaign, and instead of being lowered, the moral power of Protestantism thereby would have been immensely raised.

But we dare not challenge the right of the Protestant princes to combine, and repel force by force. It was natural, in reckoning up the chances of success, that they should count swords, especially when they saw how many swords were unsheathed on the other side. But no greater calamity could have befallen the Reformation than that Protestantism should have become, in that age, a great political power. Had it triumphed as a policy it would have perished as a religion. It must first establish itself on the earth as a great spiritual power. This could not be done by arms. And so, ever and anon, it was stripped of its political defences that the spiritual principle might have room to grow, and that all might see that the conquests of the Reformation were not won for it by force, nor its dominion and rule given it by princes, but that by its own strength did it grow up and wax mighty.

¹³ Sleidan, bk. xix., pp. 426, 427, 428. Millot, vol. iv., p. 320. Robertson, bk. ix., pp. 265, 266.

¹⁴ Sleidan, bk. xix., pp. 429—431. Robertson, bk. ix., p. 269.

¹⁵ The story goes that the change of a single German word sufficed to change the landgrave's fate from liberty to imprisonment. *Nicht einiges Gefängis*—not imprisoned—was changed, it is said, into *nicht ewigis Gefängis*—not perpetually imprisoned. The story, however, is doubted; it certainly has not been proved, and the silence of Sleidan, who wrote only a few years after the event, discredits its truth.

Chapter VI.

The “Interim”—Re-establishment of Protestantism.

All seems Lost—Humiliation of Germany—Taxes—The “Interim”—Essentially a Restoration of Popery—Persecutions by which it was Enforced—The Climax of the Emperor’s Power—It Falls—The Pope Forsakes him—Maurice Turns against him—Manifesto of Maurice—Flight of the Emperor—Peace of Passau—Treaty of Augsburg—Reestablishment of Protestantism in Germany—Charles’s Abdication and Retirement to the Monastery of St. Juste—Reflections.

It did seem as if the knell of the Lutheran Reformation had been rang out. The emperor’s triumph was complete, and he had it now in his power to settle the religious question as he chose. From the southern extremity of Wurtemberg, as far as the Elbe the provinces and the cities had submitted and were in the occupation of the imperial troops. Of the three leading princes of the League, one was the ally of the emperor, the other two were his prisoners. Stripped of title and power, their castles demolished, their lands confiscated, Charles was leading them about from city to city, and from prison to prison, and with wanton cruelty exhibiting them as a spectacle to their former subjects. Germany felt itself insulted and disgraced in this open and bitter humiliation of two of its most illustrious princes. The unhappy country was made still further to feel the power of the conqueror, being required to pay a million and a half crowns— an enormous sum in those days—which Charles levied without much distinction between those who had served and those who had opposed him in the late war.¹ “The conqueror publicly insulted the Germanic body by leading its principal members in captivity from town to town. He oppressed all who joined the League of Schmalkald with heavy taxes, carried off their artillery, and disarmed the people; levied contributions at his pleasure from his allies, and treated them as if they had been his own subjects. . . . Ferdinand exercised the same despotism over the Bohemians, and stripped them of almost all their privileges.”²

Events abroad left Charles yet more free to act the despot in Germany. His two rivals, Henry VIII. of England and Francis I. of France, were removed from the scene by death, and he had now little cause to fear opposition to his projects in the quarters from which the most formidable resistance aforetime had come. Of the four potentates—Leo of Rome and the Kings of England, France, and Spain—whose greatness had signalled, and whose ambition had distracted, the first half of the sixteenth century, Charles was now the sole survivor;—but his sun was nearer its setting than he thought.

Master of the situation, as he believed, the emperor proceeded to frame a creed for his northern subjects. It was styled the “INTERIM.” Meant to let Lutheran Germany easily down, it was given out as a half-way compromise between Wittenberg and Rome. The concoctors of this famous scheme were Julius Pflug, Bishop of Naumberg, Michael Sidonius, and John Agricola, a Protestant, but little trusted by his brethren.³ As finally adjusted, after repeated corrections, this new creed was the old faith of Rome, a little

¹ Robertson, bk. ix., p. 272.

² Millot, vol. iv., p. 322.

