HEROES OF THE REFORMATION

by Richard Newton

Biographical sketches of the great Protestant Reformers written for younger readers, beginning with John Wycliffe. Newton vividly portrays the spiritual darkness of the pre-Reformation era and the courage of those who brought the light of Scripture back to the people.

6 Chapters

Table of Contents

1 John Wicliffe.

John Wicliffe. At the time of which I am about to write, you, dear young friends, who are the children of many prayers, and who have been taught from your earliest infancy to lisp the sweet name of Jesus, can have little or no idea of the spiritual darkness that hung over our land. You have been accustomed all your lives to hear the bells ringing out all around you, calling you Sunday after Sunday to hear the Word of God. You have been taught sweet hymns, and sweeter texts, all about the saving love of our tender Saviour and you know that your confession of love to Christ would be received with the deepest joy and thanksgiving by your loving Christian parents. But if you had lived in the thirteenth century how different would have been your lot. There would have been none then to gently lead you to the feet of Jesus, telling you of His free grace and dying love. If perchance your conscience was troubled about your sins, and you said in trembling tones, "What must I do to be saved?" there would have been none to answer lovingly, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." A shaven priest with austere countenance would perhaps have taken you by the hand and leading you to some dreary cell, would have shewn you a gaunt man, with haggard face and weary eyes, prostrate before a cross, and with the marks of the scourge upon his back. He would have told you that this man was doing his best by prayers and penances to reach at last the kingdom of heaven, and he would have advised you to go and do likewise. If, appalled by the sight, you shrank away, thinking to put off till another day your soul’s salvation, a priest of quite another kind would perhaps have taken you under his care, and with a smile on his round red face would have told you of a far easier way to obtain the forgiveness of your sins. He would have whispered to you that the Church required money, and that by the payment of a certain sum he was able to forgive you all you had committed, or even would commit. The youngest of my readers would laugh to scorn such a thought, but in those days, from the king on the throne to the beggar by the wayside, there was scarcely one who would have dared to say, "God alone can forgive sins."

You will say, But how could this be! I will tell you. In all our fair land there was not a Bible written in a language that the people could understand, and so the sweet words of the Lord Jesus were unknown. Thus the people were kept in utter ignorance, under the power of priests and friars, many of them wicked men who kept the truth from the poor souls around them, that by so doing they might enrich themselves, and add to their own power. How early had those who called themselves the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ forgotten His words! He, the gentle lowly One, had said, "Ye are not of the world even as I am not of the world." He had taught them that he who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, must be the least. At this time the whole of Europe was under the power of one man, who called himself the Vicegerent of Christ upon earth. He was named Pope Innocent III. He professed to have the disposal of the souls of all men in his hand, and the power to send them to heaven or hell at his will. Kings trembled before him, for he was mightier than all earthly kings.

King John was then reigning over England; and, having dared to oppose the will of this mighty pontiff, all England was placed under his terrible edict. The king had offended, and the whole

nation must be punished with him! We, with the brightness of heaven's own truth shining around us, can have no idea of the terrors of such a sentence as this; but to the men of those days upon whom the doom fell, it meant that the gates of heaven were locked against them. All who died must wander wretched, unhappy spirits — in some doleful region until it pleased this dread Pope, who carried the keys, to open the gates and let them out. The whole country was plunged in the deepest gloom. The whole nation put on, as it were, sackcloth and ashes. Church doors were closed, lights on the altars were extinguished, bells ceased to ring, infants were baptized outside the church doors, the dead were buried in ditches and in fields; none dared rejoice, or eat flesh, or pay decent respect to his person or his clothing. King John braved this state of things for two years, but at last yielded to the will of the Pope. Craving an interview with the Pope's legate he humbly resigned "England and Ireland to God, St. Peter, St. Paul, and to Pope Innocent." He consented to hold his dominions in trust only to the Church of Rome, and to pay to it the sum of twelve thousand marks yearly. Taking his crown, he laid it humbly at the feet of the legate, who, to show the mightiness of his master, spurned it with his foot as a worthless bauble, and then stooping down, he placed it on the head of the poor craven monarch. Never in the annals of England's history was there a moment of deeper humiliation. But God had not forgotten poor dark priest-ridden England. The darkest part of the night is just before the breaking of the morning; and before long God would raise up one who would dare, in the face of Pope, bishops, and priests, denounce this wicked system of Popery. A light was about to gleam forth that should never be extinguished, but that should broaden and brighten until the world should be bathed in its glow.

John Wicliffe was born in the North Riding of Yorkshire, in the Manor house of the parish of Wicliffe, in the year 1324. Little or nothing is known of his boyhood, except that he was early destined for the Church, and received his first training at a seminary of the neighbourhood. At the age of sixteen he was sent to Merton College, at Oxford: he made rapid progress, and soon became noted for his learning. Fox says, "He was famously reputed for a great clerk and schoolmaster, and no less expert in all kinds of philosophy." But it was a higher and a deeper teaching that laid the foundation for Wicliffe's greatness. Amongst the scholars of the day whose learning shed a lustre over the college was Branwadine; he had early been drawn to the study of the Bible, then written in Latin. His soul, weary of the empty philosophy of the day, had drank in the precious words of life. He rejoiced in the doctrines of free grace, and then, lifting the veil, he unfolded the way of life to the students who crowded round him with eager attention. Wicliffe was one of these students: and as he listened to the great master day by day, telling out the sweet story so new and strange, a light began to dawn upon him, and he learned to turn from all the wretched thoughts of the day, and seek only for truth as it was found in the Bible.

Just at this time the world was visited by a terrible pestilence, known in history as the "Black Death." It is said that "appearing first in Asia it took a westerly course, and swept on and on, carrying death and desolation everywhere. Even those who were on the ocean were not exempt from this awful disease. Ships were wafted to the ports silent and still, and all on board were found lying cold and lifeless." At last it reached England in one town only, as many as fifty in a day died, and were laid together in one deep pit. In London, Fox says, "the vehement rage thereof was so great, and did increase so much, that from the first of February till the beginning of May, in a churchyard then newly made in Smithfield, about two hundred corpses every day were buried, besides those which in other churchyards of the city were laid also." This awful visitation "sounded

like the trumpet of the judgment day in the heart of Wicliffe." Again he went to his Bible, not now merely as a scholar, but as a poor lost sinner seeking salvation. The shadow of death was all around him, and in an agony of soul he went to God crying, "What must I do to be saved?" Standing on the brink of the pit, he says he felt how awful it was to go down into the eternal night and "inhabit everlasting burnings." After much agony of soul peace came, and in the joy of his escape from an everlasting doom, he felt what a trifling matter the mere life of the body was, compared to the everlasting life he had received for his soul. This blessed assurance never left him, and clad in this armour Wicliffe went forth into the battle.

If we consider the conspicuous place that Wicliffe occupied in the eyes of the world, it is remarkable how little is known of the merely personal incidents of his life.

We know that he had a singularly sweet charm of manner, arising from a rare humility, and that he led a blameless life in an age of great wickedness. From his portrait that has been preserved, we can form some idea of his personal appearance. The broad calm brow bespeaks severity of character; the firm set, yet kindly mouth tells of firmness tempered with gentleness; and the keen dark eyes show great penetration. Altogether the picture is of a man of noble aspect and commanding mien, and quite agrees with all we know of the character of the great Reformer. By this time Wicliffe had become bachelor of Theology, and the privilege had been granted him of giving public lectures in Oxford on the books of Scripture. The deep research needed for a work like this was of the greatest use to him, and he was becoming unwittingly prepared for his great life work — that of reforming the church. The strength of Wicliffe lay in his fearless submission to the Bible. Turning away from all other teachers, and from the dogmas of the thousand years that had gone before, he placed himself, like a little child, before the Word of God, and bowed to the voice of God speaking to Him in its pages. And as he pored over those luminous pages light began to dawn upon him, and he began to perceive what a darkness there was hanging, like a black pall, over England, and how his beloved country was groaning under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. At this time the country was infested with monks of different orders, black, white, and grey, emissaries of the Pope, who combined not only to blind the eyes of the people as to the truth of God, but to fleece them of their gold. The Pope, too, gave away all the richest livings (so-called) to foreign priests, who subverted the laws of the kingdom and devoured its substance. Heavy taxes were extorted from the people without the consent of the king, and sometimes this very money was turned against them, being sent away to support the war that the French were carrying on with us! You will understand this when I tell you the Pope himself was a Frenchman. And all this was done in the name of religion, by those who professed to be the followers of the gentle lowly Jesus.

What a horrible mockery must all this have appeared to Wicliffe, as he gazed at it in the light of Scripture. It must not be supposed that he saw the whole truth at once. It is God’s way to lead on a step at a time, but if the first step be taken in faith, He will surely give light for another and another, until the whole path, at first so dark, and so surrounded with bewildering mists, becomes sun clear. So it was with Wicliffe, and as the fetters began to be unloosed from his own soul, and the scales to fall from his eyes, he longed to free his poor countrymen from the galling Papal yoke. And now, with all the earnestness of his great soul, we find him by lectures and by writings doing his utmost to open the eyes of those around him. He taught the barons and commons of England that the Pope had no temporal power over the people; at the most he only had spiritual. "The Apostle

Peter," said he, "never exacted money from any. Why does this man? Peter only took freewill offerings. What right, then, has Pope Urban to extort money from us, whether we will or not? His duty is to give spiritual counsel, not to fleece us of our gold. I find not in Scripture that God gave Peter temporal power over the kings of the earth, yet this man makes himself king of kings."

Such were the doctrines that he taught everywhere, until all England was becoming filled with them, and the halo that had encompassed the Papal fabric during the middle ages began to wane, and men took courage to look into a system to which before they had blindly submitted. And so the soul of England began to bound upward.

It was just at this time that Pope Urban, not reading as he might have done the signs of the times, advanced upon England a most insolent demand.

You will remember that I told you in my last paper how poor weak King John, a hundred years before this, gifted away his kingdom to Pope Innocent III., and how he promised to pay the yearly sum of a thousand marks to him. For the last thirty-five years this sum had been discontinued, when now it was suddenly demanded by the Pope with an intimation that should the king fail to pay not only the annual tribute, but all arrears, he would be at once summoned to Rome to answer to his liege lord, the Pope, for his disobedience. This was too much for a people who, although still submitting to Rome for its spiritual affairs, were beginning to feel very restive under these constant demands for money and subjection. It was too much, too, for King Edward III., the hero of Cressy and Poictiers, and with the laurels of his triumphs still fresh on his brow, to tamely submit to pay a thousand marks a year for wearing a crown that he was so well able to defend. No, the Pope had gone too far. Calling his Parliament together, the king laid the Pope’s insolent letter before them, and asked their advice upon the matter. They asked for one day to consider the subject, which the king readily granted. On the morrow all Parliament assembled to consider the momentous question — Shall England, now becoming mistress of the seas, bow at the feet of the Pope? It was a great crisis: and it is with deep interest that we look back and scan the earnest faces of that assembly. Wicliffe was there, and it is to him that we are indebted for an account of the speeches. And now it was that the great services of Wicliffe became manifest, for it is admitted by all that the sentiments expressed in Parliament were but the echo of his teachings at Oxford.

Without a dissentient voice, Parliament resolved to free England from the Papal tyranny, and an answer, short and decisive, was sent to the Pope. It run thus: "Forasmuch as King John nor any other king could bring his realm and kingdom into such thraldom but by common consent of Parliament, the which was not given, therefore that which he did was against his oath at his coronation, besides many other causes. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt anything against the king by process or other matters indeed the king with all his force should resist the same."

One man alone in the country stood up in defence of the Pope. A monk, whose name has not come down to us, boldly asserted that as the Pope was the vicar of Christ upon earth, he was the feudal superior of kings, and lords of their kingdoms. He maintained, therefore, that their obedience and tribute was his due; and further that King Edward had forfeited his throne by the nonpayment of the tribute. Then singling out Wicliffe by name, he challenged him to deny what he had advanced, thus proving that he knew full well who was the leader in this controversy. In spite of all the perils that made the task a hazardous one (for it was no light matter to defy the Papacy) Wicliffe boldly took up the challenge.

He did not at that time touch upon the spiritual power of the Pope, but contented himself by objecting to his temporal power. He pressed home the rights of men, the laws of England, and the precepts of holy writ. By all these he argued that the Papacy had no claim upon them as a country. "There cannot," said he, "be two temporal sovereigns in one country. Either Edward is King or Urban. We make our choice, we accept Edward of England and refuse Urban of Rome."

Perhaps in the whole of England's history there was not a moment of graver interest than this. The eyes of all Europe were watching with the deepest anxiety, this conflict between England and the great power that was seeking to reduce the whole earth to vassalage; and the decision of England was hailed with joy by all nations as a great victory won in the cause of religious freedom.

I have told you all this, dear children, because I want you to understand the means God used to free our country from these Papal chains, and how he was opening the flood gates so that a river of truth might sweep over our land, bringing joy and gladness to the fainting souls who would stoop and drink. At this day you are enjoying benefits and blessings which resulted from this great triumph; and it must not be forgotten that although King Edward and his Parliament were in the foreground, Wicliffe was the real champion for the truth. The next great battle that Wicliffe was called upon to wage, was of quite a different kind. As he grew in the knowledge of the truth, we find that his merely political struggles gave place to battles for the truth of God. He began to perceive that the Papal spiritual power was utterly contrary to the Scriptures, and that if he would follow the one he must finally renounce the other. This decision was not come to without many sighs and groans.

One great crying evil was now beginning to force itself upon his notice, and roused his righteous soul to anger. At this time England was swarming with monks and friars of different orders, known as the mendicant Friars. Upon these men the Pope professed to have conferred the power of forgiving sins; and with such a hearty good will did they perform their office, that criminals of the deepest dye flocked to them for remission of their crimes. They sold to such, indulgences, or "pardons," the money for which they spent in erecting palatial buildings, and in sumptuous tables. "The sum of all piety," said they, "was to obey the Pope, pray to St. Frances, and to give alms to the friars." This unscriptural and corrupt system roused Wicliffe to intense opposition, for well he knew the great gulf that was fixed between salvation by the blood of the Lamb, and pardon by the Pope. About this time he published his "Objections to the Friars," and grandly does he preach in it the Gospel to them, and to his countrymen. "There cometh," says he, "no pardon but of God. The indulgences of the Popes, if they are what they say they be, are a manifest blasphemy. Think not that God has given the keys to Innocent of Rome; think not that the friar carries heaven in his wallet; think not that God sends His pardons wrapped up in bits of paper which the mendicants carry about with them, and which they sell for a piece of silver. Listen to the voice of the Gospel: "Ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot." "Oh everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Come ye, buy and eat, yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Thus did Wicliffe begin to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Wicliffe was now beloved and reverenced by the people, and trusted and honoured by the king. As a proof of this we find his name placed second in the list of delegates, who were sent to Pope

Gregory XI. in the year 1374. They were sent to him in the hope that a grievance that was growing almost intolerable might be remedied. They prayed that the foreign priests, who by the Pope's agency were occupying all the best livings in England, and draining the land of its wealth, might be removed, and that the king should have the power to appoint whom he would. For two years these delegates were kept at Bruges, negotiating about the matter, but all to little or no purpose, for the Pope would give them no satisfactory answer. At the end of that time Wicliffe returned home, weary and disheartened at the poor result of this mission. But the time had not been wasted, and doubtless God had ordered his visit there so that he might see, with his own eyes, the iniquity of the Papacy. The nearer he came to the so-called sacred city, and the throne of God's high priest upon earth, the more his soul revolted from the avarice, ambition, and hypocrisy, that abounded there. He found this Rome to be a scene of false priests, clothed, not in the beauty of holiness, but in far other vesture. It was all a cheat and a lie; and this great true-hearted man, with his soul filled with indignation, came home to proclaim it so in trumpet tones, that rang through the land. In his public lectures he now spoke of the Pope as "Antichrist, the proud worldly priest of Rome."

Soon after his return from Bruges he was appointed by the king to the rectorship of Lutterworth, Leicestershire, and from his pulpit there, and from his chair in Oxford, he shrank not to oppose with boldness and eloquence, the blasphemous assumptions of the Pope. His sentiments soon began to find an echo in public opinion. The murmurs of the people became louder against the foreign monks, and not long after this the Parliament — well called the "Good Parliament" — proclaimed that the Pope should no longer have power to install his foreign favourites here, and that "no Papal collector or proctor should remain in England under pain of life and limb."

Great was the rage of the Pope at this measure, and loudly did he storm, but all to no purpose. England remained firm; and so was won a more lasting victory and one nobler in its efforts than that of Cressy or Poictiers.

Think not that Wicliffe could thus daringly oppose the Papacy without suffering. We read that, "The whole glut of monks and begging friars were set in a rage of madness, which (even as hornets with their stings) did assail this good man on every side." The Pope ordered his writings to be examined; and his doctrines, you may be sure, highly incensed the Papal court. If the world came to be of Wicliffe's opinion, farewell to the spiritual and temporal power of the Popes. Bulls, or edicts, were sent to England; one to the Archbishop of Canterbury, one to the king, and the last to Oxford. They were all of one tenor, blaming the English clergy for not having crushed long ere now this dangerous heretic, and commanding them to take steps at once to silence him. But though they thirsted for his blood, God took care of him, and in a most wonderful manner preserved him from their hands.

You see he had a great work to do for God, and not all the power of earth or hell could touch him until it was finished. He came out from the furnace with garments unsinged.

Each time that he was brought before his judges, we are struck with the calm dignity of his mien. He was first called to appear at Our Lady's Chapel, in St. Paul's, to answer for his teaching. He did not stand alone, for the bold baron, John of Gaunt, and Lord Percy, Earl Marshall of England, pushed roughly through the crowd of monks that surrounded him, and took their stand by his side. If not on religious, on political grounds they then held the Reformer in high esteem, and they were determined to support him when he was before the tribunal of bishops.

