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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK COUNT ULRICH OF LINDBURG: A TALE OF THE REFORMATION IN GERMANY ***

W.H.G. Kingston

"Count Ulrich of Lindburg"

Chapter One.

On the banks of the river Saal, in Merseburg, forming part of Saxony, at the time of which we speak, governed by the aged and excellent Elector Frederick, stood the Castle of Lindburg. It was one of those feudal piles of the Middle Ages, impregnable to the engines of ancient warfare, but which were destined to crumble before the iron shots with which cannon assailed them, as the system they represented was compelled to succumb to the light of that truth which the Gospel was then diffusing over the greater part of Europe.

Ulrich, Count von Lindburg, or the Knight of Lindburg, as he was often called, sat in a room in his Castle, with his arm resting on a table and a book before him, at which, however, his eyes seldom glanced; his looks were thoughtful and full of care. He had engaged in much hard fighting in his younger days, and now all he wished for was rest and quiet, though the state of the times gave him but little hope of enjoying them. In his own mind, too, he was troubled about many things. Four years before the time at which he is introduced to the reader, he had visited Worms, during the time the Diet, summoned by the Emperor Charles the Fifth, was sitting, and was among those who found their way into the great hall where the Emperor and the chief princes, bishops, and nobles of the land were sitting, when Dr Martin Luther, replied to the chancellor of Treves, the orator of the Diet, who demanded whether he would retract the opinions put forth in numerous books he had published and sermons he had preached.

"Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my fate either to the Pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the Word of God, *I cannot and will not retract*, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience." And then, looking round on that assembly before which he stood, and which held his life in its hands, he said, "HERE I STAND, I CAN DO NO OTHER. MAY GOD HELP ME! AMEN!"

The assembly were thunderstruck. Many of the princes found it difficult to conceal their admiration; even the emperor exclaimed, "This monk speaks with an intrepid heart and unshaken courage." Truly he did. This is the weakness of God, which is stronger than man. God had brought together these kings and these prelates publicly to confound their wisdom. These bold words had had also a deep effect on the Knight of Lindburg, and he kept meditating on them as he rode homeward towards the north. Could it, then, be possible that the lowly monk—the peasant's son—should be right, and all those great persons, who wished to condemn him, wrong? Was that faith, in which he himself had been brought up, not the true one? Was there a purer and a better? He must consult Father Nicholas Keller, his confessor, and hear what he had to say on the subject. The Knight carried out his intention. Father Nicholas was puzzled; scarcely knew what answer to make. It was a dreadful thing to differ with the Church—to rebel against the Pope. Dr Martin was a learned man, but he opined that he was following too closely in the steps of John Huss, and the Knight, his patron, knew that they led to the stake. He had no wish that any one under his spiritual charge should go there. As to the Scriptures, he had read but very small portions of them, and he could not tell how far Dr Martin's opinions were formed from them. The Knight was not satisfied. He asked Father Nicholas to explain what was the Church, and if it was not founded on the Scriptures, on what was it founded? Father Nicholas replied that it was founded on Peter, and that the popes were Peter's successors, and that therefore the Church was founded on the Pope. The Knight remarked that from what he had heard of Peter he must have been a very different sort of person to Leo the Tenth, and he asked what we knew about Peter, and indeed the other apostles, except through the Scriptures? Father Nicholas, shaking his head at so preposterous a question, replied, "Through tradition." The Knight asked, "What is tradition?" Father Nicholas hesitated—coughed—hemmed—and then said, "My son, tradition—is tradition! And now let us change the subject, it is becoming dangerous."

The Knight was not yet satisfied, and he determined to look more particularly into the matter. When, therefore, his

son Eric came home, and expressed a strong desire to migrate to Wittemburg, that he might pursue his studies under the learned professors of that University, Drs. Martin Luther, Melancthon, Jerome Schurff, Jonas Armsdorff, Augustin Schurff, and others, he made no objection. Dame Margaret, his wife, however, and Father Nicholas, loudly protested against Eric's going among such a nest of heretics.

"He will be perverted," they exclaimed; "he will share the fate of Huss."

"I have promised him that he shall have his will, and perhaps he will be able to come back and tell us the meaning of tradition," answered the Knight, with a peculiar look at Father Nicholas. "There are, besides, two or three other things about which I want him to gain information for me."

Dame Margaret knew from experience that when the knight, who was an old soldier and wont to rule in his own house, said a thing, he meant it. She therefore held her peace, and it was finally arranged that Eric should forthwith set off for Wittemburg.