³ Sleidan, bk. xx., p. 454.

freshened up by ambiguities of speech and quotations from Scripture. The Interim taught, among other things, the supremacy of the Pope, the dogma of transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the mass, the invocation of the saints, auricular confession, justification by works, and the sole right of the Church to interpret the Scriptures; in short, not one concession did Rome make. In return for swallowing a creed out-and-out Popish, the Protestants were to be rewarded with two paltry boons. Clergymen already married were to be permitted to discharge their office without putting away their wives; and where it was the wont to dispense the Sacrament in both kinds the custom was still to be tolerated. This was called meeting the Protestants half-way.⁴ Nothing was to be altered in the canon of the mass, nothing changed in the ceremonies of baptism. In every city church two masses were to be said daily; in village churches and landward parishes, one, especially on holidays. Exorcism, chrism, oil, &c., were to be retained; as were also vestments, ornaments, vessels, crosses, altars, candles, and images. The compilers added, without intending to be in the least satirical, “that if anything have crept in which may give occasion to superstition, it be taken away.”⁵

This document was presented (May 15th, 1548) by the emperor to the Diet at Augsburg. It was read according to form. Without giving time for any discussion, the Archbishop of Mainz, President of the Electoral College, hastily rose, and thanking the emperor for this new token of his care about the Church, and his pious wish to heal her divisions, expressed the Diet’s concurrence in the new scheme.

Not a dissent was tendered; the Diet sat silent, awed by the emperor’s soldiers, who had been massed around Augsburg. The Interim was straightway promulgated by the emperor: all were to conform to it under pain of his displeasure, and it was to remain in force until a free General Council could be held.⁶

Astute and far-seeing as the emperor was within his own province, the Interim remains the monument of his short-sightedness in matters outside of that province. Great as his experience had been of the world and its affairs, he did not yet know man. He knew the weakness of man, his self-love, his covetousness, and his ambition; but he did not know that in which lies his strength—namely, in conscience. This was the faculty that Protestantism had called into existence, and it was with this new power—which Charles did not understand, or rather did not believe in—that he was now rushing into conflict. He thought he was advancing to victory, when the issue showed that he was marching to destruction.

The emperor now proceeded to enforce the Interim. “The emperor insisted on the observance of it with the authority of a master that would be obeyed.”⁷ He was astonished to find that a matter which he had taken to be so simple should give rise to so many difficulties. The Interim, for which he had anticipated a chorus of welcome on all sides, had hardly a friend in the world beyond the narrow circle of its compilers. It stank in the nostrils of the Vatican authorities. It gave offence in that quarter, not in point of

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 458. Millot, vol. iv., p. 323.

⁵ Sleidan, bk. xx., p. 458.

⁶ Sleidan, bk. xx., p. 460. Millot, vol. iv., p. 324.

⁷ Millot, vol. iv., p. 324.

substance, for theologically there was little to complain of, but in point of form. That the emperor in virtue of his own sole authority should frame and promulgate a creed was not to be tolerated; it was to do the work of a Council; it was, in fact, to seat himself in the chair of the Pope and to say, "I am the Church." Besides, the cardinals grudged even the two pitiful concessions which had been made to the Protestants.

In Germany the reception which the Interim met with was different in the different provinces. In Northern Germany, where the emperor's arm could hardly reach, it was openly resisted. In Central Germany it in a manner fell to the ground. Nuremberg, Ulm, Augsburg accepted it. Prince Maurice, to please Charles, had it proclaimed in his dominions, but, in tenderness to his former allies, he excused himself from enforcing it. It was otherwise in Upper or Southern Germany. There the Churches were purified from their Protestant defilement. The old rites were restored, Protestant magistrates were replaced by Popish ones, the privileges of the free cities were violated, and the inhabitants driven to mass by the soldiers of the emperor. The Protestant pastors were forced into exile, or rendered homeless in their native land. Four hundred faithful preachers of the Gospel, with their wives and families, wandered without food or shelter in Southern Germany. Those who were unable to escape fell into the hands of their enemy and were led about in chains.⁸

There is one submission that pains us more than all the others. It is that of Melancthon. Melancthon and the Wittemberg divines, laying down the general principle that where things indifferent only are in question it is right to obey the commands of a lawful superior, and assuming that the Interim, which had been slightly manipulated for their special convenience, conflicted with the Augustan Confession in only indifferent points, and that it was well to preserve the essentials of the Gospel as seed-corn for better times, denied their Protestantism, and bowed down in worship of the emperor's religion.⁹