"Percy," said Bishop Courtney sharply, more offended at seeing the humble rector of Lutterworth so powerfully attended, than at their rough passage through the church, "had I known what masteries you would have kept in the church, I would have kept you from coming in hither."

"He shall keep such masteries though you say nay," said John of Gaunt, gruffly.

"Sit down, Wicliffe," said Percy, "sit down, you have many things to answer for, and have need to repose yourself on a soft seat."

"He must and shall stand," said Courtney, still more chafed, "it is unreasonable that one on his trial before his ordinary should sit."

"Lord Percy's proposal is but reasonable," said burly John of Gaunt; "and as for you," addressing bishop Courtney, "who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will bring down the pride, not only of you, but that of all the prelacy in England." To this menace the bishop made some hypocritical remark about his trust being not in man, but in God, when suddenly the church doors were burst open by an angry mob, demanding the release of Wicliffe. Their clamour drowned the voices of the bishops, and all was now in confusion and uproar. To proceed with the trial was impossible. The bishops, in a sad fright, hastily retreated, and Wicliffe, who had never spoken, quietly returned home. So the Lord delivered him from them.

It was not till a year after that he was again ordered to appear before Archbishop Sudbury. When the day came for his trial, an immense crowd besieged the doors of the palace of Lambeth, and when he appeared they opened reverently to allow him to pass. As many as could pressed in after him, and soon filled the chapel. The primate and his peers, not liking the appearance of things, were consulting together how they might best turn out or silence the intruders, when a messenger entered with a letter, the contents of which filled them with consternation. It was a message from the Queen Mother, forbidding the bishops to pass sentence on Wicliffe. The dismay of the prelates was unbounded, and the proceedings were instantly stopped. "As reeds shaken by the wind they became," said one who describes the scene, "and their speech turned soft as oil, to the public loss of their dignity, and the damage of the church." In all the tumultuous assembly, Wicliffe alone stood in calmness and self-possession. A second time had the Lord fought the battle for him, and again he passed from his accusers uncondemned and unhurt. But a time was coming when his powerful friends would fall back and leave him, and when God would train His servant to walk alone with Him. There comes a moment in the lives of all those who would be faithful to the Lord (it may come to you, dear children) when they feel painfully that their place is one of isolation and loneliness. The voice of Christ comes to them from over the dark, stormy deep, as it came to Peter, saying "Come;" and if they would be true, they must follow, though friends look coldly upon them, and loved faces grow strange and distant.

Wicliffe was soon to pass into a region unknown to the powerful friends, who loved him merely as a patriot; a region that bold, kindly-hearted John of Gaunt and Earl Percy could not enter, and yet it was a place where, of all others, the sublimity of faith could be displayed, for he walked alone there with his God.

Just before the time that Wicliffe commenced his great life-work — the translation of the Bible — he fell sick, nigh unto death. Unbounded was the joy of the monks. "Now," said they, "he will be overwhelmed with borrow and remorse for all his evil deeds," so they would go to him and receive

his last message of penitence and sorrow. In a very short time his bedside was surrounded by shaven monks, exhorting him as one on the brink of the grave to make full confession, and express his deep grief for all the injuries he had inflicted on their orders. Wicliffe lay quite silent until they had made an end of their speeches; then, asking his servant to raise him on his pillow, he fixed his keen eyes upon them and said sternly, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the evil deeds of the friars." In dismay and astonishment, the monks rushed from the room, and soon his words were verified, for his sickness left him, and he rose from his bed to commence his most glorious work — that of giving to the English people the Bible in their own tongue. It was to the ignorance of God's will that Wicliffe traced the evils that afflicted our kingdom.

Pope Gregory, one of the greatest of Wicliffe's enemies, was just at this time stricken down by death, and the cardinals met together to elect another Pope. As most of them were Frenchman, the Roman people were fearful that they would again choose one of their own countrymen to fill the Papal chair. So with loud tumults and terrible threats, they surrounded the palace where the cardinals were assembled, and demanded that a Roman should be elected for their Pope. "Not a cardinal should leave the court alive," they said, "unless their demand was complied with." So to appease the mob, an Italian was chosen. However, the cardinals soon grew tired of this Pope, who proved to be a mean, selfish man, and fleeing to France, they declared their former election to be null, seeing it was made under pressure, and they now elected a Frenchman. So was created the great controversy that raged in Christendom for over half-a-century.

It was with feelings, almost of horror, that all good Catholics saw the Papal throne as it were divided, and two men, each of whom claimed to be the Pope. The great question that all felt called on now to settle, was Which is the true Pope? Into whose hand has God committed the keys of heaven and hell? Their souls' salvation hung, they believed, on the solution of this question. The Christian world was rent in twain.

Popes were hurling curses at one another's heads, and torrents of blood were being shed by their devoted followers. In the midst of these thunderings of Papal wrath, the humble rector, Wicliffe, was forgotten.

Far away from this seething, surging ocean of contention, he retired, and in the midst of his beloved flock at Lutterworth, he sought the rest and quiet he so much needed.

Far off was the din of strife and battle, but the sounds broke and died away before they reached his peaceful rectory. And here, with God's fair country all around him, and forgotten by his enemies, he commenced his sublime work — the translation of the Bible.

Spring, with its fair flowers and sweet wild-voiced songsters, came and found him at his work; June's roses lived and died, and shed their crimson petals, and autumn's golden sheaves were gathered in, and yet he laboured on. Winter, with its frost and snow and red-breasted robins, came and went, and still the white-haired man bent unweariedly over his God-appointed task.

Four times the seasons rolled away before he rose, and said, "My work is done." We can imagine how great his joy would be, when he was able to place in the hands of his countrymen their true Magna Charta. He knew that this Book would be to them as a pillar of fire, leading them on into happy liberty. Yes, the long night of England was near its close, and its realms were about to be flooded with the glorious light of the scriptures, before which the ghostly terrors and superstitious

fears of the people would flee away, as night phantoms before the beams of day.

It mattered not to Wicliffe what they did now with his body; they might rack or burn it as they pleased, but they could never extinguish the light that he had kindled.

But, although the translation was finished, there was still the laborious work of publishing to be commenced. There were no printing presses in those days, whereby thousands of copies could be produced in a very short time. All the copying had to be done by the hand, and such was the interest that Wicliffe's work created, that a hundred expert copyists came forward and offered their services in multiplying the Bible. Great was the joy of the English people, when, for the first time, they read the tender, loving promises of God in their mother-tongue.

Long had they been kept afar from Him, by priests and bishops, and now they learnt with exceeding gladness, that He had Himself made an open way to the divine mercy seat, and that even as a tender Father yearning for his children, He had devised means, "that his banished be not expelled from him." They needed not, as Rome had taught, the intercession of numberless saints, that were dead. There was but one Mediator, even Christ, and in that sweet name they found that they could boldly approach God's throne. The blessed tidings sped with amazing rapidity. In humble cot and lordly hall the silent messenger entered, and often found a welcome; and broken hearts were healed, and wearied ones found rest. Great was the consternation of the priests when they discovered what Wicliffe had done. They had been hoping that the old man would soon die, and that his work would be stamped out, but now they saw that another Preacher was to take his place mightier than he; One that they could not bind nor burn. A great clamour was raised. He was called a heretic, a sacrilegious man, who had committed a crime unheard of in former times; for he had taken the sacred things of God, and had cast them before common men, like pearls before swine, only, said they, to be trampled under foot.

Again was he called upon to appear before his judges to answer for his blasphemous conduct. No great man or baron stood by him now. He stood alone, and with calm dignity faced his accusers. A vast company had assembled to witness his trial. With his venerable head uncovered, and with his steady searching gaze fixed upon his enemies, he commenced his defence and such was his rare eloquence and unflinching boldness, that he won the admiration even of those who were against him. He would retract nothing, and would neither crave nor accept acquittal at their hands. Such was the grand dignity with which he spoke, that he and his accusers seemed to have changed places. He was the judge, and they were at his bar. So smitten were they by his words that sped like arrows to their hearts, that they could neither move nor speak. "Ye are the heretics," said he in closing, "not I. With whom, think you, are you contending? With an old man on the brink of the grave? No! with truth — truth which is stronger than you, and which will overcome you!" And then he turned and left the court. His enemies had no power to stop him. Even as his divine Master at Nazareth, he passed through the midst of them. But the time had almost come for the faithful servant to be called home. The primate, the king, and the Pope were working together to compass his destruction. Wicliffe himself expected soon to receive a violent death. A "chariot of fire" he thought would carry him to the skies. But God had willed it otherwise. One fair Lord's Day morning, when he was surrounded by his beloved people at Lutterworth, the message came. They were all in the little rural church that Wicliffe loved so much. The little church, where, in the summer-time the fragrant breezes blew in through open windows framed in ivy, and where the birds' songs

mingled with their hymns of praise. It was in the midst of this peaceful scene, and while he was in the act of blessing the bread and wine before administering the Lord’s Supper, that the Voice came to him saying, "Come up hither." His grief-stricken brethren lifted him gently from the pavement where he had fallen, and carried him home to the rectory, where, ere the day closed, he quietly passed away. And so ended his noble life.

Through the appalling darkness of the middle ages, Wicliffe shines out like a star of the first magnitude. Well has he been called the day star of the Reformation, for with his rise the night of Christendom began to flee away.

There is very much of Wicliffe’s life that I have been unable to touch upon. I have merely glanced at some of the leading features of his long life work. Much relating to his doctrinal controversies you would not be interested in, and could scarcely understand; but I hope I have said enough to enable you to think with reverential interest of one of God’s greatest men.

2 John Huss.

John Huss.

Let us now transfer ourselves — in imagination — far away from the land of Wicliffe, to a little village in Bohemia, called Hussinetz. Here was born one whose name, even to this day, is spoken of with deepest love and reverence; for his voice was the first which dared to denounce the tyranny of the Papacy, and from his eloquent lips first came the message of redemption in Christ, through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

John Huss was born in the year 1373, in a little cottage, just at the edge of the vast Bohemian forest. Its great pines rocked and swayed over his humble dwelling, and doubtless, their sad, wild music often mingled with his cradle songs. Close by, rolled the bright waters of the Molden river, and with nature in all her loveliness around him, he spent his happy, dreamy childhood. His father died when he was quite young, so he lived alone with his mother. Though she was poor, she did all in her power to teach her only child, for we find that as soon as he had finished his education at the village school, she took him to Prague, to enter him at the University of that city. Hoping to find favour for her boy with the rector, she carried a present for him, which, unfortunately, she lost on the way. In great distress she knelt down on the road with her boy beside her, and implored God’s blessing upon him. Her prayers were answered; but, ah! if at that moment the curtain of the future could have been lifted, how her mother’s heart would have been pierced to have seen the way. His University career was one of great brilliancy. He was made Bachelor and Master of Arts, and Bachelor of Theology. After finishing his University course, he entered the Church, where he soon rose to great eminence. His fame even reached the Court of Winceslaus, and his Queen, Sophia, choose him for her confessor.

Huss was at this time a firm believer in the Papacy, but through God’s great mercy ere long his eyes were opened, and he became one of its most zealous opponents.

We have seen how in England God had sent forth a skillful and laborious servant to till the ground, and, as it were, cast in the divine seed; but not in our country only was the great Husbandman preparing the soil; for lo! afar off in Bohemia the winter is past, and the great spring-time is come, and soon will He send forth His sowers to scatter the precious seed! A blessed link binds England and Bohemia together, for we read in the book of the persecutions of the Bohemian church, "In the year A.D. 1400 Jerome, of Prague, returned from England, bringing with him the writings of Wicliffe;" and again, a writer of the 15th century says "that the books of Master John Wicliffe opened the eyes of the blessed master John Huss, as several reliable men know from his own lips, whilst he read and re-read them with his disciples."

It is from this time that the true career of Huss must date. He was appointed preacher to the Chapel of Bethlehem, and his sermons there formed an epoch in the history of Prague. Far removed from anything they had ever heard before, his words fell upon their wondering ears with a sound strange, yet sweet, and well might they say, "Never heard we such things before." Ah! he

drew his sermons direct from the pure wells of Scripture. He gave them the words of the Lord in all the loving tenderness with which they fell from His divine lips. The tale which we call "the old, old story," in all its divine simplicity, was new to them. They had been fed by the priests on legends of the saints, stories of the fathers, tales of wondrous miracles and weeping virgins, any thing or everything, rather than the truth of God.

Like soft rain on arid ground fell the words of Huss on the hearts of many who were thirsting for something — they knew not what — to bring them peace. And no wonder that there was a great awakening, and that many believed, and were saved. The moral condition of the people at this time was most deplorable. We read that "the king, the nobles, the prelates, the clergy, and citizens indulged without restraint in avarice, pride, drunkenness, and every profligacy."

Against this fearful state of wickedness Huss thundered his powerful sermons, not sparing any; against prelates, nobles, and clergy, he alike launched his bolts. A great clamour was raised against him, but the Queen, whose confessor he was, and who held him in great esteem for his holy, blameless life, protected him.

It was impossible for Huss, studying and constantly preaching the word, as he was, not to grow rapidly in the knowledge of the Scriptures, and ere long he found that the Bible must be placed before the authority of the Pope or of councils, and so almost unwittingly Huss had entered the road of Protestantism.

It was not long before Rome heard of what was going on at Prague, and Pope Alexander V. at once issued a bull commanding the Archbishop of Prague, to proceed against all who preached in private chapels, and who read the writings or taught the opinions of Wickliffe. Then a great collection of all Wickliffe’s books was made, and upwards of 200 volumes beautifully written, and elegantly bound — some even ornamented with jewels and precious stones, showing how much they were prized by their owners — were piled up in the street, and were publicly burned, while the bells tolled dismally. But they could not so stamp out the divine work. After this wicked act we find Huss preaching with still greater zeal and earnestness. He now attacked the sale of indulgences, and other unscriptural proceedings of the Papacy.

Another mandate arrived from Rome. The Pope summoned Huss to appear in person to answer for his doctrines. All knew that to obey this command would be but to walk to his grave. The King, the Queen, and many of the great ones of Bohemia sent an embassy to the Pope, begging that Huss might not appear in person, and that his defence might be heard through another. In vain they pleaded; the Pope condemned Huss in his absence, and laid the city of Prague under interdict.

Again was enacted the same scene which took place in our own country, in the reign of King John. Prague was like a city stricken with a sudden and terrible calamity. Outside the closed church doors lay the corpses awaiting burial by the wayside, for the churchyards might not receive them. The images, which were supposed to guard and sanctify the streets, were laid prostrate on the ground, as though interceding for the wicked city, and sackcloth was thrown over them. The altar lights were extinguished, and everywhere were tokens of the terrible curse that was laid on the city that harboured within its walls the man who had dared to disobey the Pope’s summons. The poor superstitious people could not brave this state of things long; tumults soon began to disturb the

peace. "Let us cast out the rebel," was the cry, "lest we perish."

There was nothing for Huss but to depart. He must leave the city where he had many friends, and not a few loving disciples, for he knew that his presence could but entail sorrow and calamity on them. So he went away, and found a place of refuge in his home beneath the sighing pines of Hussinezt. But think not that he was idle; he preached and taught in all the towns and villages round about that region. Great crowds followed him, hanging on his words; they could not but admire him, no less for his modesty than for his rare eloquence and boldness. "The church," said his hearers, "has pronounced this man a heretic and a demon, yet his life is holy, and his doctrine is pure and elevating." In time things quieted in Prague, although doubtless, the calm was only at the surface. With an intense yearning Huss longed to return again to his Chapel of Bethlehem, the scene of so much divine blessing. The wish was granted him, and once more he stands with his beloved flock around him, who listen with hushed breath to the burning words that proceed from him. His banishment has but quickened his zeal, and more courageously than ever he denounces the tyranny that would suppress the free preaching of the Gospel. Up to this time Huss had no yoke-fellow in his work; he was quite alone; and often in sadness and melancholy, he yearned for the sweet solace of a companion of like spirit with himself. It pleased God to give him such an one, a friend, who became to him as Jonathan to David. Jerome, of Faulfisk, was a Bohemian knight. He had been at Oxford, in England, and there had received much truth from Wickliffe’s writings. He was noted for his subtle intellect and fervent eloquence. He had, too, a fearless courage, and a lofty devotion. From this time the names of Huss and Jerome were ever united, Although alike in their great qualities and aims, there were many minor points of difference between them that made them necessary to one another. Their love ripened, day by day, until it became "passing the love of woman," and so it remained, in sweet unbrokenness while life lasted. Even death did not keep them long apart, for "they were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

If we cast our eyes round, and survey the state of Europe at this time, the picture is truly deplorable. Three popes were now reigning in Christendom, each claiming to be the rightful successor of Peter. Not only with maledictions and curses did the rival popes shine now to crush one another; they hired soldiers and swords, and by war and rapine each strove to become the greatest. As this could not be done without money, pardons and places in Paradise were put up for sale that they might obtain the needed gold. Europe was plunged into anarchy and confusion; piety consisted of nothing but a few superstitious rites. Everywhere was heard the clash of arms and the sighing of nations. This melancholy spectacle had a very powerful effect on John Huss, and drove him to a still closer study of the Bible. Every day he saw more clearly how "the Church" had departed from her early model, not in practice only, but in doctrine. And now we find him not only striking at the abuses of the Papacy, but levelling his blows at its root and endeavouring with all his might to extirpate it, both root and branch together. He now wrote his wonderful treatise "On the Church," in which he brought out clearly that Christ alone was the invisible Head of the Church. This tract was followed by another, called, "The Six Errors," which was circulated far and near, and produced a profound impression throughout Bohemia.

Something else happening at this time helped to deepen the impression made by this tract. Ladislaus, King of Hungary, had brought down the wrath of John XXIII. upon himself, by giving support to Gregory XII. one of the rival popes. In great anger he (John) issued a bull,

excommunicating (which means shutting out from heaven) King Ladislaus, and all his children to the third generation. We, read too, that the Pope also "commanded all emperors, kings, princes, cardinals, and men of whatever degree, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, to take up arms against Ladislaus, and to utterly exterminate him and his supporters; and he promised to all who should join the crusade, or who should support it, the pardon of all their sins, and immediate admission into Paradise, should they die in the war." This edict plunged Hungary into conflict, and Huss seized the opportunity of directing the eyes of his countrymen to the contrast between the vicar of Christ, and Christ Himself: the one who proclaimed war and bloodshed, and the gentle Saviour who taught a gospel of peace. The scandals around him raised his indignation and horror. It was hard to remain calm while he saw John XXIII., one of the most wicked men that ever wore the tiara, professing to open and shut the gates of Paradise, and scattering his pardons over Europe, only that he might kindle the flames of war and shed torrents of christian blood. Plainer and bolder, day by day, grew the speech of Huss, and the people became so incensed against the priests that they trembled for their lives. The Archbishop interfered, and again placed Prague under interdict, so long as John Huss remained in the city. Again the Reformer, fearing for his friends, withdrew to his native village of Hussinetz.

Another scene in the drama of the life of Huss was closed, and he was bidden to rest awhile before the opening of his last and sublimest one. He had left far behind him the strifes and clamours of Prague, and sweet and calm was his rest beneath the waving pines of his birth-place. His letters at this time show a mind full of that calm courage that springs from trust in God. He had no fear, for he was dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty. Here he had time to calm his mind and fortify his son by communion with his God.

He could with joy think that by his instrumentality, his native country, Bohemia, had been rescued from much spiritual darkness and he could trust in God that the light would broaden and brighten.

Never again was his voice to be heard in his favourite chapel of Bethlehem, and never more were his living words to stir the hearts of his countrymen. There remains but one more act for Huss to do — his greatest and most enduring — and now I must hasten on, though shrinkingly, to tell of his noble martyr death. In the year 1413 Sigismund had ascended the throne of the Empire. I must tell you somewhat about him, for his name was destined to be handed down to posterity, along with that of Huss, but not with like fame. He was a sincere devotee, and the sight of Christendom, disgraced and torn asunder by its popes, moved him even to tears. The emperor studied long as to how these evils were to be met, and at last he hit upon a plan, and he resolved to make trial of it: it was a general Council. He resolved to call together the whole Church; all its patriarchs, cardinals, bishops and princes, and to summon before this august body the three rival popes, and then, by the authority of the Council, compel them to adjust their claims.

I cannot stay to give an account of this wonderful assembly that met on Nov. 1, 1414. From every kingdom and state, and from almost every city in Europe, came delegates to swell the great gathering. Men of princely rank and high dignity were there, and men of fame in learning; but of all that brilliant assembly there was none in whom we take such a deep interest as in John Huss, for he, too, had been commanded to appear before the Council. He had been summoned by the emperor, who had also pledged his kingly word that he should go and return in perfect safety. We shall see how he redeemed his pledge.

Some of Huss's most powerful enemies had preceded him to Constance, and now day and night were they working to compass his destruction. Twenty-six days after his arrival, in spite of the solemn written promise of the emperor that he should remain unmolested, he was seized and thrown into the prison of a monastery on the banks of the Rhine. Here the damp and pestilential air of his prison brought on a raging fever, which nearly brought his life to an end.

Deep was the indignation when the news of Huss's imprisonment reached Bohemia. In burning words did the barons indite a remonstrance to the emperor, reminding him of his promise, and demanding that he should vindicate his own honour and release their great countryman.

Sigismund, upon receiving this remonstrance, would have at once ordered his release, but the subtle men around him soon found means to make him alter his decision. They told him that the good of the Church demanded that he should keep this heretic a prisoner. They told him that the Council, by its supreme authority, could release him from his promise, and afterwards they made a decree "that no faith is to be kept with heretics to the prejudice of the Church."

Huss was now completely in the power of his cruel enemies. They examined his writings, and soon found plenty in them whereby to condemn him; and writing down what they had against him, they proceeded to the prison where he was lying, weak and feeble with the fever. He begged that he might have an advocate to defend himself, but this was denied him. After this Huss was removed to the castle of Gotelhen, on the other side of the Rhine, where he was heavily loaded with chains. At last, on the 5th of June, 1415, he was brought to trial. His books were produced, and he was asked if he were the writer of them. This he readily admitted. Then they found by his writings that he had transferred his allegiance from the so-called "Church" to God, speaking through His Word. This was his great crime. In the judgment of the Council he was in rebellion, for he had broken the bond of submission. It would take too long to tell you how he was dragged backwards and forwards, from prison to the Council, before he was condemned, unheard, to the doom of a heretic. He went through unheard-of sufferings, for after long sittings, listening to the attacks and reasonings of his accusers, he would be shut up in a tower, with fetters on his legs, and at night he was fastened up to a rack against the wall, hard by his bed.

Sigismund, who doubtless had at this time an earnest desire to save his life, caused the Council to draw up a paper, in which it was put to him that if he would withdraw his heresies his life would be saved. But it was in vain that they tempted the great Reformer. "He would rather," he said, "be cast into the sea with a millstone round his neck, than offend those little ones to whom he had preached the Gospel." At last the day arrived when all the sorrows of Huss were to be terminated. The execution took place in a meadow, between the gardens of the city and the gates of Gotelhen. When he reached the place where he was to be burnt, the martyr knelt down and said, "Lord Jesus into Thy hands I commend my spirit." A mighty crowd surrounded him, and those near by said, as they listened to his prayers, "We know not what his life has been, but verily he prays after a devout and godly fashion." And now he stands with his feet on the faggots, and wood piled all around him up to the chin. Again, at the last moment, the Marshal of the Empire approached, and for the last time implored him to save his life and recant. "What errors," asked Huss, "shall I renounce? I know myself guilty of none. I call God to witness that all I have written and preached has been with the view of rescuing souls from sin and perdition, and therefore most joyfully will I confirm with my blood that truth which I have written and preached." And so they left him to his

fate. The fire was applied, and the flames blazed upward, and Huss began to sing with a loud voice, and while he was singing, the flame choked him, and so he died. Carefully were his ashes collected and thrown into the Rhine. And so they thought that he was vanquished. Never had the Council made a greater mistake. From the stake of Huss what blessings have flowed, and are still flowing, to the world. Being dead he yet speaketh; for, from the moment he expired at the stake, his name became a power which is speeding on the cause of truth, even to this day.

3 Jerome.

Jerome.

Now Huss, with noble steadfastness of heart, joyfully gave up his life in the cause of his Master, we have seen.

I must now tell you of Jerome, his loving and much loved fellow-labourer. They had been one in heart and spirit in life, and it pleased God that in death they should drink of the same cup of martyrdom When the news of Huss's danger reached Bohemia, Jerome hastened to Constance in the hope of helping him. But he soon found that, without being of any assistance to Huss, he had placed his own life in danger, so with an aching heart he fled from the city that contained his friend. He had almost arrived at Prague when his pursuers arrested him, and he was carried back to Constance loaded with chains like a malefactor. On May 23, 1415, just about a month before the execution of John Huss, he was brought before the Council, and by them was condemned to be thrown into a dreary dungeon in a tower of St Paul. His chains were so placed that they did not permit of his sitting down; his arms were crossed behind his neck, and tied with fetters. This caused his head to bend forward, and gave him great suffering. So much did he endure that he became very ill, and his cruel enemies, fearing that death might snatch their victim from them, relaxed somewhat the rigour of their treatment. Yet for a whole year he pined in that dark noisome dungeon! In the meantime the Council had received a letter from the Barons of Bohemia, expressing their horror and indignation at the death of Huss. They were convinced that, although they had thrown his ashes in the Rhine, he was not done with; they saw clearly that a great storm was rising; already the threatening sounds of its thunders were heard. They dare not, in the face of what they saw around them, plant another stake beside that of Huss. It would, they perceived, be far better to induce Jerome to recant, and so they used all their power and subtilty to this end.

Poor Jerome, ill in body, week and depressed in mind, and cut off from all his friends, in a moment of weakness yielded to their solicitations. Like Peter, when he was out on the stormy deep, he took his eyes for a moment off Christ, and so like him began to sink in the waves. But do you think that Christ would let him be engulphed in the waters? Oh, no, He loved him too well for that. In an agony of mind Jerome reflected in his lonely prison on what he had done. He had submitted to the wicked Counsel; he had subscribed to the justice of the condemnation of his beloved co-worker, Huss; he had promised to live and die in the Catholic faith, and never preach anything contrary to it. He felt he had perjured his soul — and for what? Why to escape a short season of agony at the stake. But, he asked himself, could any bodily agony be greater than the anguish of mind he was now enduring? Where, now, were those sweet times of communion that he had been wont to have with the Lord, moments that had filled even his dreary dungeon with the glory of heaven? Where now was the peace that had flooded his soul, as he had thought of the loving "Well done" of his Master? All gone! All gone! He had turned his back upon his Lord. And then he thought of Huss, and his image would rise before him, constant and courageous to the last, singing while the flames rose around him, and he loathed himself as he thought of his own weak cowardice. "Oh God," he

cried, "I am cast off out of Thy sight, but I will look again towards Thy holy temple," and as he cried his soul was filled with tender thoughts of his Saviour's love, and then he knew that this love was more to him than life. "I will never deny Thee again, my Saviour," we hear him crying; "life is nought to me without Thy smile of love. With my hand in Thine I can meet the Council, I can go to the stake. They can kill the body, but they cannot separate my soul from Thee;" and so he strengthened himself in his God. From this time his courage never failed him, and Jerome rose from his fall, a stronger man than ever. And now we must follow Jerome to his final trial. On May 26, 1416, he was brought for the last time before the council.

There was no sign of fear about him now. Although pale and enfeebled by long and rigorous confinement, his face was peaceful, and lit up with a noble courage.

Kneeling down in the presence of his enemies, before commencing his defence, he earnestly besought God to guard his heart and lips that he might not utter an unworthy word. Then he commenced his defence. It was a wonderful speech, and its power and eloquence filled even his bitterest enemies with admiration. Sometimes the pathos was so tender that his stony-hearted judges were almost melted to "dewy pity;" and yet it was not for life that he pleaded. The bitterness of death seemed to be passed for him. His eloquence was not to rescue his life from the stake, but to defend and exalt the truths of his Master.

It was impossible for him to close his address without showing the Council how bitterly he repented of his recantation. "Of all the sins," said he "that I have committed since my youth, none weighs so heavily on my mind, and causes me such poignant remorse as that which I committed in this fatal place, when I approved of the iniquitous sentence, recorded against Wicliffe and against that holy martyr, John Huss, my master and my friend. Yes! I confess it from my heart, and declare with horror, that I disgracefully quailed when, through a dread of death, I condemned his doctrine. I, therefore, supplicate almighty God to deign to pardon me my sins, and this one in particular, the most heinous of all. You condemned Wicliffe and Huss not because they shook the faith, but because they branded with reprobation the scandals of the clergy, their pomps, their pride, and their luxuriousness." At these words the whole assembly rose in a tumult. The father shook with passion, "What need we of further proof?" cried they. "The most obstinate of heretics is before us." So they hurried him back to his dungeon and loaded him more heavily with chains than before and here he remained until he was brought out to receive his sentence, and to be executed. They took him to the spot in the meadow that to him was consecrated by the death of Huss, and here they tied him to the stake. While they piled the faggots of wood about him he sang joyfully "Hail happy day." The courage that sustained his heart, and the peace that filled his soul, never left him. His death was a slow, lingering one, yet his faith and joy never failed him to the last, for there was one "like unto the Son of God," in the flames with him upholding him until his happy soul sped away from the body of pain, and he had won the martyr's crown.

4 Martin Luther.

Martin Luther. In a little cottage by the wayside in the small town of Eisleben, on Nov. 10th, 1483, the wail of a newborn babe was heard, and a father (only a humble miner) hung with proud delight over his firstborn son. When a great one of this world is born joy bells are rung, cannons are discharged, and rejoicings and splendours surround the cradle of the unconscious little one. Into the cottage of which I have spoken God had just sent one of His heroes; the greatest man of his age had stepped quietly upon the stage of life, but none knew it; there were no indications of the wondrous future that awaited him, yet hereafter the voice of this little child was to shake all popedom, his strong hands would make the proud edifice totter and fall for his tones, clear and sweet as the trumpets of the day of Jubilee, would ring through the earth, proclaiming the old gospel of free pardon through faith alone. The mother of Luther, though only a humble villager, was a woman of superior mind and character, her sweet piety lent a graceful charm to her manner. How often the fear of God gives a refinement and delicacy to the manners which we look for in vain elsewhere. It was doubtless from his gentle Christian mother that Luther inherited the loving trustful part of his nature, for he had a heart ever yearning for human sympathy, and a mind ever planning largely for the happiness of others. The ruggedness, the sternness of his nature, the lion-like fortitude which he likewise possessed in such a large degree, came, doubtless, from his father. His father was a grave, stern man, too stern, perhaps. No fault of the boy’s was left unpunished from a mistaken sense of duty the warm-hearted impulsive boy was often punished with a severity that was not wise. And yet, methinks, there was a softness somewhere beneath this hard surface, and sometimes the tender heart of the father peeps out like a gentle flower from a granite rock, for we read that often the miner might be seen carrying his "little one" to school on his shoulders. At the age of fourteen years Martin was sent to a school at Magdeburg. Here the hardships and privations of his young life were increased. His master often flogged him. It was a maxim in those days that nothing could be done with children without a free use of the rod, and we can well imagine how the buoyant, boisterous nature of the lad often led him to transgress the strict rules of the school. He mentions one day being whipped fifteen times. Poor Luther, yet this was not all he had to endure. It was the custom at that time for the scholars of the town to be sent from door to door to beg their bread, so they used to go in small companies singing and asking alms of the burghers. Very often, instead of food, the hungry tired boys received cuffs and blows. One day Luther was perambulating the streets, stopping before its likeliest dwellings, and striving by singing his little hymns to woo the inmates to kindness. He was very hungry, more so than usual, but no door opened, and no hand was extended. He was in great dejection, and stood musing as to what would become of him. Alas, he thought, he could not endure these hardships much longer, he must return home and work with his father in the mines. Then farewell to all his bright hopes of a fair education, and the brilliant career he was anticipating. Luther little thought that at that moment God was preparing a home for him. A door near him opened, and a gentle voice bade him enter. It was Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, a man of consideration among the burghers of Eisnach.

It was not the first time Ursula had noticed the young scholar. She had been struck by his fresh young voice when he sung in the choir on Sundays. She had noticed him, too, when he had been sent, with harsh words, from her neighbour’s doors. Her gentle heart pitied him, and bidding him come in, she placed him at her own table and satisfied his hunger. Both she and her husband were won by the open countenance and sweet disposition of the boy, so they bade him stay with them; and from that time the boy had a home, and the worthy pair were to him as father and mother.

Here, surrounded by love and the sweet influences of a tender gentle woman, his young heart expanded like a flower in the sunshine. Penury and coldness had threatened to blight his powers, but now they awakened with fresh vigour, and he gave himself up to study with renewed ardour. Madame Cotta was very fond of music, and there was no better way in which Luther could repay his kind friends, than to sing to her while he accompanied himself on the lute. In this happy home Luther lived two years. In all his after life he never forgot the good Madame Cotta or the town where she lived. He was accustomed to speak of the latter as "his own beautiful town," and with reference to the former he would say, "There is nothing kinder on earth than a good woman’s heart." He never forgot, too, how God had helped him when he had stood hungry, solitary, and heart sick in the streets of Eisnach.

Luther entered the university of Erfurt in 1501. Here the young student came thirsting for knowledge, to drink his fill. His father, perceiving his son’s talents, wished him to study law, and he toiled harder than ever that he might support his son during his studies.

Luther was eighteen when he entered the university. With avidity did the young student drink in of the scholastic philosophy that was then in such great repute. Aristotle, Duns, Occan, and others, he studied. Doubtless they tended to the ripening of his understanding, and gave agility to his mind, and afterwards were of value to him in the discussion of subtle questions; but in all other respects it was a mere attempt to gather grapes off thorns, and figs off thistles. When he had been two years at his university, an event occurred which changed his whole future life. Always fond of books, he went day by day to the library of the university, and spent hours amid its treasures. One day, as he took down the books, he came upon one such as he had never seen before — a volume unlike all others. Looking at it with surprise, he found it to be a Bible — the Vulgate or Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures, by Jerome. He had never seen the Bible before. Certain portions the church had prescribed to be read, and these he had thought were the whole Bible. Great was his surprise when he found there were whole books and epistles which he had never seen before. As he read it seemed as though the very heavens were opening before him. Day after day he returned to the library and devoured some gospel of the New, or story of the Old Testament, rejoicing as one who had suddenly discovered a country fair and new. From this time a change came over Luther; the struggles in his soul commenced, which were destined never to cease until the old Luther had passed away, and the new Luther, born of the incorruptible seed, had taken his place. And from this new man came a new age — a new Europe. Long before, out of the Bible at Oxford, came the first dawn of the Reformation, and now out of this Old Bible at Erfurt came its second morning.

Luther took his first academic degree in the year 1503, and two years later he became Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy. A grand torch-light procession was given him in honour of this

event. Already the miner’s son saw a brilliant pathway before him, leading to fame and honour. He saw that even now he held no mean place in public opinion. As the nearest road to the goal of fame, he devoted himself to the bar, and began to give public lectures on the learned subjects treated of by the ancient philosopher, Aristotle. And where, in the midst of these intellectual fascinations, was the old Book upon which he had lighted with so much joy?