But amid so many prostrate one man stood nobly erect. John Frederick of Saxony, despite the suffering and ignominy that weighed upon him, refused to accept the Interim. Hopes of liberty were held out to induce him to indorse the emperor's creed, but this only drew from him a solemn protestation of his adherence to the Protestant faith. "God," said the fallen prince, "has enlightened me with the knowledge of his Word; I cannot forsake the known truth, unless I would purchase to myself eternal damnation; wherefore, if I should admit of that decree which in many and most material points disagrees with the Holy Scriptures, I should condemn the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which I have hitherto professed, and in words and speech approve what I know to be impious and erroneous. That I retain the doctrine of the Augustan Confession, I do it for the salvation of my soul, and, slighting all worldly things, it is now my whole study how, after this painful and miserable life is ended, I may be made partaker of the blessed joys of life everlasting."¹⁰

Believing Roman Catholicism to be the basis of his power, and that should Germany fall in two on the question of religion, his Empire would depart, Charles had firmly resolved to suppress Lutheranism, by conciliation if possible; if not, by arms; He had been

⁸ Sleidan, bk. xx., p. 461. Kurtz, *Hist. of Christian Church*, p. 79.

⁹ Kurtz, pp. 79, 80.

¹⁰ Sleidan, bk. xx., 462.

compelled again and again to postpone the execution of his purpose. He had appeared to lose sight of it in the eager prosecution of other schemes. Yet, no; he kept it ever in his eye as the ultimate landing-place of all his projects and ambitions, and steadily pursued it through the intrigues and wars of thirty years. If he combated the King of France, if he measured swords with the Turk, if he undertook campaigns in the north of Africa, if he coaxed and threatened by turns his slippery ally, the Pope, it was that by overcoming these rivals and enemies, he might be at liberty to consolidate his power by a consummating blow against heresy in Germany. That blow he had now struck. There remained nothing more to be achieved. The League was dissolved, the Protestants were at his feet. Luther, whose word had more power than ten armies, was in his grave. The emperor had reached the goal. After such ample experience of the burdens of power, he would now pause and taste its sweets.

It was at this moment, when his glory was in its noon, that the whole aspect of affairs around the emperor suddenly changed. As if some malign star had begun to rule, not a friend or ally had he who did not now turn against him.

It was at Rome that the first signs of the gathering storm appeared. The accession of power which his conquests in Germany had brought the emperor alarmed the Pope. The Papacy, he feared, was about to receive a master. "Paul III. already repented," says the Abbé Millot, "of having contributed to the growth of a power that might one day make Italy its victim; besides, he was offended that he received no share of the conquests, nor of the contributions."¹¹

Paul III., therefore, recalled the numerous contingent he had sent to the imperial army to aid in chastising the heretics. The next step of the Pope was to order the Council of Trent to remove to Bologna. A sudden sickness that broke out among the Fathers furnished a pretext, but the real motive for carrying the Council to Italy was a dread that the emperor would seize upon it, and compel it to pass such decrees as he chose. A religious restoration, of which Charles himself was the high priest, was not much to the taste of the Pope, and what other restoration had the emperor as yet accomplished? He had put down Lutheranism to set up Caesarism. He was about to play the part of Henry of England. So was it whispered in the Vatican.

Nearer him, in Germany, a yet more terrible tempest was brewing. "So many odious attempts against the liberties of Germany brought on a revolution."¹² The nation felt that they had been grossly deceived. They had been told before the war began that it formed no part of the emperor's plans to alter the Reformed religion. The Protestant ministers turned out of office and banished, their churches in possession of mass-priests, blazing with tapers, and resounding with chants and prayers in an unknown tongue, told how the promise had been kept. To deception was added insult. In the disgrace of its two most venerated chiefs, Germany beheld its own disgrace. As every day renewed its shame, so every day intensified its indignation. Prince Maurice saw the gathering storm, and felt that he would be the first to be swept away by it. His countrymen accused him as the author of the calamities under which Germany was groaning. They addressed him as "Judas," and

¹¹ Millot, vol. iv., p. 316.

¹² Millot, vol iv., p. 328.

assailed him in daily satires and caricatures. At last he made his choice: he would atone for his betrayal of his Protestant confederates by treachery to the emperor.