It seemed in danger of being well-nigh forgotten. But God would not have it so. Amid the excitement of his scholastic studies a sudden blow fell upon him which opened his eyes to the solemnity of eternity. He was brought to its very verge that he might gaze, as it were, over its brink. His bosom friend, Alexis, was suddenly snatched away by a violent death. His conscience, which the old Bible had awakened, but which had of late been sleeping, again awoke. "What," it said to him, "shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Again, still louder, the voice of God spoke to him. He was passing through the country on a visit to his friends, when a violent storm broke over him. The thunders rolled and the lightnings flashed in an awful manner. It seemed to Luther as though the great Judge had descended and was calling him to account. A flash of fire suddenly struck the place where he was standing; a terrible crash of thunder broke above his head, and Luther fell almost senseless to the ground, momentarily expecting death. In agony of mind he vowed to God that if He would spare his life he would devote it to His service. The lightnings ceased, the thunders rolled away, and, rising from the ground, Luther pursued his way with solemn steps to Erfurt. But his vow, it must be fulfilled. In those days devoting oneself to God was interpreted as meaning that you must enter a monastery — you must wear the monk’s hood. To Luther, the monastery was but another word for the grave. How could he, who was so well fitted to enjoy them, forswear the delights of love and friendship? How could he renounce the honour and glory he was so well able to win: nay, which were almost already in his grasp? But his vow had been made, and it could not be broken; and surely, he thought, the more the sacrifice I make, the greater will be my merit in the sight of God. But he must see his friends once more, and then —. So, without telling them of his purpose, he calls his friends around him. He trys to converse gaily with them; but surely there are tears in his voice at times, for in his heart he is bidding them a long farewell. He touched his lute, and regales them with the music he loves so well, and if the strain is sad and dirge-like, how can he help it, for is it not his own requiem that he is playing? The time comes for them to part — he sees the last one away, and then without a moment’s hesitation, he walks straight to the Augustine Convent; he lifts the heavy knocker, its ponderous bolts are withdrawn, the door opens to receive him, and he enters. And now surely that he has been admitted into the solemn cloisters of the monastery that he has heard spoken of as being so peaceful, calm, and holy, the pangs of his troubled conscience will cease. Here, afar from the world and its temptations, he will find rest for his weary soul. Surely God will accept the great sacrifice that he has made. So thought Luther. Did he find it so? Ah, no. Luther had to find out that there could be no peace for him out of Christ. His inward torments became day by day more unsupportable. He found that the convent bars had but shut him in with his conscience: and now louder, and still louder, became its voice. He knew not where to flee. "Where," he groaned, "shall I find a shadow from this great heat — where a shelter from this great blast?" He knew no holier place than the cell; yet with all his penances and prayers he became no holier, gained no rest. It was a bitter cup that Luther was drinking, but God was teaching the man who was to be the church’s great reformer.

What a heavy burden is unpardoned guilt, and how impossible it is to find relief from it by these works of self-righteousness!

Again and again the poor monk came, as it were, to the door of heaven with his goodly sum of works only to find it closed. God was teaching the man who was to be the great apostle of justification by Faith — that heaven could not be bought by any sum, however great, but must be a free gift from God Himself.

Like a shadow he glided from cell to cell of his monastery, his eyes sunken, his bones protruding, his figure bowed to the earth. His crys and groans echoed through the long corridors of the convent. He became a mystery and a terror to his brother monks. His confessor tried to help him, but his wounds were too deep for his skill.

"'Save me in thy righteousness' — what does that mean?" asked Luther; "I can see how God can condemn me in His righteousness, but how can He save me in His righteousness?" But none could answer poor Luther. God was allowing great furrows of sorrow to be worn in his heart, but only that He might flood them with the water-brooks of life. And even now one is approaching the monastery who will bring relief to his broken heart! It chanced — but no, it was not chance — that just at this time Staupitz, Vicar-general of the Augustines of Germany, paid a visit to the monastery where Luther was groaning under his heavy burden of sin. He was a man of great piety; one who was trusting not to the church for salvation, but to Christ alone. His eye, trained to read the faces of those around him, fell on the young monk. He could not gaze on that broad brow, upon which was the shadow of a great sorrow, or mark the eye which told of much spirit anguish, without feelings of deep interest. He spoke to him with tenderness — such sounds were rare to poor Luther now, for the inmates of the monastery thought that his conflicts could only be accounted for by the influence of the evil one, and so had shunned him. The words of love won his confidence, and he laid his whole soul bare before the vicar. Staupitz saw at once how it was. "Luther," said he in effect, "you are trying to stand before the Great Judge without a days-man. Turn your eyes away from your own wounds, your stripes, maceratings, and fastings. You can never move God by these. Look to the wounds of Christ — see there His blood flowing for you!"

"But how dare I come to Christ," said Luther, "till I am a better man?"

"A better man! It is sinners, not just men, Christ came to call." And so with skilful hand the vicar strove to turn his thoughts from himself to his Saviour. Like healing balm upon an open wound seemed the vicar's words to Luther's bruised spirit; he felt that light was beginning to pierce the cloud. Before the vicar left he gave him a Bible, which he received with unbounded joy.

Still Luther's faith was but feeble and flickering, and at times the clouds of despondency would gather round him, and his old conflicts would be renewed. At last he was laid on a bed of sickness, and while he was there God used a very humble instrument to complete the work that the vicar had commenced. A poor old brother monk came to Luther's bed-side one day, and began reciting, with great earnestness and simplicity, the apostle's creed. Luther repeated after him in feeble accents, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." "Nay," said the monk, "you are to believe not only in the forgiveness of David's sins, and Peter's sins, you must believe in the forgiveness of your own sins." The decisive word was spoken. As a flash of vivid lightning in the night time suddenly illumines the whole landscape, so the monk's simple words thew a flood of light upon the scheme

of the Gospel, which had before seemed to Luther so incomprehensible. "Oh, God," he exclaimed in an ecstasy of joy, "I see it all now, it is not payment, but forgiveness." It seemed as though he were in a new world — his prison doors were open. God had removed his sackcloth from him, and girded him with gladness. "In that hour," says one, "the principle of popery fell from Luther's soul." To Christ alone now he looked for salvation, to the church he would look no more. But although Luther had received life and peace, there was still much that he had to learn, and soon after this we find him being ordained as a priest. Our picture will show what a gorgeous scene this was when Rome had full sway over men's hearts. What an awful perversion of the simplicity of the Lord's supper! The ceremonies of popery still had a hold upon him, yet according to his light, with wholeheartedness he served his God, and remained some time in the monastery, under the training of God, and growing daily richer in the knowledge of Him. And now the time has come for him to pass out of his cell — the cell in which he had fought a battle sublimer than the one he was afterwards called upon to fight before the Diet of Worms — and enter upon the work which God had in divine wisdom been preparing him to fulfil.

He was appointed to the post of Doctor of Theology in the University of Wittemberg; and passing from the monastery to the class-room with the open Bible in his hand, he was able to reveal the fountains of life to the eager students who surrounded him. How freely could he now communicate to others that which he learned amid tears, and groans, and anguish of soul. Such was the power and freshness of his words that crowds of students came to hang, as it were, upon his utterances. His fame went out into other lands. Flocks of students from foreign countries came to drink in of the heaven-taught wisdom of the Wittemberg professor.

Staupitz watched with lively satisfaction the career of the young monk. Why, thought he, should this man confine his light to the walls of a university? around him on all sides were multitudes who were endeavouring to satisfy their hunger on the wretched husks which the monks gave them to feed on. Why should not this man, who was so well able, minister to them the bread of Life? Why should not the living waters, so long dammed up, be let loose to flow again among the habitations of men? The vicar-general proposed to Luther that he should preach in public, and soon after this, Luther commenced his public ministry. At an old wooden chapel in the centre of the public square, so tottering with age that it needed to be propped up on all sides, Luther first commenced his public ministry. And here, after the silence of centuries, rang out again the proclamation of free pardon for all sins through faith in Jesus Christ alone. With animated countenance, and kindling eye, Luther told out in thrilling tones the majestic truths that he had received from God, and the hearts of his hearers were filled with awe. Men wondered at tidings so strange and sweet, so refreshing and welcome. When the heart is full it is easy for the tongue to be eloquent, and day by day the fame of the preacher grew. From all the surrounding cities came crowds to hear him; the old wooden chapel became far too small for the numbers who flocked to it. The Town Council of Wittemberg now elected him to be their preacher, and gave him the use of the parish church. Once the Elector Frederick was among his hearers, and was delighted with the simplicity of his language, and with the weight of his matter. And now the Reformation was fairly launched. God had bidden it go forward, and man could not stop it. But it was needful for Luther that he should learn another lesson. The Lord wished him to find out the vileness of that church which he still regarded as the church of Christ, and the dwelling place of holiness; and that he might learn it more surely, it was necessary that he should go to Rome. And so God opened up the way for him

to go there. With heart swelling with strange emotion, Luther stands within the gates of, to him, the thrice holy city. What a disenchantment awaited him! What a deliverance from a spell that had too long held him captive! He would see Rome, not as he had fondly painted her in his dreams, but as she had made herself by her own corruptions.

It must not be forgotten that although Luther was converted, and resting on the Lord Jesus as the rock of his salvation, his knowledge was still very imperfect, for popery still extended its shadow over his mind. It was no easy thing for Luther to emerge from under that gloom, a gloom that had lasted for twelve centuries, and which is brooding, even to this day, over half of Europe. And so we find that the first few days of Luther’s stay in Rome were occupied in visiting the holy places, and saying mass at its most holy churches, and thus he was brought into contact with the priests. And now it was that he saw behind the scenes. With unspeakable pain and grief of heart he found out that these "holy" men were merely playing a part, and that in private they laughed to scorn the very rites which in public they celebrated with such a show of devotion. And if he was shocked at their levity, they were no less astonished at his solemn credulity. They jeered at him as a dull German; a poor thing without genius enough to be a sceptic, and without cunning enough to be a hypocrite. They were amazed, they said, to find such a fossilised specimen in the sixteenth century.

One day he was at table with some prelates who, thinking the German was as easy of faith as themselves, began to make merry over the clever way in which they deceived and befooled the people. When blessing the bread, and using the Latin words by which (as Rome teaches) the bread is truly changed into the flesh and blood of Christ, they would say, in Latin, "Bread thou art, and bread thou wilt remain," and then they said, "We elevate the Host and the people bow down and worship." In horror Luther listened, and in that moment the vail was torn from his eyes. He saw then that he must either give up Christianity or Rome. But what he had gained amid his groans and struggles in his lonely cell at Erfurt, could never be given up. That he had received from God Himself. It was from this Rome, with her mocking hypocrisy, her jeering impiety and shameless revelry, that he must turn away. And so from the clergy Luther turned; but even yet he thought her rites might be holy; surely, he thought, there must be some merit in visiting the shrines, something whereby he might nourish his piety and return home a holier man. Influenced by these feelings he went one day to the church of the Lateran. In it are the holy stairs which, tradition says, Christ descended when returning from the hall of judgment where Pilate had passed sentence on Him. It was said that the angels had removed these marble stairs from Jerusalem to Rome, and every one who climbed them on his knees would merit fifteen years of indulgence for each ascent!

While Luther was laboriously ascending the stairs, he was startled by a sudden voice, which seemed to him to come from heaven, saying, "The just shall live by faith!" In amazement Luther started to his feet. This was the third time that these words had been conveyed to his mind, and with startling power. Now they seemed to speak louder than ever. "What am I doing?" said Luther, "why am I striving to gain an indulgence from the church which can last me only a few years, when God has given me an indulgence that will last for ever?" From this time the doctrine of justification by faith alone stood out before Luther as the one grand leading doctrine of revelation. He had done now with relics shrines, and altars; that one glorious sentence, "The just shall live by faith," had more efficacy in it, a thousand times over, than all the holy treasures Rome contained. This was the key that should unlock the closed gates of Paradise; this the star, the bright star, that should go before him and lead him to his Saviour’s feet. In words grandly characteristic of the

man, Luther at this time recorded his purpose. "I Dr. Martin Luther," writes he, "unworthy herald of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, confess this article, that faith alone without works justifies before God, and I declare that it shall stand for ever, in despite of the Emperor of the Romans, the Emperor of the Turks, the Emperor of the Tartars, the Emperor of the Persians; in spite of the Pope and all the cardinals, with the bishops, priests, monks, and nuns; in spite of kings, princes, and nobles, and in spite of all the world, and of the devils themselves; and that if they endeavour to fight against this truth, they will draw the fires of hell upon their own heads. This is the true and holy gospel, and the declaration of me, Dr Martin Luther, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. We hold fast to it in the name of God. Amen." This was what Luther had learned at Rome. Verily it was worth his wearisome journey thither. His stay did not extend over two weeks, but the lessons learned there would never be forgotten during his life. The year of his return was 1512. A few months after this he received the degree of Dr. of Divinity. On this occasion Luther took a solemn oath upon the Bible to study, propagate, and defend the faith contained in the holy Scriptures. And now he bade farewell to philosophy, and turned to the Bible as his great life work. Even yet he had no thought of separating himself from the Romish church; there were still some links that held him in bondage, and to find out how Rome herself severed these links we must turn our eyes a few moments to the history of the time. The warlike Julius II., who was Pope at the time of Luther's visit to Rome, was now dead, and Leo X. occupied the Vatican. He was of the family of the Medici, and like them was distinguished by sensuality and voluptuousness, though graced by an exquisite refinement of manner. He was a lover of fine arts, and had a taste for letters. He was determined that his court should be the most brilliant in Europe. No elegance, no amusement, no pleasure should be forbidden to enter it.

You may be sure that this pontiff was burdened with no religious beliefs or convictions. To him the whole scheme of Christianity was a "gigantic fable." And he was wont to sneer and give vent to his scepticism in the words, "What a profitable affair this fable of Christ has been to us!" And now Leo conceived a grand idea. His family had adorned Florence with its noblest edifices, and its glories were spoken of in all countries. Why should not he make his name famous and adorn the Eternal City by a pile more glorious than Christendom contained? But to execute such a project millions would be needed; how could the money be procured? His exchequer was empty, emptied by the vain shows and amusements of his court. But surely such a magnificent conception must not be allowed to fall through from want of money. Could not he sell his pardons and indulgences? And so it was resolved to open a grand market for the sale of spiritual blessings. It was done, and very soon, as he expected, a river of gold began to flow into Rome. The licence to sell these indulgences in the different countries of Europe, was disposed of to the highest bidder. The indulgences of Germany were farmed by Albert, Archbishop of Main and Magdeburg, a man as bereft of conscience and religion as the Pope himself. And now he began to look about for a suitable person to walk the streets of Germany, and to do his best to sell his pardons. He soon found a man in every way suited to his purpose. This was a monk of the name of Tetzel. He had been convicted of an odious crime, and sentenced to be put in a sack and drowned, but through powerful intercession, had been reprieved. He had the voice of a town-crier, and the eloquence of a mountebank. Such was the man that made progress through Germany, carrying a great red cross, on which were suspended the arms of the Pope. In front of the procession, on a velvet cushion, was borne the Pontiff's bull of grace, in the rear came the mules laded with bales of pardons to be given — not to the penitent of heart, but to those whose money was in their hand.

When he entered a city, Tetzel and his company went straight to the cathedral; then the cross was set up on the high altar, a strong iron box was placed beside it to receive the money, and Tetzel, in the garb of a Dominican Friar, began to set forth in stentorian tones the marvellous worth of his wares. "Press in now, press in while the gates of Paradise are open. Should that cross be taken down, the doors of heaven will be closed." "Indulgences," he went on, "are the most precious, and the most noble of God's gift's. Come, come while you may, and I will give you letters all properly sealed, by which, even the sins which you intend to commit, may be pardoned; and, more than this, indulgences avail not only for the living but for the dead. Priest, noble, merchant, wife, youth, maiden, do you not hear your parents, and your other friends who are dead, and who cry from the bottom of the abyss, "We are suffering horrible torments, a trifling alms will deliver us; you can give it, and you will not!" "At the very instant," he continued to his shuddering hearers, "that the money rattles at the bottom of the box, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies liberated to heaven!"

These are some of the very sentences by which this wicked man strove to extort the money from poor deluded people, who firmly believed in the fires of purgatory. And now Tetzel, in the course of his tour through Germany, has arrived within four miles of Wittemberg. And there, in the Market place, the great red cross has been set up, and the pardon-monger's stentorian tones are heard proclaiming his wares. With grief and indignation did Luther witness the thousands that flocked to his standard, and very soon did he perceive the moral havoc that these so-called "pardons" were working. You must remember that Luther still believed in the power of the church to exact confession and penance from its flock, though not as a means to salvation. This he taught was to be had alone through the merits of the Saviour's blood.

One day, when he was sat at the confessional, some citizens came to him, and confessed having committed some thefts and other grave sins.

"You must abandon your evil courses," said Luther, "otherwise I cannot absolve you."

You may imagine his holy indignation and horror, when they told him that they had no intention of leaving off their sins, that there was no necessity for them to do so, seeing that the Pope had, in the person of Tetzel, pardoned these sins, and secured them against the punishment of them. And then, in the testimony of their innocence, they pulled out their indulgence papers, and shewed them to him.

Groaning in anguish of spirit at the way in which the poor creatures were being deluded, Luther could only tell them that their papers were worthless, and that they must repent and be forgiven of God, or perish everlastingly.

Refused absolution, and sore at losing their money, and also their hope of heaven, these people went back to Tetzel, and informed him that a monk in Wittemberg was throwing contempt on his indulgences. Foaming with rage, Tetzel poured out a torrent of abuse against the man who dared to make light of the Pope's pardons; then as a sign of what would be done with him, he kindled a great fire in the market place, with the threat that the Pope had given him authority to commit all such heretics to the flames.

Little heeding Tetzel's angry words, Luther continued his opposition more strenuously than ever. With all the grand unflinching boldness of his character, he condemned, from the pulpit, in the university, and at the confessional, these proceedings of Rome, denouncing them as a scandal to

religion and a snare to souls. But this was not enough for him, he felt he must do still more to free his conscience.

One, day, on the eve of All Saint's Day, when the streets of Wittemberg were filled with pilgrims who had come to nourish their piety at the numerous shrines of Wittemberg, Luther issued from his home, and joined the stream of people who were flowing to the Castle Church, which stood by the eastern gate. Drawing from his pocket a paper, he proceeded to nail it on the church door. The strokes of his hammer soon drew a crowd around him, who pressed eagerly forward to read what was written thereon. And what was this paper? It was Luther's wonderful "Theses," consisting of ninety-five propositions on the doctrine of indulgence.

These propositions Luther undertook to defend against all who might choose to impugn them next day at the university. But none appeared. In this wonderful paper, which was destined to be the means of bringing light and blessing to thousands, Luther took the opportunity of preaching a free salvation to all who would believe. He placed God's free gift in sharp contrast to the indulgence of Rome — the one to be had "without money and without price," the other to be bought with gold. He taught that the Pope's forgiveness, without God's was a mere cheat and delusion. And so taking the great prerogative of salvation from the church's hand, he gave it back to God. And now the great movement of the Reformation is fairly launched, and is spreading onward with wonderful rapidity. The Theses were printed, and seemed to fall as thick as snow flakes all over Saxony. They were translated into Dutch, and read in Holland they were rendered into Spanish, and studied at the universities of the Iberian peninsula. "It seemed," as one has said, "as though the angels were their bearers," for even as far away as Jerusalem, copies were to be bought. Strange as it may seem, in four short weeks Luther's tract had become a household book, and his name a household word. Everywhere the Theses were the subject of converse and discussion. The feelings awakened by them were, of course, of a varied nature, but by very many they were received with great joy. Men were conscious of a great burden taken from their hearts. "While those," says Mathesius, "who had entered the convent to seek a good table and lazy life, or consideration and honour, heaped Luther's name with revilings, those monks who lived in prayer, fasting and mortifications, gave thanks as soon as they heard the cry of that eagle which John Huss had foretold a century before." The historian, Kranz, of Hamburg, was on his deathbed, when Luther's Theses was brought to him. "Thou art right, brother Martin," he said upon reading them, "but thou wilt not succeed. Poor monk, hie thee to thy cell and cry, 'O God, have pity on me!'" Another old, priest of Hexter said: "Dear brother Martin, if thou succeed in overthrowing this purgatory, and all these paper-mongers, thou are truly a very great gentlemen." But, others, lifting their eyes higher, saw God's hand in it, and they felt he had come forth in answer to the groans of His burdened saints, to break their bonds in sunder.

Three years have sped away since Luther, with bold hand nailed his theses to the door of the Kirk of Wittemberg. But in those three short years what changes had taken place in the opinions of men, and indeed, in those of Luther himself. A light as fair as that which streamed in the beginning, on this dark chaotic world, had shone upon the moral blackness of that time. Gladness was flooding the hearts of men. Deep joy was breaking out on every side. How fair was the light! How gracious the drops that were falling from heaven upon a weary earth, for men afar and near were praising God for a recovered gospel. In vain now did Tetzel cry his wares; pardons had become unsaleable. Shrines once thought so holy, were now forsaken. Nunneries and

monasteries were emptying for men were learning now to turn to God alone for their souls' needs. In the direst alarm, the Pope and his counsellors sought to silence this monk who was working them such ill. But in vain they set their snares to entrap him, God took care of him; in vain they sent their cleverest men to meet and confound him with subtle arguments and theological skill. With his hand upon the Bible, Luther put them utterly to rout. One by one, they returned to their master discomfited. Pope Leo felt that something must be done, and at once, to stop the baneful course of this intrepid man.

He stepped into the arena and launched his final missal. A bull of excommunication was issued against Luther, by which (according to them) he was hurled from the church, and cut off from hope of heaven.

Harmlessly fell the bolt which once had power to shake the thrones of monarchs. The men of Wittemberg, with Luther at their head, took the bull and (as all unclean things were burnt outside the camp) burnt it, and with it, the books of the papal canon law outside the city. No mysterious virtue was in these Papal edicts. They blazed and crackled and sank to ashes like any common paper. Amid demonstrations of triumph, the procession reformed, and doctors, masters, students and townsmen gathered round the great Reformer, and led him back to the city. But well Luther knew that one blow would not win the battle. Next day, when he was lecturing to a crowd of eager students, he told them that the burning of the Papal statutes was but a sign; the thing signified was the utter extinction of the Papacy. His voice grew solemn as he continued — "Unless, with all your hearts, you abandon the Papacy, you cannot save your souls. The reign of the Pope is so opposed to the law of Christ, and the life of the christian, that it will be safer to roam the desert, and never see the face of man, than abide under the rule of Antichrist. I warn every man to look to his soul's welfare, lest, by submitting to the Pope, he deny Christ. The time is come when christians must choose between death here, and death hereafter; for my part, I choose death here. I cannot lay such a burden upon my soul, as to hold my peace in this matter. I must look to the great reckoning, I abominate the Babylonian pest; as long as I live I will proclaim the truth. If the wholesale destruction of souls throughout Christendom cannot be prevented, at least I shall labour to the utmost of my power to rescue my countrymen from the bottomless pit of perdition." On the 24th of March, 1521, the imperial herald arrived at Wittemberg, and put in the hands of Luther, the summons of the Emperor to appear before the Diet of Worms. A more brilliant assemblage than this, the first Diet of the young Emperor Charles, of Spain, had perhaps never been gathered together since the days of Charlemagne. It may have been his youth, for he was only twenty, together with the vast dominions over which he had sway, that helped to throw such a singular interest over him. From far and near came unprecedented numbers to his Diet. We read "that every road leading to Worms, displayed a succession of gay cavalcades — the electors with their courts, the archbishops with their chapters, margraves, and barons with their military retainers, the delegates of the various cities, in the badge of their office — all hastened to Worms." But a greater than Charles was to present himself before them, and a cause greater than that of the Empire, was to unfold its claims to their hearing. The time had come when Luther must bear testimony to the gospel, not at the stake, but on the loftiest stage the world can furnish. God had so willed it that emperor, lords, and barons must come to Worms, and there patiently wait and listen while the miner's son speaks to them.

"Will he come?" asked the members of the Diet one of another, when they had determined to summon Luther before them. Not for a moment did he hesitate, he knew that a higher than the Emperor had summoned him, and he was ready to obey. He knew that his safe conduct might be violated, as that of John Huss had been; he might be going to the stake, for many, he knew, were thirsting for his blood, yet he never wavered. There he would be able to bear testimony for the truth, as for the rest, he had no concern, he left the issue with God. "Fear not," he wrote to a friend, "that I shall retract a single syllable. With the help of Christ I will not desert the Word on the battle field." To others, he said, "I am called, it is ordered and decreed that I appear in that city. I will neither recant nor fly. I will go to Worms in spite of all the gates of hell, and the prince of the power of the air." Like wild fire the news spread through Germany, that their beloved Luther had been summoned to appear before the Emperor and his Diet. It was with mingled feelings of thankfulness and alarm that they heard. Thankfulness, that their cause — which they knew to be God's cause also — was about to be examined before so august an assembly, and fear, lest Luther should be sacrificed, and so many loving eyes and anxious hearts followed him as he left Wittemberg.

It was ten o'clock in the morning of the 16th of April when Luther saw the old towers of Worms rising before him. Sitting up in his car he began to sing a hymn that he had composed two days before, "A Strong Tower is our God." Away on the cathedral tower the sentinel descried the approach of the cavalcade and sounded his trumpet. At this signal of Luther's arrival, the citizens of Worms rushed into the street, and in a moment nobles, citizens, princes, and men of all nations mingled in one mighty throng to see the entry of the intrepid monk. Preceded by a herald Luther approached, dressed in his monk's gown. Although bearing traces of his recent illness, all who gazed upon him noticed the deep and settled calm of his eyes. The surging crowd, struck with the courage of the man who, contrary to all their expectations, had entered their gates, pressed around him to give him a hearty welcome. Looking round upon them as he descended from his carriage, Luther revealed to them the secret of his courage in the simple words, "God will be for me."

Weak after his recent severe illness, and greatly fatigued with his fourteen days' journey, the Reformer greatly needed rest. The next day, too, was before him; the most eventful, perhaps, of his whole life, but all were too anxious to see the monk to permit him an hour's repose. Princes, dukes, counts — friends and foes alike — besieged his hotel and crowded his apartments. As one relay of visitors were dismissed, another waited for admission. With calmness and dignity the miner's son received the brilliant throng. Unmoved he stood in their midst, hearing and answering their questions with a quietness and wisdom that filled even his enemies with wonder and admiration. At last, far in the night, his crowd of visitors, so varied in rank, left him, and Luther was alone. Too excited and restless to sleep, he threw open the casement, and let the soft spring air fan his fevered brow; taking his lute he touched it and sang a favorite hymn, and then from his window he looked off out into the night. Below him the weary city was silently sleeping; away in the great valley he heard the roar of the Rhine as it poured out its floods; above him was the silent, fathomless vault of heaven. To it he lifted his eyes, as had often been his wont when in anguish of mind. The midnight stars, always so dear to him, gazed down on him now like the faces of old friends; all else around him was so unfamiliar and strange. How it soothed his soul to see them now fulfilling their stately march so far above the tumult of the earth, and yet so far below the throne whereon sat a King infinitely greater than the monarch before whom he was to appear

to-morrow. He gazed till a sense of sublimity filled his soul, bringing with it a feeling of repose. Turning away from his casement, he said, "I will lay me down and take quiet rest, for Thou makest me to dwell in safety."

Next morning, Wednesday, the 17th of April, at eight o’clock, Luther was cited to appear at four in the afternoon before his Imperial Majesty and the States of the Empire. With all the earnestness that marked his nature, the Reformer prepared himself to meet the coming strife, and kneeling before the throne of the eternal God, he poured out his prayers and supplications with groans that were audible outside his chamber door: and so he spent most of the time, until he rose to stand before the throne of Charles.

Accompanied by the Marshal of the Empire, and preceded by a herald, Luther set out for the Diet. But no easy matter did they find it to push their way to the town-hall, for the streets were filled with a denser crowd than that which had assembled the day before. Every window and house-top had its cluster of spectators, all eager to catch a sight of the Reformer. Arrived at the town-hall, they found the road so blocked up that the soldiers had to clear a way by main force. As they were elbowing their way, and were now near the door at which they were to be ushered into the presence of the Diet, Luther felt a hand laid on his shoulder. He looked round to see the kindly face of George Freundsberg, a veteran well know to his countrymen for his gallantry and bravery.

"My monk, my good monk" said the soldier, "you are now going to face greater peril than any of us have ever encountered on the bloodiest field; but if you are right and feel sure of it, go on, and God will fight for you."

Hardly had these words been spoken, when the door opened, and Luther was in the presence of the august assembly.

Again came words of comfort to him. Passing through the throng of princes to take his place before the Emperor, a soft whisper reached his ear: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour, what you shall speak." To Luther it seemed like the voice of God, and came to him with soothing power; and so, with equanimity and composure, he advanced and stood before the throne of Charles.

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

"The sun," says the historian Wylie, "was near its setting, his level rays pouring in at the windows and falling in rich mellow light on all within, gave additional splendour to the scene. It brought out in strong relief, the national costumes and variously coloured dresses and equipments of the members of the Diet. The yellow silken robes of the Emperor, the velvet and ermine of the

electors, the red hat and scarlet gown of the cardinal, the velvet robe of the bishop, the rich doublet of the knight, covered with the badges of his rank and valour, the more sombre attire of the city deputy, the burnished steel of the warrior, all showed to advantage in the chastened radiance which was now streaming in from the descending luminary. In the midst of that scene, which might have been termed gay but for its overwhelming solemnity, stood Luther in his monk's frock."

Amid a deep silence John Eck, Archbishop, of Treves and spokesman of the Diet, rose and in a sonorous voice repeated, first in Latin and then in German, the following words: "Martin Luther, his sacred and invincible majesty has cited you to appear before his throne to answer two questions. First, do you acknowledge these books," pointing to a pile of volumes on the table, "to have been written by you? Secondly, are you prepared to retract and disavow the opinions you have advanced in them?"

"Most gracious Emperor," answered Luther, "the books are mine. As to the second, seeing it is a question which concerns the salvation of souls, and in which the Word of God is interested — I should act imprudently were I to reply without reflection. I entreat your Imperial Majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, so that I may reply without offending the Word of God."

Fondly hoped the members of the Diet that this request for time was a mere prelude to a retraction. "He is but breaking his fall," said they; "the heretic of Wittemberg is about to play the part of penitent at Worms." Had they known a little more of Luther's character, they would have judged very differently. They would have known that this pause was the act of a man whose mind was thoroughly made up, and who, knowing that it was unalterably so, wished to make his avowal without haste, and in such a way that its full strength might appear, and that all might feel it to be irrevocable.

After a time of deliberation, the Diet granted Luther his request. At the same time to-morrow he must appear, and give to them his final answer.

Luther bowed, and instantly the herald was by his side to conduct him to his hotel. The morning broke that was destined to be the most eventful one in Luther's life, and also in the history of the Reformation, and it awoke to find Luther a prey to the most tormenting anxieties and gloomy forebodings. There were moments when Luther, with his exquisitely strung and highly emotional nature, gave way to these feelings, and we shall err greatly if we suppose that it was a great intrepidity of spirit, or an iron firmness of nerve, that bore him up and carried him through these scenes of awful mental trial. There were times when the sense of the presence of the Lord, that shed such a divine serenity and strength into his mind, was withdrawn, and then difficulties and dangers would rise around his path like so many giants, he would feel himself forsaken, and a horror of great darkness would fill his soul. And so did it befall him on the morning of this eventful day. The upholding power which had sustained him on his journey to Worms, seemed to be all gone, and Luther felt weak and feeble as a little child. It was not the thought that he would be condemned and led to the stake, that shook, so terribly, the Reformer on the morning of his second appearance before the Imperial Diet. It was something far more dreadful than to die, to die a thousand deaths. He felt the crisis had come, and he was powerless to meet it. He would falter at the Diet, he would wreck his cause, he would blast the hopes of future ages, and God's enemies would triumph. Let us draw near to his closet door and hear his groans and cries.

It is scarcely dawn yet; he has been a considerable while engaged in prayer. His supplications are drawing to a close; "My God," he cries, "My God, hearest Thou me not? Hidest Thou Thyself from me? Thou hast chosen me for this work, I know it well! ... Act then, oh God! ... Stand at my side for the sake of Thy well-beloved Jesus Christ, who is my defence, my shield, and my strong tower." After an interval of silence again we hear his voice, "Lord, where stayest Thou? ... Oh, my God! where art Thou? Come, come, I am ready .... I am ready to lay down my life for Thy truth....patient as a lamb, for it is the cause of justice, it is Thine ..... I will never separate myself from Thee, neither now nor through eternity ....And though the world should be filled with devils —though my body, which is still the work of Thy hands, should be slain — should be racked on the wheel ... cut in pieces ... reduced to ashes ... My soul is Thine ... Yes! Thy Word is my solemn assurance of it. My soul belongs to Thee! It shall abide for ever with Thee ... Amen! ... Oh, God, help me ... Amen!"

Thus, with strong wrestlings, Luther prayed. What a solemn moment! As we listen we feel as though we were nearing the precincts of the eternal throne and walking on holy ground. And did he plead and call in vain? Ah, no. Only that he might feel, and prove the better, God’s own great strength and power, had he been allowed to feel his own great weakness. "When we are weak then are we strong," says Paul. And so Luther found it, for as he prayed the veil of darkness around his soul seemed rent. A light broke in upon him, and as he rose from his knees he felt, by the calm now reigning in his soul, that he had already received an answer to his cries. At four o’clock the grand marshal and the herald presented themselves, and again, through crowded streets, conducted the Reformer to the town hall. But for hour after hour Luther was kept standing in the outer court, amid the hum and clamour of the multitude. Although this delay was well fitted to exhaust him, and to mentally detract and ruffle him, his tranquility never for a moment forsook him. Alone, in a sanctuary that the multitudes around him knew not of, he communed with his Lord. At last when night was falling and torches were being kindled, Luther was admitted into the hall. With perfect composure, and with an air of dignity, Luther stood before the Emperor, and with a calm steadfast eye gazed around at the assembled princes. Then the chancellor of the Bishop of Tréams, Dr. Eck, rose and demanded his answer. In a full, firm, but modest tone Luther began his reply. The discourse occupied in all two hours, and as he proceeded with his eloquent and fervid discourse, "to their amazement," says Wylie, "the princes found that a change had somehow come over the scene. Luther no longer stood at their bar, they had come suddenly to stand at his. The man who, two hours before, had seemed to them the accused was now transformed into the judge — a righteous and awful judge — who, unawed by the crowns they wore, and the armies they commanded, was entreating, admonishing, and reproving them with a severe but wholesome fidelity, and thundering forth their doom, should they prove disobedient, with a solemnity and authority before which they trembled. At the conclusion of this wonderful address, Dr. Eck again rose, and in peevish tones, and with a fretted air, said to Luther: "You have not answered the question put to you. We demand a direct and precise answer. Will you, or will you not retract?"

Calmly Luther replied: "Since your most Serene Majesty and your High Mightiness require from me a direct and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or to the councils, because it is clear as day they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgments, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience." And then, looking round on the assembly, he said, "Here I

stand; I can do no other. May God help me, Amen." As Luther ended his discourse in words which, in their courage and grandeur, are among the sublimest in history, a thrill, which after three centuries, communicates itself to us, passed through the august assembly, and a murmur of applause burst out in the Diet. Not, however, among its Papal partisans; they were silent in dismay. Well they knew that the monk's decisive "No," which had fallen like a thunder-clap amongst them, would sound forth from out that hall, and reverberate throughout the world, arousing christians everywhere to break the chains that had so long held their spirits captive, and to stand forth in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Rome had lost the battle, they knew it mattered not what they might do with Luther now. The fatal word had been spoken, the monk was the victor, to place him at the stake would only be to enhance his glory.

Filled with mortification, they bade Luther withdraw for a time, and during his absence the Diet deliberated. Could nothing be done? They saw a crisis had arisen, but what to do to meet it they could not tell. Again they would call him before them, and give him another opportunity of retracting. So he was called in and placed in front of the Emperor's throne, and asked to pronounce over again, now the third time, his "Yes" or "No." With simple dignity, his answer came —

"I have no other to give than that which I have already given."