He divulged his purpose to the princes. They found it difficult not to believe that he was digging a deeper pit for them. Able at length to satisfy them of his sincerity, they willingly undertook to aid him in the blow he meditated striking for the liberties of Germany. He had a large force under him, which he was employing professedly in the emperor's service, in the siege of Magdeburg, a town which distinguished itself by its brave resistance to the Interim. Maurice protracted the siege without discovering his designs. When at last Magdeburg surrendered, the articles of capitulation were even conformable to the views of Charles, but Maurice had privately assured the citizens that they should neither be deprived of the exercise of their religion nor stripped of their privileges. In a word, he so completely extinguished their former hatred of him, that they now elected him their burgrave.¹³ The force under him, that had been employed in the siege of Magdeburg, Maurice now diverted to the projected expedition against the emperor. He farther opened communications with King Henry II., who made a diversion on the side of France, by entering Lorraine, and taking possession of the imperial city of Metz, which he annexed to the French monarchy. All these negotiations Maurice conducted with masterly skill and profound secrecy.

The emperor meanwhile had retired to Innsbruck in the Tyrol. Lulled into security by the artifices of Maurice, Charles was living there with a mere handful of guards. He had even fewer ducats than soldiers, for his campaigns had exhausted his money-chest. In March, 1552, the revolt broke out. The prince's army amounted to 20,000 foot and 5,000 horse, and before putting it in motion he published a manifesto, saying that he had taken up arms for the Protestant religion and the liberties of Germany, both of which were menaced with destruction, and also for the deliverance of Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, from a long and unjust imprisonment.¹⁴

The emperor, on being suddenly and rudely awakened from his security, found himself hemmed in on every side by those who from friends had been suddenly converted into foes. The Turk was watching him by sea. The French were striking at him by land. In front of him was The Pope, who had taken mortal offence; and behind him was Maurice, pushing on by secret and forced marches, "to catch," as he irreverently said, "the fox in his hole." And probably he would have done as he said, had not a mutiny broken out among his troops on the journey, which, by delaying his march on Innsbruck, gave Charles time to learn with astonishment that all Germany had risen, and was in full march upon Innsbruck. The emperor had no alternative but flight.

The night was dark, a tempest was raging among the Alps; Charles was suffering from the gout, and his illness unfitted him for horseback. They placed him in a litter, and lighting torches to guide them in the darkness, they bore the emperor over the mountains, by steep and rugged paths, to Villach in Carinthia. Prince Maurice entered Innsbruck a few hours after Charles had quitted it, to find that his prey had escaped him.¹⁵

¹³ Millot, vol. iv., p. 329.

¹⁴ Millot, vol. iv., pp. 330, 331.

¹⁵ Sleidan, bk. xxiv., pp. 559, 560. Millot, vol. iv., p. 331. Robertson, *Charles V.*, bk. x., pp. 298, 299.

The emperor's power collapsed when apparently at its zenith. None of the usual signs that precede the fall of greatness gave warning of so startling a downfall in the emperor's fortunes. His vast prestige had not been impaired. He had not been worsted on the battlefield; his military glory had suffered no eclipse; nor had any of his kingdoms been torn from him; he was still master of two worlds, and yet, by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, he was rendered helpless in presence of his enemies, and had to save his liberty, if not his life, by a hasty and ignominious flight. It would be difficult, in all history, to find such another reverse of fortune. The emperor never fully recovered either himself or his Empire.

There followed, in July, the Peace of Passau. The main article in that treaty was that the Protestants should enjoy the free and undisturbed possession of their religion till such time as a Diet of all the States should effect a permanent arrangement, and that failing such a Diet the present agreement should remain in force for ever.¹⁶ This was followed by the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555. This last ratified and enlarged the privileges conceded to the Protestants in the pacification of Passau, and gave a legal right to the Augustan Confession to exist side by side with the creed of the Romish Church.¹⁷ The ruling idea of the Middle Ages, that one form of religion only could exist in a country, was then abandoned; yet with some unwillingness on both sides; for the Lutherans, not less than the emperor, had some difficulty in shaking themselves free of the exclusiveness of former times. The members of the Reformed Church, the followers of Zwingle and Calvin, were excluded from the privileges secured in the treaties of Passau and Augsburg, nor was legal toleration extended to them till the Peace of Westphalia, a century later.