"In the calmness of his voice," says the historian Wylie, "in the steadfastness of his eye, and in the lion-like lines of his rugged German face," the assembly read the stern indomitable resolve of his soul. The "No," could not be recalled. The die had been cast irrevocably.

"The Diet will meet again to-morrow, to hear the Emperor's decision," said Chancellor Eck, dismissing the members for the night.

Late as it was, crowds still lingered around, anxious to know what the end would be. "See, see," they cried, as Luther was led out between two Imperial officers, "there he is, in charge of the guard; are they taking you to prison?"

"No," replied Luther, "they are taking me to my hotel." So quietly they dispersed, and Worms settled down into silence. When Luther reached his lodgings, faint and weary after his long mental exertions, a servant entered, bearing a silver jug filled with Eimberk beer.

"My master," said the bearer, presenting it to the doctor, "invites you to refresh yourself with this draught."

"Who is the prince," said Luther, "who so generously remembers me?" It was the aged Duke Eric of Brunswick, one of the Papal members of the Diet.

Raising the vessel to his lips, Luther took a long draught, and then putting it down said, "As this day Duke Eric has remembered me, so may the Lord Jesus Christ remember him in the hour of his last struggle." Not long after, when the Duke lay dying, he whispered to some one near, "Read to me from the Bible." Opening the book his young page read, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because ye belong to me, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." And the Duke remembered Luther's words, and so he in his turn was refreshed, when heart and strength were failing, with a draught from the Well of Life, But we must pass on more hurriedly to tell of Luther's departure from Worms, for in spite of their earnest wishes to the

contrary, the Papal party dare not but let him depart peacefully. Well they knew that from the most distant cities men were watching, with their hands on their swords, to see what would happen to Luther, and to have violated his safe conduct, as they had done that of the martyr Huss, would have been but the signal for civil war throughout Germany. So on the morning of the 26th of April, Luther was allowed to depart, but scarcely had he gone, ere the Emperor fulminated his edict against him, placing him outside the pale of the law, and commanding all men, whenever the term of the safe conduct had expired, to withhold from him food and drink, succour and shelter, to apprehend him, and send him bound to the Emperor.

Meanwhile the Reformer was drawing near to his journey's end, the pines were getting fewer, and the hills were sinking into the plain. Very grateful to him after the stir and grandeur of Worms were the silent glades of the peaceful hamlets. He had reached a lonely spot near the Castle of Altenstein, when a troop of horsemen, wearing masks and completely armed, rushed suddenly upon him; one of them seized Luther, while others raised him to a saddle, and grasping his horse's reign plunged quickly with him into the forest of Thuringia. All day long the horsemen wandered hither and thither until the night began to fall, and then they began to ascend a mountain. A little before midnight they came under the walls of a castle that crowned its summit. Here, passing over the drawbridge, the cavalcade passed in, and the captive was led into an apartment where he was told he must make a sojourn of unknown length; he must lay aside his monk's dress, and attire himself in the costume of a knight, and be known only by the name of Knight George. Not until the morning broke did the Reformer know where he was. As the first beams of the morning began to shoot their golden shafts through the forest glades, Luther looked from his casement, and lo! around him lay the well-known scenes that adjoin Eisnach. Further away were the plains round Mora, and beyond these still further away rose the vast circle of hills that sweep along the horizon. Then with joyful heart Luther knew that he was in the hands of friends, and in the castle of the Wartberg. Yes, God had in this wonderful way allowed Luther to be snatched away and carried off as by a whirlwind, none knew whither, from all the danger that was closing in around him. And here, in the peaceful silence of the Wartberg, we must leave him; leave him to learn the lessons that God had to teach him, and for which He had brought him hither, and to begin and end his great work — the translation of the Bible.

5 Ulric Zwingle.

Ulric Zwingle. In the south-east of Switzerland is the long and narrow valley of the Tockenburg. Here, in a quaint little cottage standing on a green meadow, its walls formed of the stems of trees, its roof weighed down with stones to protect it from the mountain gusts, and with a limpid stream flowing before it, was born about three hundred years ago, Ulric Zwingle. His father, Huldric Zwingle, was greatly respected by his neighbours for his upright character as well as for his office, for he was the bailiff of the parish. He was a shepherd, and his summers were passed in company with his sons on the mountains tending his sheep.

Day by day as the verdure mounted higher on the mountain sides, the shepherds with their flocks continued to ascend. As the long days of midsummer came, the herds would browse on the very skirts of the eternal snows, where a luxuriant herbage was nourished by the burning July sun, and the waters of the melting ice. When the long night and the fading pasturage told them the winter was drawing nigh, they would descend by the same stages as they had mounted, and arrive at their home by the time the autumn winds were beginning to wail through the valleys. In such high-lying localities as the Tockenburg, little out-door work can be done as long as the winter, so wild and dreary, holds its reign on the mountain tops, and darkens the valleys with mists and tempests. Then the peasants, assembling by turns at each other's hearths, beguiled the long evenings with songs and musical instruments, or by brave tales of adventurous exploits. Many a story would be told of shepherds climbing the precipice to rescue some silly sheep which had strayed from the fold, or braving the furious tempest to save the life of a comrade lost in the snow.

Often, while the glare of the blazing firwood lit the room with its crimson glare, would young Ulric listen with kindling eye to such tales of valour, or to others and still more daring deeds, performed on the field of battle, where their fathers were wont to meet the spearmen of Austria, or the steel-clad warriors of Gaul.

Thus was the spirit of valour kept alive in the boy, and his brave, lofty, liberty-loving nature strengthened from year to year. But in that little cottage was another who was destined to take a part in the training of the future Reformer, and this was the boy's grandmother. Often would she call him to her, and making him sit beside her, would tell him of heroes of a far loftier type than those who had shed their blood for their country. She would tell him of those mighty men of valour taken by God from the plough, the sheep-fold, or the vineyard, who drove back the enemies of the Most High with great slaughter. She would tell him of those grand patriarchal shepherds of old — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — who fed their flocks on the hills of Palestine of old, with whom the Lord God deigned to converse. Or she would take him to the cradle of Bethlehem, to the cross of Calvary, or to the open sepulchre from whence the glorious Redeemer had walked forth unharmed from the darkness of the tomb. Then she would tell him of the first missionaries hurrying away to tell the great news of the Gospel, of their persecution, of their fortitude under terrible trials, and often of their cruel death. Thus, day by day, was the young Zwingle trained for his future great task.

Doubtless the grand aspects of nature around him contributed their share in the formation of his character. It could not be but that the sight of the dashing cataract, and the towering mountain peaks, the sound of the torrents' roar, and the echoing voice of the mighty thunder helped to elevate his soul, and fill it with sublime awe. With delight his father marked the amiable disposition and the truthful character of his son, for very early the fruits of the Spirit were manifested in him.

He saw, too, in him, manifestations of a lively genius, and soon perceived that he was fitted by nature for a higher occupation than that of tending sheep. When Ulric was eight years old it was found necessary to provide him with better instruction than could be found in his native valley. His father resolved to send him to his uncle, the Dean of Wesen, and place him under his superintendence. And so one day the father and son climbed the green summits of the Ammon: and from these heights, for the first time, young Ulric caught his first glimpse of the world, lying around his native valley of Tockenburg. The Dean loved the boy as though he had been his own. He sent him to the public school, but very soon the quick genius of the boy had enabled him to take in the slender stock of knowledge which the teacher had to impart, and it became necessary to send him to another school. His father and uncle decided to send him to Basle. And now Ulric left behind him the white peaks of the mountains, and passed on to the fertile district of the Rhine.

Young Zwingle was very fortunate in regard to the master under whose care he was placed at Basle. He was a man of gentle temper and a loving heart; under his care his pupils made great progress, and very soon Zwingle distanced his schoolmates and stood abreast of his teacher. Again it became necessary to change his school, and now it was determined to send him to the most distinguished school at that time in Switzerland, that of Berne; and now, bidding adieu to the carpet-like meadows and gentle hills of Basle, Zwingle recrossed the Jura and stood once more in sight of the mighty peaks of the Shrikhorn and the Eijer, and, towering above all, the pearly summits of the Jung Frau.

Lupullus, the master under whose care Zwingle was placed at Berne, was accomplished beyond the measure of his day. He had travelled over Italy, Greece, and Syria, and had mastered the long-forgotten tongues of these celebrated countries. And while feasting his eyes upon their exquisite scenery, he had drank in the spirit of the Roman and Greek poets and orators, and so was well able to communicate the fervour of ancient liberty and philosophy to his pupils. The genius of Zwingle rapidly expanded under such a master, and it was no wonder that in such sympathetic company, and with nature around him in its sublimest form, that his poetic vein was developed, and his style became marked for its classical and chastened beauty. He cultivated, too, his musical talents; and often, when weary with his intellectual pursuits, he would take his lute and soothe his tired mind with the beautiful airs of his native land, or wandering out along the banks of the Rhine, or climbing the mountains of the Black Forest, would awake the echoes with his tuneful horn. His frank, joyous, open nature soon drew around him a large circle of friends, among whom was Leo Juda, the most loved of all. He shared Zwingle's two master passions — the love of truth and the love of music, — and when the hours of labour were fulfilled, they would mingle the sounds of their instruments and voices in soul-stirring harmonies. A covenant of friendship was formed between them that lasted till death.

It was by this loved friend that Zwingle was led to the feet of Wittembach, — one who was destined to exert no small influence over his pupil's future life.

Thomas Wittembach was a native of Bienne, in Switzerland, and a disciple of Reuchlin, the famous Hebraist. But he had a higher wisdom than any he could glean from man, for he had drank deeply at the fountains of divine knowledge. From his lips Zwingle first heard and received the wondrous and (to him) astounding doctrine, that "The death of Christ is the only ransom for our souls."

It was not long after this that the door was opened which ushered him into the arena of his great labours. At this juncture, the Pastor of Glarus died, and the people of Glarus, who were mostly shepherds, having heard of the repute of the son of their neighbour, the Bailiff of Wildhaus, sent an invitation to Zwingle to become their pastor. He accepted the invitation, was ordained at Constance, and arrived at Glarus to begin his work. This took place in the year 1506, Zwingle being then in his twenty-second year.

"He became a priest," says Myconius, "and devoted himself with his whole soul to the search after divine truth, for he was well aware how much he must know to whom the flock of Christ is entrusted." But yet, at this time, he was a more ardent student of the ancient classics than of the Scriptures, and it was now that he founded a Latin school at Glarus. The youth of the best families of his parish were sent to him, and were won over by him to the cause of letters and noble aims; and soon, in place of the gross licentiousness of manner that had — united with a fiery martial spirit — distinguished the inhabitants of Glarus, they became noted for unwonted refinement of style. But now a pause came in his classical studies, for the men of Glarus with their cardinal-bishop at their head, marched out by order of their war-like Pope, Julius II., to encounter the French on the plains of Italy, and fight for "The Church." Ulric Zwingle was compelled to accompany them. And now it was that a ray of light found its way into his mind, and his eyes began to open to the abominations of the Papal system which, with its wars and intrigues, was bringing such misery and beggary upon his native land. Could such a system be of God?

Turning from the classic writers, whom he had so enthusiastically admired, but who were so powerless to help him now, the young priest placed himself before the Word of God, to see if he could discover there, God’s mind upon the matter. This study of the Word had a blessed effect upon Zwingle. From the gloomy wilderness of scholastic philosophy, with all its barrenness and confusion, he turned with delight to the smiling fertile fields of Scripture, and there found food for his soul.

"The Scriptures," said he in a burst of joy, "come from God, not from man, and even that God which enlightens will give thee to understand that the speech comes from God. The Word of God cannot fail; it is bright, it teaches itself, it discloses itself, it illumines the soul with all salvation and grace, comforts it in God, humbles it, so that it loses and even forfeits itself, and embraces God in itself." And thus, like our own Wycliffe, Zwingle placed himself like a little child before the Bible, and submitted himself to its teachings; and so, while all was densely dark around him, the light of truth broke upon him direct from heaven.

While he was thus occupied in searching the Scriptures, and communicating its truths to those around him, he was invited (1516) to be preacher in the Convent of Einsiedeln. Its Abbot was a gentleman of rank, who cared nothing for the superstitious usages of the Church, and who in his heart had no affection for the mass, and who had dropped the celebration of it. The Convent of Einsiedeln was beautifully situated. It stood on an eminence close to the lovely town of Zurich.

Near by were the noble expanses of water forming the lakes of Zurich and Wallenstadt. Their gently swelling banks were clothed here with smiling vineyards, and there with sombre pine forests. It looked down upon peaceful hamlets, where white villas enlivened the scene, while far away on the horizon the gleaming glaciers blended with the golden clouds. To this lovely spot Zwingle retired but not to bury himself. In this convent was a shrine, which was the most famous in all Switzerland, for it boasted an image of the Virgin, which had the alleged power of working miracles. At all seasons of the year parties of pilgrims could be seen toiling up the mountain side, carrying in one hand tapers to be burned in honour of "Our Lady of Einsiedeln," and in the other money to buy the pardons which were sold at her shrine. Deeply moved was Zwingle by the sight, and he saw now why God had brought him hither. With a heart bleeding with pity for them he told them that all in vain had they come this long journey, that they were no nearer God on the mountain-top than in the valley; that they were on no holier ground before the shrine than in their own closets; that they were spending "their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not." But Zwingle was not satisfied with reproving them for their superstition. He preached to them the Gospel; he spoke to them of Christ and Him crucified; he told them of the loving tender One, who had died for them, and who was waiting even now with yearning heart to receive them. One who wanted not their fastings, scourgings, and vigils, but who delighted in a "contrite heart." As "cold water" to one who is athirst seemed the preacher's words to many weary souls. Not in vain had been their toilsome journey. Such "good news" as this was well worth coming for and returning with a well of peace in their hearts they published abroad the strange and welcome tidings.

Ere long the well-worn pilgrim track began to be disused, the shrine to which it led forsaken, and so it came about that the chief stronghold of darkness in all Switzerland was converted into a centre of God's own light. In 1519 Zwingle was chosen as preacher in the Cathedral of Zurich. At this time Zurich was the chief town of the Swiss Confederation, and every word spoken from the pulpit here had double power. Well did Zwingle know this, and he determined with the help of God, that His truth should be sounded out from this place, and resound to all the cantons; and faithfully and boldly did this intrepid man rebuke superstition, and preach the Gospel.

Soon the repute of his wondrous eloquence spread far and wide, and multitudes were drawn to attend his sermons.

Beneath him, crowding every bench, sat men of all ranks and conditions, and as the calm face of the ocean reflects the sky that is hung above it, so did the upturned faces respond to the varied emotions of the fervid preacher. With what delight did he tell out in simple, clear, yet earnest words, the story of a "free salvation" — a gift sent down from God to be received without money and without price! How thrillingly tender grew his tones as with winning words of love, he beseeched men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God!

What strange, what wondrous tidings were these for the poor priest-ridden Swiss! Bending forward with intense eagerness, the audience drank in his words, and men were heard to say one to the other as they retired from the cathedral, "Glory be to God! This man is a preacher of the truth. He will be our Moses to lead us out of Egyptian darkness." And so a fountain of new life seemed opened at the heart of Switzerland. Earnest students everywhere were poring over the pages of Scripture, and earnestly calling upon God for light to enable them to understand its meaning. And

God heard their prayers: for thousands had their eyes opened to see Christ the Saviour as the all-perfect sacrifice for sin, and in their joy, unable to keep silence, they told out to others around the blessed truth which they had learned.

We have seen in another place how, at this very time, Rome had prepared a great market for the sale of indulgences or pardons for sin. And we have also seen how, while in Germany, she was sending out her hawkers, stamping her indulgence tickets, and fixing the price of sins, God was sending out His evangelists to preach the true Gospel of forgiveness without money and without price. And so we will find that in the same wonderful way God was preparing hearts in Switzerland to resist the tide of evil that was about to sweep over the land. The sale of indulgences in Switzerland was given into the care of one Barnardin Samson, guardian of the convent at Milan. "He discharged his mission in Helvetia," says Gerdesius, "with not less impudence than Tetzel in Germany." Forcing his way through the snows of the St. Gothard, and descending along the stream of the Reuss, he and his band arrived in the canton of Uri. A few days sufficed to fleece these simple mountaineers, and the greedy troop passed on to Schwitz. As soon as Zwingle heard of their approach he set out to confront them. The result was Samson was obliged to decamp, and from Schwitz he went on to Zug. Here he set up his stage and displayed his wares, while crowds from the little towns on the lake came forth eager to purchase the Pope’s pardons.

Samson continued his journey, filling his coffers as he went, until he approached Zurich. And now he heard that Zwingle was thundering against him from his pulpit in the cathedral. Notwithstanding this he pressed on, thinking, doubtless, that he would soon silence the preacher. As he approached, Zwingle waxed the bolder and plainer. "God only can forgive," said the preacher, with a solemnity that awed his hearers, "none on earth can pardon sin. You may buy this man’s papers, but be assured you are not absolved. He who sells indulgences is a sorcerer like Simon Magus; a false prophet like Balaam; an ambassador of the king of the bottomless pit, for to these dismal portals rather than to the gates of paradise do indulgences lead." When Samson reached Zurich he found its gates closed against him. Not in vain had the Gospel of the grace of God been ringing in the ears of the people. And with great thankfulness Zwingle saw Samson ignominiously sent away without selling a single pardon. Not long after this another terrible visitant appeared in Switzerland, and was used by God to help on His own work. This was no less than the plague, or "Great Death." It broke out in the August of that same year, (1519), and spread from valley to valley with terrible rapidity, inflicting frightful ravages everywhere. What a mockery to the poor dying creatures seemed now the pardons which a few months back they were so eager to purchase! Soon it reached Zurich, and Zwingle, who had gone to the baths of Pfeffers to recruit his exhausted health, hastened back to his flock. Day and night he spent almost all his time at the bedsides of the sick, whispering words of life-giving comfort to many an agonised sinner’s heart, and sustaining his brethren in the faith with holy cheer, while the cold waters of death were closing around them. At last he, too, was stricken down, and lay at the very point of death. While he was utterly prostrate, and with all hope of life taken away, he breathed forth this little hymn, so simple, and yet so full of faith and gentle resignation: —

"Lo, at the doorI hear Death’s knock! Shield me, O Lord,My Strength and Rock.The hand once nailed Upon the tree,Jesus, uplift,And shelter me.Willest Thou, then,Death, conquer me In my noon-day?So let it be!Oh! may I die,Since I am Thine;Thy house is madeFor faith like mine." And so we see him at the very point of death firmly trusting in the Gospel he had preached. God

brought him to this awful test, and then, in His mercy restored him to health, and sent him forth, chastened, solemnised, and purified, to preach again this Gospel which he had found enough to sustain his own soul at the very portals of the grave.