To the emperor how mortifying this issue of affairs! To overthrow the Protestant religion in Germany, and restore the Popish worship to its ancient dominancy, was the one object of all his campaigns these five years past. His efforts had led to just the opposite result. He had been compelled to grant toleration to Lutheranism, and all things appertaining to the churches, schools, and pastors of Germany had returned to the position in which they were before the war. He was in the act of putting the crown upon the fabric of his power, when lo! it suddenly fell into ruin.

At the beginning of his career, and when just entering on his great combat with the Reformation, Charles V., as we have already seen, staked kingdom and crown, armies and treasures, body and soul, in the battle with Protestantism.¹⁸ Thirty years had passed since then, and the emperor was now in circumstances to say how far he had succeeded. Hundreds of thousands of lives had he sacrificed and millions of money had he squandered in the contest, but Protestantism, so far from being extinguished, had enlarged its area, and multiplied its adherents four-fold. While the fortunes of Protestantism flourished day by day, how different was it with those of the emperor! The final issue as regarded Spain was as yet far from being reached, but already as regarded Charles it shaped itself darkly before his eyes. His treasury empty, his prestige diminished, discontent and revolt springing up in all parts of his dominions, his toils and years increasing, but bringing with them no real successes, he began to meditate retiring from the scene, and entrusting the continuance of

¹⁶ Sleidan, bk. xxiv., pp. 570, 571.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, bk. xxvi., pp. 626, 627.

¹⁸ See *ante*, bk. vi., chap. 7, p. 346.

the contest to his son Philip. In that very year, 1555, he committed to him the government of the Netherlands, and soon thereafter that of the Spanish and Italian territories also.¹⁹ In 1556 he formally abdicated the Empire, and retired to bury his grandeur and ambition in the monkish solitude of St. Juste.

Disembarking in the Bay of Biscay, September, 1556, he proceeded to Burgos, and thence to Valladolid, being borne sometimes in a chair, sometimes in a horse-litter. So thoroughly had toil and disease done their work upon him, that he suffered exquisite pain at every step. A few only of his nobles met him on his journey, and these few rendered him so cold an homage, that he was now made painfully aware that he was no longer a monarch. From Valladolid he pursued his journey to Placentia in Estremadura, near to which was a monastery belonging to the Order of St. Jerome, so delightfully situated that Charles, who had chanced to visit it many years before, had long dreamed of ending his days here. It lay in a little vale, watered by a brook, encircled by pleasant hills, and possessing a soil so fertile and an air so salubrious and sweet, that it was esteemed the most delicious spot in Spain.

Before his arrival an architect had added eight rooms to the monastery for the emperor's use. Six were in the form of monks' cells, with bare walls; the remaining two were plainly furnished. Here, with twelve servants, a horse for his use, and a hundred thousand crowns, which he had reserved for his subsistence, and which were very irregularly paid, lived Charles, so lately at the head of the world, "spending his time," says the continuator of Sleidan, "in the innocent acts of grafting, gardening, and reconciling the differences of his clocks, which yet he never could make to strike together, and therefore ceased to wonder he had not been able to make men agree in the niceties of religion."²⁰

As soon as he had set foot upon the shore of Spain, "he prostrated himself upon the earth," says the same writer, "and kissing it he said, 'Hail, my beloved mother; naked came I out of my mother's womb, and now I return naked to thee again, as to another mother; and here I consecrate and give to thee my body and my bones, which is all the acknowledgment I can give for all thy numerous benefits bestowed upon me.'"²¹

What a striking contrast! The career of Charles ends where that of Luther begins. From a convent we see Luther come forth to enlighten the world and become a king of men: year by year his power expands and his glory brightens. At the door of a convent we behold Charles bidding adieu to all his dominion and grandeur, to all the projects he had formed, and all the hopes he had cherished. The one emerges from seclusion to mount into the firmament of influence, where a place awaits him, which he is to hold for ever: the other falls suddenly from the heaven of power, and the place that knew him knows him no more. In the emphatic language of Scripture, "that day his thoughts perish."

¹⁹ Robertson, *Charles V.*, bk. xi., pp. 333, 334. Millot, vol. iv., pp. 344, 345.

²⁰ Sleidan, *Continuation*, bk. i., p. 7; Lond., 1689. Millot, vol. iv., p. 354.

²¹ *Ibid.* Robertson, bk. xii., pp. 339, 340.