It was a solemn moment when Zwingle and the citizens of Zurich again assembled at the Cathedral. They were only just emerging from under the awful shadow of the Great Death." Their beloved pastor had been given back to them from the very portals of the grave; most of them were mourning the absence of some dear one who had left a vacant chair at their fireside, and solemn deathbed scenes were still fresh before their minds. In the presence of all this how bright had shone this new gospel, this reformed faith, brought to them by their pastor! Chastened and subdued they listened as they had never listened on any other occasion, to words spoken by Zwingle with an earnestness never heard before. And now the Zurichers needed no argument to convince them that his words were true. They had seen how the old popish religion, with all its pomp and ceremonies, had failed them utterly at the moment of their souls' direct need. What could it do to sustain their souls at the point of death? Nothing. When the awful gloom of its shadow was upon them, lo! its lights had gone out, and they were left in utter darkness.

How different from this had they found the warm life-giving love of the Saviour. A love which, once received, penetrated the whole being, quickening, purifying, comforting, filling the conscience with peace, and the heart with joy. The Cathedral, although a large building was too small for the crowds that flocked to it, and Zwingle laboured indefatigably to diffuse the life-giving doctrines for which their souls were craving, and God so caused his work to thrive that in 1519, in a letter to Myconius, Zwingle says that "at Zurich upward of 2,000 souls had been so nourished and strengthened by the milk of the truth, that they could now bear stronger food, and anxiously longed for it."

It was impossible that a movement like this could be confined within the walls of Zurich; and so we find that the light diffused from it soon began to radiate the mountain tops of Eastern Switzerland. The precious seeds of truth which were being wafted far and wide, were destined to take root and germinate, and many of the Helvetine cantons were at no distant day released from the debasing yoke of papal tyranny. With intense interest did Zwingle perceive the rays of divine truth penetrating into his dear native valley of Tockenburg. To many there he was bound by the sweet associations of his youth, and by ties of blood and friendship.

Hearing the villagers were about to assemble to decide whether they should receive the new doctrine or continue in the faith of their fathers, he addressed a letter to them in which he said, "I praise and thank God who has called me to the preaching of His Gospel, that He has led you, who are so dear to my heart, out of the Egyptian darkness of false human doctrines, to the wondrous light of His Word." Then he goes on to earnestly exhort them to add to their profession of the Gospel, the practice of every gospel virtue, and thus bring glory to it and profit to their own souls. "This letter," says Wylie, "decided the victory of Protestantism in the Reformer's native valley. The Council and the community in the same summer, 1524, made known their will to the clergy, "That the Word of God be preached with one accord." In 1525, Zwingle commenced his work of protesting against monastic establishments. He showed that these institutions were alike contrary to the laws of nature, the affections of the heart, and the precepts of Scripture. "To snore behind the walls of a cloister," said Zwingle in one of his sermons, "is not to worship God. But to visit

widows, and orphans, that is to say, the destitute in their afflictions, and keep one's self unspotted from the world, this is to worship God."

"As melts the ice on the summit of the Alps when spring sets in," says Wylie, "so did the monastic asceticism of Zurich give way before the warm breath of evangelism." In June 17, 1523, the Council of Zurich gave permission to the nuns to return to society, and numbers quitted the cloisters for ever. The next year a resolution was passed to reform the monasteries. Fearing that the monks would offer resistance to the dissolution of their orders, the Council wisely decided to take them by surprise. One afternoon the members of the Council, accompanied by delegates from the various guilds, the three city ministers, and followed by the town militia, presented themselves in the Augustine monastery. Summoning the inmates into their presence, they told them that by command of their Council their Order was dissolved. The monks, taken by surprise, and awed by the sight of the armed men, yielded at once and so, without a struggle, the victory was gained.

Soon after this, Zwingle publicly married a lady of great beauty and noble character, Anna Reinhard, and this marked the completion of another stage in the Swiss Reformation, for by so doing he set at nought the unscriptural law forbidding ministers to marry. Many others took advantage of the change in the law as to marriage, among others, Leo Juda, Zwingle's friend. And thus step by step, and very peacefully, the movement advanced.

Space will not allow us to follow Zwingle much further, or we could tell how he attacked the worshipping of saints and images, and how the time came when all the useless images were removed from their churches, and men came together to worship God without any of these idolatrous adjuncts. Still further than this did God's truth, through His servant Zwingle, advance. This led to the doing away of the popish mass, and to the people partaking of the Lord's Supper, in the simple way laid down in the Scriptures. This was first done on the Thursday of Easter week. The gorgeous altar was replaced by a wooden table covered with a white cloth, on which were placed two wooden plates of bread, and wooden goblets filled with wine. The words in 1 Corinthians 11:20-29 were read, prayers were offered, a hymn was sung, a short address delivered, and then the bread and wine was partaken of by those in communion.

"This celebration of the Lord's Supper," says Christoffel, "was accompanied with blessed results. An altogether new love to God and the brethren sprang up, and the words of Christ received spirit and life. The brotherly love of the first centuries of Christianity returned to the Church with the Gospel." "Peace has her habitation in our town," wrote Zwingle, "no quarrel, no hypocrisy, no envy, no strife. Whence can such union come but from the Lord, and His doctrine, which fills us with the fruits of peace and piety."

It would have been well if Zwingle had been content to serve his Lord by preaching the true Gospel and denouncing the errors of the papacy. But, alas, he was not. He forgot, or perhaps never knew, that our citizenship is not an earthly one, and that as a Christian it was no work of his to endeavour to set right that which he found so wrong governmentally. He did not see why the Protestant states should not resist, to the extent of the power which God had given them, the treacherous plots which were being hatched on all sides for the destruction of their faith and liberty. And so the Reformer who ought to have been a son of peace, took up the sword to fight for the maintenance of the truth which God had revealed through his word to him.

Thus it came about that Zwingle died on the battlefield. On the 9th. of Oct. 1531, the five Cantons who disapproved of the Reformation declared war against Zwingle and his adherents, and on the 10th. the Zurichers received the alarming intelligence that a large army were marching towards them. About 700 men went out to meet them, Zwingle going with them as army chaplain. But although they fought we are told, with the bravery of lions, yet they did not succeed. They became entangled in a bog and were surrounded, and nearly all cut to pieces by the infuriated papists.

Although Zwingle was on the battle field he did not use the sword, but restricted himself to his duties as chaplain. While stooping down to whisper words of comfort to a dying man he was struck with a stone upon the head, and fell to the earth. Recovering a little he rose, but a spear dealt him a fatal stab and he lay bleeding to death upon the ground. "What matters it," he was heard to murmur, "they may kill the body but they cannot kill the soul." These were his last words. As he lay on the ground, his hands clasped and his lips moving in prayer, some of the camp followers who were prowling around came upon him. Seeing that he was dying, they said, "Do you wish for a priest to confess yourself?" Zwingle was past speaking, but he shook his head. "At least" they said, "call in your heart upon the mother of God." Again he shook his head. Curious to see who this obstinate heretic could be, one of them raised his head and turned it to the light. "It is Zwingle!" he exclaimed, letting the head fall. Now it happened that an African named Bockinger from Unterwalden, one against whom Zwingle had often had occasion to denounce for holding and teaching error, was near. "Zwingle!" cried he, "is it that vile heretic and traitor Zwingle?" and raising his sword, he struck him on the throat. Yielding to this last blow Zwingle died.

6 William Farel.

William Farel. As we have seen in the foregoing chapters, during the dark night that shrouded Europe for so many centuries, a few lights appeared at intervals, raised up of God, to minister a little solace to the few faithful ones who wearily waited for the dawn. We have seen how Wickliffe, in the middle of the fourteenth century, appeared in England, and endeavoured, by spreading divine truth, to liberate his groaning brethren from the spiritual bondage of iniquitous Rome. We have seen, too, how, nearly half a century later, Huss and Jerome arose to do a similar work in Bohemia. A century rolled away, and then with the appearance of Luther came the partial emancipation of the church in many countries from the thraldom of popery. In the account we are about to give of God’s honoured and devoted servant, William Farel, we must turn our gaze for a short space to another scene of action. A new nationality has come to mingle in the great drama of the Reformation. France held, in the opening of the sixteenth century, a very foremost place among Christian countries. On its south and south-east was Switzerland, on its east was Germany, and on the north, parted only by a silver streak of sea, was England. At all these gates, as it were, the Reformation was waiting for admission. In the year 1510, we find the throne of France occupied by Louis XII. He had just assembled a parliament at Tours to resolve for him the question as to the lawfulness of going to war with the Pope — one who violated treaties, and sustained his injustice by levying soldiers and fighting battles. The answer of that assembly marked the moral decadence of the Papacy. "It is lawful not only for the king to act defensively, but offensively against such a man." Thus fortified by the advice of his parliament, Louis commanded his armies to march against the Pope. This is mentioned here as a symptom of the near approach of the new times.

"The river," says one, "which waters great kingdoms and bears on its bosom the commerce of many nations, may be traced up to some solitary fountain among the far-off hills. So was it with that river of the water of Life that was now to go forth to refresh France." It had its rise in a single soul. In the year 1510, a stranger visiting Paris would hardly have failed to mark an old man, small in stature and simple in manners, going the round of all the churches, and prostrating himself devoutly before the images and shrines. This same old man, steeped as he was at this time in darkness and superstition, was destined to be, on a small scale, to the realm of France what Wickliffe had been to England. His name was Jacques Lefevre. He was born at Etaples, a village of Picardy, and although now verging on seventy, was hale and hearty.

Wonderfully in this old man was the promise fulfilled, "At evening time it shall be light," for it pleased the Lord that he should not depart, until the eclipse of superstition had wholly passed from his soul. As he was, as far as we know, the first man to emerge from the darkness of his native land, and as he was the instrument in God’s hand for the conversion of the subject of our narrative, we think he is worthy of some share of our attention; we will describe him, then, in a few words. Lefevre was naturally endowed with a capacious intellect. There was scarcely a field of study open in those ages which he had not entered, and made in them great proficiency. His thirst for knowledge had led him to visit Asia and Africa, there to view all that the fifteenth century had to

show. Returning to Paris he was, Erasmus tells us, the first luminary in the constellation of lights that at that time adorned the Theological Hall of the great Paris University. Yet with all his learning he was so meek, so amiable, so candid, so full of loving-kindness that it was impossible to know him and not to love him. But even this man had his enemies, and they tried to insinuate that the man who had visited so many countries could hardly have escaped some taint of heresy. So they began watching him, but could find no fault with him; never was he absent from mass, and none remained so long on his knees before the saints as Lefevre. Nay, so superstitious was he, that this man, the most distinguished professor of the Sorbonne, might often be seen decking the statue of Mary.

Lefevre at this time formed the idea of collecting and rewriting the lives of the saints, and this, through God’s mercy, was the means used to open his eyes to the truth. When he had already made some progress, it struck him that he might find in the Bible materials that would be useful in his work. "Unwittingly," says Wylie, "he opened the portals of a new world. Saints of another sort than those that had till that moment engaged his attention, now stood before him — the virtue of the real saints dimmed in his eyes the glories of the legendary ones. The pen dropped from his hand and he could proceed no further." As he continued to search the Word of God, Lefevre really found that the Church of the Bible was a totally different thing from the Church of Rome; the wondrous plan of salvation, the plan of justification by faith alone, came to him like a sudden revelation. He says in one of his works which is still extant, "It is God who gives us, by faith, that righteousness which by grace alone justifies to eternal life."

These words of Lefevre, surely Spirit-born, assure us that the dawn had broken on poor benighted France. It was a single ray, perhaps, but it had come direct from heaven, and was the harbinger of the flood of glorious light that was about to burst forth. As the light of the truth of God which had entered Lefevre’s soul banished for ever from his mind the gloom of monasticism, so he knew well that this light had not been given him to hide under a bushel; and he felt that at once he must, by God’s grace, communicate it to his pupils around him.

Now of all places the Sorbonne was the most dangerous in which to proclaim a new doctrine. Centuries had rolled away, and none but the school-men had spoken there; and daring indeed would be the man who could proclaim in this, the citadel of scholasticism, a doctrine which if received would explode that which had been heard with reverence for ages.

Lefevre well knew the risks to which he was exposing himself; nevertheless, he went on to spread around the joyful tidings of salvation by grace. As may well be supposed, a great commotion was raised around the chair from whence proceeded sounds so new and strange. With varied feeling did the pupils of the venerable man listen to the new teaching. The faces of some were lighted up with joy, and they looked like men to whose eyes some glorious vista had suddenly opened, or as though they had unexpectedly discovered something for which they had long but vainly sought. On the faces of others, astonishment and anger were plainly written; and their knitted brows and flashing eyes plainly bespoke the anger of their souls. The agitation in the class-room soon communicated itself to the university, and on every side were heard reasonings and objections. Some were frivolous, some were filled with blind prejudice and hatred of the doctrine; but some were honest, and in real earnest, and these Lefevre made it his business to answer, showing them that his doctrine did not give licence to sin, and that it was not new, but as old as the Bible.

Mutterings of the distant storm were heard, but it had not burst; and meanwhile Lefevre, within whose soul the light burnt clearer day by day, went quietly on with his work.

It is well to mark that these events took place in 1512. Not until five years after this had the name of Luther been heard of in France: the monk of Wittemberg had not yet nailed his Theses to the doors of the Schlosskirk. From this we see most manifestly that the Reformation, springing up at this time in France, did not come from Germany. Before Luther's hammer, as one has said, was heard ringing out the knell of the old times in Wittemberg, Lefevre was proclaiming beneath the vaulted roof of the Sorbonne the advent of a new and brighter age. The Word of God, like God Himself, is light; and from that source alone came the welcome day, which after a long dark night broke upon the nations in the morning of the sixteenth century.

Among the crowd of pupils who gathered around the chair of the aged Lefevre, there was one who is now especially to claim our attention. Between this scholar and the master existed an attachment of no ordinary kind. None of all the crowd so hung upon his lips as did this youth; nor was their one on whom the eyes of that master rested with so kindly a light. This youth was William Farel. He was born among the Alps of Dauphine, at Gap near Grenoble, in the year 1489. His parents, measured by the standard of that age, were eminently pious. Every morning as the sun kindled into glory the white mountains around his dwelling, the family were assembled to count their beads; and as evening descended, crimsoning and then paling the beautiful Alps, the customary hymn ever ascended to the Virgin. As Farel himself tells us, his parents believed all that the priests told them, and he in his turn believed everything that his parents told him. Until the age of twenty he grew up with all the grandeur of nature around him, but with the darkness of superstition in his soul. A historian speaking truthfully of him says, "It would have been as hard for him to believe at this time that Rome, with her pope, and her holy priests, with her rites and ceremonies, were the mere creation of superstition, as to believe that the great mountains around him, with their snows and their pine forests, were a mere illusion, a painting on the sky, which but mocked the senses, and would one day dissolve like an unsubstantial, though gorgeous exhalation. 'I would gnash my teeth, like a furious wolf,' said he, speaking of his blind devotion to Rome at this period of his life, 'when I heard anyone speaking against the Pope.'"

It was his father's desire that he should devote himself to arms, but young Farel longed to be a scholar. Shut up though he was in the seclusion of his native valley, the fame of the Sorbonne had reached him, and he longed to drink his fill at this renowned well of learning. In 1510 he presented himself at the gates of the university, and was enrolled among its students.

It was here that young Farel became acquainted with Lefevre, and before long they were bound together in the bonds of closest friendship. Outwardly there were few points, one would have thought, to bring them together. One was old, the other young; one deeply learned, the other a mere tyro in knowledge; one enthusiastic, the other shrinking and timid; but beneath these external differences there beat two kindred souls. Both alike were noble, unselfish, and devout; and although living in an age rife with scepticism, their devotion was ardent and sincere. Often might the aged master and the young disciple be seen hand in hand visiting the shrines, and kneeling together before the same images. But the time came when the spiritual dawn broke upon the soul of Lefevre and he now began to let fall at times words that told of the new light he had gleaned from the Bible.

"Salvation is of grace," would he say to his pupils, "the innocent One is condemned, and the criminal is acquitted; it is the cross of Christ alone that openeth the gates of heaven, and shutteth the gates of hell." With consternation Farel listened to these words. What did they mean? to what would they lead? If this were true, what use then were his visits to saints, his kneeling at altars? Had his prayers been uttered to the air? All the teachings of his youth, the sanctities of home, the beliefs learned at his parents' feet, rose up before his mind and appeared to frown upon him. Tossed with doubt and uncertainty, he longed to be back in his quiet home, where such thoughts might never torture him more. A crisis had come in the history of Farel; he must either press forward into the light with his beloved master, and become what the world called a heretic, or plunge back again into deeper darkness — but he felt he could never be the same as before.

Peace had left him; "the sorrows of death" and "the pains of hell" had taken hold of him and he felt he could not save himself. It was just when he was near despair that the words of Lefevre were spoken again in his hearing. "The cross of Christ alone opens the gates of heaven." "This is the only salvation for me," said Farel, "if I am to be saved it must be of grace, without money and without price." And so he immediately pressed into the portals that were opened to him by the blood of Jesus. The tempest was at an end, and he was now in a quiet haven. "All things," he tells us, "appear to me in a new light, Scripture is cleared up. Instead of the murderous heart of a ravening wolf," he says, "I came back quietly, like a meek and harmless lamb, having my heart entirely drawn from the pope, and given to Jesus Christ." With soul at peace within, and with heart welling over with joy, Farel, now fully emancipated from the yoke of the Pope, went forth with his Bible in his hand to preach in the temples. Like Paul before him, he allowed all the zeal of his nature to be used for the God who had saved him; and he was now as bold and uncompromising in his advocacy of the Gospel, as before he had been in behalf of popery.

"Young and resolute," says Felice, "he caused the public places to resound with his voice of thunder." But William Farel was not content with the mere preaching of the Gospel: he was studying the Word deeply for himself. There he found out how Christians in a great measure had wandered from the clear light in which God had placed them, at the time of the early formation of the Church, and how, by allowing themselves to become mixed up with the world, they had passed into such darkness that now they scarcely knew the difference between good and evil. "Grievous wolves," said the Apostle "shall come in amongst you, not sparing the flock." How true these words were, was manifest to Farel as he cast his eyes around. God's beautiful flock of sheep! How was it scattered! Instead of feeding in the green pastures and beside the still waters of God's own Truth, they were wandering away on the dark and dreary mountains of ignorance and superstition, being fleeced by the hand of cruel hirelings. His heart yearned over those poor deceived ones; deceived by those, too, who professed to be their teachers sent from God. "Listen" he cried in his impassioned manner, as he stood amongst them, St Paul spake these words: Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' This sentence is worthy to be written in all our hearts, being in truth spoken by God Himself, through the mouth of the holy Apostle. And this good personage was thus led to speak on account of the evil ways of heretics, who dared to preach what they could not prove by the holy Scriptures, who dared to set up their own reasons and opinions in the face of the fact that the things they taught were not to be found in the Scriptures at all. And in truth, all the ruin and down fall of men has always come from the same source — namely, that they persisted in adding

to, or taking from the Word of God.

"You see that in the time of the holy Apostles, these teachers were not contented with the grace and truth which were fully and plentifully preached by Paul. They began to hinder the truth, and to hinder God's blessing — not by disapproving of the preaching of Jesus Christ, they approved of it, in fact, but they persisted in adding to that which God had commanded. They added to it those things which God had never commanded to believers in Jesus, but to the nation of Israel. It is true, these false teachers had some show of having the right on their side, because it was a fact that God did speak to Moses, and what Moses commanded was really by the order of God, and the Apostles themselves had observed those ceremonies. But the holy Apostle Paul, and God who spoke by His mouth, would give no ear to such excuses; he would not admit that Moses, to whom the Gentiles had never been given in charge, was to be ranked with Jesus Christ, nor that Moses was to be added on to Christ to give salvation and life. And not only does Paul say that the ordinances of Moses were unnecessary for believers; he goes much further, and says on the contrary, that all who teach such things are to be detested, and held as accursed — that they are miserable troublers of the church, and that any such ought to be entirely disowned; even should such a teacher prove to be an angel from heaven — such an angel should be held as accursed by God; for nothing is to be added, nothing to be diminished from that which God has said. His holy and perfect Word is to be kept pure and entire.

"The Apostle Paul says, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that what he preached was to be proved by the Scriptures, and he says also, that all Scripture is written by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

"If all could receive this pure truth, and give to Christ that honour which belongs to Him, and if the old fathers had, in every single matter, kept to that rule, there would have been no need now to write against evil doctrine, and to have such trouble to weed out of the hearts of men the things which have taken such deep root in them. On the contrary, all that is not contained in the holy Scriptures, all that has no foundation there, would have been held in abhorrence; and instead of writing as they did, with such affection, about the sign of the cross, and such like things, the old fathers would have opposed them, as not contained in the Bible; they would have firmly resisted every thing of the sort "....." We ought not to be," he went on to say, "as reeds shaken by the wind, but firmly established in Christ, knowing for certain that we have His Word for every thing, and thus the gates of hell shall never prevail against us.

"This is what God requires of all Christians, and admits nothing less in any who are members of the Body of Christ, sheep of the Good Shepherd. And he who does not know what to believe, nor whom he is to believe, who hears no difference between the voice of Jesus and other voices, who cannot distinguish between the voice of the Shepherd and the voice of the stranger, he does not belong to Jesus Christ as yet, he is not in Christ at all. It is no use to say, "I have always been used to believe and teach so and so," it is no use to say, "Our pastors and teachers teach us this and that," for custom without truth is useless. God never has approved, and never will approve of any thing but the truth, and He will judge us by that. The pastor and teacher must keep to the Word of God only, and feed the flock with that, otherwise he is a blind leader of the blind, and altogether will fall into the ditch.

"And now that things are come to this, that every thing is poison, except that heavenly bread, the Word of God, it is quite certain that whosoever attempts to feed upon other food than that, will be poisoned and die. The whole of popery falls at once, the moment we admit that the Word of God alone is the rule to guide us. Where then, is the authority for the mass, and such like services? Where is the authority for the consecration of altars and of churches? Where is the authority for using the sign of the cross? God has not commanded any of these things. And if we once admit that it is lawful for a man in any one thing, to command and order that which God has not commanded, where are we to stop? How are we to have any rule, if once we step beyond the plain Word of God? O that it might please God in His grace to open the eyes of men, that they may seek no longer to make excuses for any thing which is not to be found in the holy Scriptures; that they might believe, do, hold, and follow nothing that is not found there."

You may be sure that by such plain speaking as this, Farel made bitter enemies of the doctors and priests of the Sorbonne; yet there were some, who, taking his advice, went to the Scripture and found there a loving Saviour, and He who could save them without the help of saints, penances or fastings. Among these was Princess Margaret of Valois. She was the beloved sister of the King, Francis I of France, a woman of a sweet and gentle disposition. Another who received the truth was Briçonnet Bishop of Meaux.

Great hopes were raised in the hearts of Lefevre and Farel by the conversion of these so-called great ones of the earth. All Paris, they hoped, would soon be turned to the truth. But not many mighty, not many noble, are called. And after the Gospel had been proclaimed for two years in Paris, the University after a long consultation on the subject of the Reformation, decreed that all Luther’s books should be publicly burned in the streets. And so the great city refused to receive Christ, preferring rather to be subject to the Pope. With a sad heart William Farel turned his steps from the city where they refused to hear the sweet sounds of a free salvation, and we next find him at Meaux, preaching everywhere, in the streets, the market places or wherever a place could be found. The people crowded to hear him, and as the thirsty earth gladly drinks in the refreshing shower, so did many hearts drink in the life-giving words.

Come with me to the edge of this crowd, consisting chiefly of labouring people. They have just left for a little space their toilsome labours in the fields, the workshops and vineyards. Old age is there and youth, mothers with their babies in their arms, fathers with care worn brows, and backs bent with toil and labour. See how one and all listen with eager attention, while as the words of the preacher tell home, great drops fall from the eyes down many a rugged grief worn cheek.

Listen to his words. "What, then, are those treasures of the goodness of God, which are given to us in the death of Jesus Christ? Firstly, if we diligently consider what the death of Jesus was, we shall there see in truth how all the treasures of goodness and the grace of God our Father are magnified, and glorified, and exalted in that act of mercy and love. Is not that sight an invitation to wretched sinners to come to Him, who has so loved them, that he did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Does it not assure us that sinners are welcome to the Son of God, who so loved them that He gave his life, His body, and His blood, to be a perfect sacrifice, a complete ransom, for all who believe in Him; for he it is, Who calls to all those who labour and are heavy laden, saying He will give them rest. He it is Who spoke in His love to the wretched thief, giving him a place in heaven, saying to him, Verily I say unto thee this day shall thou be with me in

Paradise. He it is, Who so loved and pitied His enemies, who hated Him unto death, that He prayed, Father forgive them for they know not what they do. And lastly, if we behold diligently, that death of Christ, there we see how the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and why? Because that hidden place into which none might enter, was now revealed, and thrown open by the death of Jesus, so that all who believe have access and free entrance there — may go in boldly, in full assurance of faith — may come before the throne of grace, and find mercy and grace to help in every time of need. For He who is the Son of God, the power and wisdom of God, He who is God Himself, so humbled Himself as to die for us. He the holy and the righteous one, for the ungodly and for sinners offering up Himself that we might be made pure and clean. And it is the will of the Father, that those whom He thus saves by the precious gift of His Son, should be certain of their salvation and life, and should know that they are completely washed and cleansed from all their sins. And the Father, for the love of Himself, and not for the love of us, nor of our doings, our deservings, and our righteousness's (which are simply abominations —) — He, the Father, saves us, and gives us eternal life. Yes, it is for the love of Himself, that His counsels may stand, to quicken and to serve those whom he has ordained to life, without any respect to persons. He sees nothing to cause His love in the sinner whom he saves — nothing in his works, nor his race, nor in his country, nor in any thing belonging to him. He pardons all his sins and transgressions on account of the work of His beloved Son. He gives the precious gift of His Son to the wretched prisoner of the devil, of sin, of hell, and of damnation. He gives him His Son because of his wicked lost condition; a sinner born in sin, and the child of wrath — a sinner in whom sin and rebellion against God live and reign. The gracious God, the Father of mercy, takes such as this to make him His child of adoption, to be His heir, joints-heir with Christ! He makes him a new creature." In words such as these, Farel set forth with wonderful power the blessed truth of a full, free, and present salvation for all those who will receive it, through the saving blood of a crucified Saviour.

Strange, blessed news, for the poor priest-ridden inhabitants of Meaux, and numbers gladly opened their hearts to the sweet tidings of divine grace and love; and before long a little meeting was formed, and often when the toils of the day were over, these dear saved souls came together that they might search the Scriptures, converse of the wondrous, blessed liberty into which they had been brought, and sing and pray one with the other. Meek in spirit, loving in heart, and holy in life, they presented a blessed testimony to all around them. But not long did these happy days last; bitter persecutions were commenced against them, Briçonnet who had done so much for the spread of the Truth, recanted in the face of the stake, and the little flock had the unspeakable honour of furnishing martyrs, "whose blazing stakes," as an eloquent writer has said, "were to shine like beacons in the darkness of France, and afford glorious proof to their countrymen that a power had entered the world which, braving the terror of scaffolds and surmounting the force of armies, would finally triumph over all opposition." But we must leave this devoted little company, to follow the footsteps of Farel, who, now that he was chased from France, turned his gaze towards Switzerland. He arrived there in 1526, took up his abode in Aigle, and there commenced his Gospel campaign, being determined to conquer to Christ, with God's help, the brave and hardy people dwelling amid the glaciers of the eternal mountains, as well as those who sunned themselves in the happy valleys and by smiling lakes.

Darkness, almost like that of Egypt, over-hung this place, but Farel carried with him a light that was able to dispel it. And how do you think he began? By brilliant sermons and thrilling discourses? No, he knew if he began in that way most probably he would not have been allowed to speak at all, so he took the name of Ursin, and commenced to keep a school. The little children of the village flocked to it, and he began to teach the little ones about Jesus; so tenderly and winningly did he speak, that many of the little ones received the Saviour as their own. Then they in their turn carried home the divine seed to their parents, and thus the blessed truth quietly and assiduously spread until many in the little villages were rejoicing in Christ. Then Farel threw off his disguise and told them who he was.

Great was the fright of the priests at this sudden, metamorphosis of the Schoolmaster, for well they knew who William Farel was. But without any hesitation, he now ascended the pulpits, and with bold look and burning eye, and voice of thunder, and with words rapid and eloquent, stamped with the majesty of truth he ploughed up the consciences of those who listened, and through God’s mercy a great work was commenced Not for long however was it allowed to go on. The curés were filled with wrath at this bold intruder who had dared to enter their quiet valley, and shake their ancient beliefs. A clamour was raised against him, and Farel was obliged to retire, thankful that at least, the standard of the cross had been planted, and that he had left behind him men whose eyes had been opened, and who would never again bow the knee to the idols of their fathers. From this place Farel proceeded to Lausanne, and from thence to Berne. But in each of these places he was repulsed. Now turning northwards he made a short pause at Morat, and here, by the help of God, the victory of the Gospel was complete, and this important town embraced the protestant faith. An unseen but mighty power was with Farel, softening hearts and opening the understandings of men to receive the truth, and encouraged in heart, Farel pressed on hoping to win other cities and cantons to the gospel.

He now crossed the lovely lake and presented himself at Neuchatel. This place was peculiarly given up to popery. It had a great Cathedral with its full compartment of canons, priests, and monks, who, you may be sure gave the poor credulous people the usual store of pomps, dramas, indulgencies, banquetings and scandals. In the midst of their devotions the people were startled by a man of small stature, red beard, glittering eye, and stentorian voice, who stood up in the market place and announced that he had brought a religion not from Rome, but from the Bible. The shaven monks could not speak for astonishment, but at last, when they had found their voices they cried with one accord, "Let us beat out his brains," "Duck him, duck him." In spite of their clamour, Farel proceeded with his preaching, and many opened their hearts to the glad tidings. Before long the whole city declared for the Reformed faith.

Having sown the seeds of divine truth here, Farel left them to fructify, and departed to evangelize in the mountains and valleys which lay around. The winter came on and cold, hunger, and weariness were his frequent attendants; his life, too, was in peril, almost every hour. Once he was seized and almost beaten to death. Nothing however could daunt the bold Reformer. At times he would mount the pulpit, even while the priest was celebrating mass, and such was the power of his eloquence, that sometimes the priest would strip himself of his stole and chasuble, while the congregation would demolish the altars, remove the images, and declare that Farel was speaking the Truth of God. In three weeks time four villages renounced popery.

Farel was far from resting satisfied with his spiritual triumphs in the little villages at the foot of the Jura. His eye was ever turned with longing towards Geneva. On his way there at St Blaise, he made a short halt and commenced to preach. He was cruelly set upon by the mob instigated by the priests, and almost beaten to death. "Covered with bruises" says a writer, "spitting blood, and so disfigured as scarcely to be recognised by his friends, he was put into a small boat, carried across the lake, and nursed at Morat." But his time had not yet come to depart, and in spite of his cruel wounds, he recovered, and in 1532 we find Farel's long cherished wish accomplished, and he is preaching the Gospel in Geneva. With dismay almost bordering on despair the priests learned that the man had arrived in their midst, who, as they said, had passed like a devastating tempest over the Pays de Vaud. His track so far, they knew, had been marked with altars overturned, images demolished, and canons and monks, and nuns flying before him in terror. What were they to do? They must at once take effectual steps to put him down or all would be lost. So without loss of time Farel, was summoned before the Town Council. With angry looks and bitter words did the magistrates receive him, but happily for Farel he carried letters from their Excellencies of Berne with whom Geneva was in alliance, and whom the Council feared to offend. Thus protected the Reformer and his friend left the Council chamber unharmed. This acquittal only the more aroused the anger of the priests and they met in council, and under pretext of debating the question, summoned the two preachers before them. Two magistrates were with them, "to see," says an historian, "that they returned alive," for it was known that some of the priests carried arms under their robes. The Reformer was asked by what authority he preached? Farel replied by quoting the Divine injunction, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." His meek answer was received with derision, and in a few moments the members starting to their feet, flung themselves upon the two evangelists, and commenced to ill-treat them. They spat upon them, pulled them about, struck them, "crying, come Farel, you wicked devil, what makes you go up and down thus? Whence comest thou? What business brings you to our city to throw us into trouble?" As soon as the noise had a little subsided, Farel answered courageously, "I am not a devil; I am sent by God as an ambassador of Jesus Christ; I preach Christ crucified — dead for our sins — risen again for our justification; he that believeth upon Him hath eternal life; he that believeth not is condemned." "He blasphemes; he is worthy of death" cried some. "To the Rhone, To the Rhone!" shouted others, "It were better to drown him in the Rhone than permit this wicked Lutheran to trouble all the people." "Speak the words of Christ, not Caiaphas," replied Farel. This was the signal for a more furious attack. "Kill the Lutheran hound," they exclaimed, Strike, Strike!" They closed round Farel, and one of the great Vicars servants levelled a gun at him, and pulled the trigger, but here again the Lord intervened for His servant, the pruning flashed, and the magistrates after a vigorous interposition rescued the evangelists.

Such, however, was the rage and enmity of the mob that Farel was obliged to flee the city. But although Farel's first essay was so unsuccessful it was not God's will that the good work should die out. Another and a gentler hand was to scatter the seed, — this was a young man, Fromont by name, of a gentle peaceful disposition. Him Farel sent back to the city where he had been almost torn to pieces.

"Fromont's appearance," says Wylie, "was so mean that even the Huguenots, as the friends of liberty and progress were styled, turned their backs upon him.'' Thus cast off and despised by all, what was young Fromont to do? "Recalling Farel's example at Aigle," the historian goes on to say,

"he resolved to turn schoolmaster. He hired a room at the Croix d'or, near the Molard, and speedily his fame as a teacher of youth filled Geneva. The lessons Fromont taught the children at school the children taught their parents when they went home. Gradually, and in a very short time, the class grew into a congregation of adults, the schoolroom into a church, and the teacher into an evangelist. Reading out a chapter he would explain it with simplicity and impressiveness." Thus with a tender, gentle hand the young man scattered the Divine seed into hearts, and many were converted; and soon great crowds were seen pressing round him listening eagerly to his words. This was in the year 1532 and the good work went on apace. Two rich and honourable women were among the first converted; and their conversion made a great sensation in Geneva. Their husbands and many others were drawn to hear and embrace the Gospel.

Space would not suffice for me to tell how rapidly the good work sped although in the midst of much trouble and persecution; suffice to say, that, in only one year after the beginning of Fromont's ministry, Farel to his great joy, was allowed to return to Geneva, and he did not leave it until the city so dear to his heart had declared in favour of the truths of the Reformation.