Dame Margaret was a very well-meaning woman. She could not prevent her son from going to the heretical University, but she hoped by her admonitions and warnings that she might prevent him from imbibing the dangerous principles which she understood were taught there. She consulted Father Nicholas on the subject; indeed she never failed to consult him on all subjects, temporal as well as spiritual, connected with her family, so that the father had a good deal of influence in the household. He did not give her any great hopes of success.

"With all respect be it spoken of a son of yours, Eric has ever been obstinate and dull-headed, and turned a deaf ear to all my ghostly counsels and exhortations. Very like his father, the knight, I regret to say," he observed; "however, there can be no harm in warning him. Tell him all I have told you about that heresiarch, Dr Martin, and if he believes what you say, you may thus have the happiness of counteracting the effects of the evil and abominable instructions he will receive."

This was a bright idea. Father Nicholas had been accustomed to say a good many hard things of Dr Luther and his friends. The plan must succeed. While, like a good mother as she really wished to be, Dame Margaret was preparing Eric's shirts and hosen, a new cloak, and other things for his journey, she sent for her son that she might talk to him. She was alone; Eric kissed her hand affectionately, as he entered, and stood respectfully before her—

"You are going away for a long period from your father and me, and from our esteemed Father Nicholas, and you will be exposed to countless perils and dangers, my son," she began. "You have a desire to go among those people, holding new-fangled doctrines, for the sake of the novelty and excitement; that is but natural, so I scarcely blame you; but beware, my son, this Dr Martin himself is, I hear, a wild, unstable character, a roisterer and wine-bibber, who desires to overthrow our holy Father, the Pope, for the sake of ruling, by his wicked incantations and devices, in his stead."

"Others speak very differently of him, my mother," answered Eric, humbly; "but I shall know more about him when I have been to Wittemburg and heard what he and his friends have to say for themselves."

"Alas, it may be too late when you once get into his toils," sighed Dame Margaret. "They say that he has a compact with the Evil One, and he it is who gives him the wonderful power he possesses over men's minds and makes them oppose our Father, the Pope, and our holy mother Church."

"I have not heard that Dr Martin Luther has been guilty of any deeds such as those in which the Evil One especially takes delight, and we must judge of people by the works they perform," answered Eric, in the gentle tone which his affectionate respect for his mother induced him to employ. "I know that Dr Martin is a learned man; he desires to introduce learning and a pure literature into our fatherland, and he is moreover an earnest seeker after the truth, and has sincerely at heart the eternal interests of his fellow-men. He is bold and brave because he believes his cause to be righteous and favoured by God. That is the account I have heard of him; I shall know whether it is the true one when I get to Wittemburg."

"They say that he preaches that the convents should be thrown open, and the priests allowed to marry, because he himself wants to take a wife. They say that the motives for all he does are very evident," continued Dame Margaret, not listening to her son's remark.

"I should have thought that had he been plotting from the first to oppose the power of the Pope for the sake of marrying he would have taken a wife long ago. There has been nothing to hinder him. Certainly not many 'pfaffen' would have been so scrupulous. He himself has remained single, and is a man, several of my friends who know him assure me, singularly abstemious; often he goes a whole day or more without food, and his usual meals are of the simplest kind. It is true that when he mixes with his fellow-men his heart expands and he does not refuse the wine cup or the generous food placed before him. His is no churlish spirit to turn away from the good things kind Heaven has provided for man. God sends us trials, but He intends us to enjoy what He has in His loving mercy given us in this world, and never throws temptations to sin in our way, as some foolish teachers would make us believe. But as to Dr Martin's mode of life, I shall be able to tell you more about it when I have been to Wittemburg."

Dame Margaret sighed deeply, she had not yet quite said her say, that is, what Father Nicholas had told her to say. "My son," she continued, "I am informed that evil people are saying many wrong things against our Holy Father, the Pope; that he has no business to call himself head of the Christian Church; that he is an extravagant, worldly man; that many predecessors have been as bad as bad could be. Indeed I cannot repeat all the dreadful things said of him."

"But suppose, dear mother, that all the things said of him are true; suppose that Saint Peter never was at Rome, that he did not found a Church there, and was never Bishop of Rome; that designing men, for their own ambitious ends, have assumed that he was, and pretended to be his successors, and finally, finding the success of their first fraud,

have claimed the right of ruling over the whole Christian world. But, however, when I go to Wittenburg I shall better know the truth of these things, and if they are calumnies, learn how to refute them."

"Oh! my son! my son! how can you even venture to utter such dreadful heresies?" shrieked Dame Margaret, even before Eric had finished speaking; then, hearing his last words, she added, "Of course they are calumnies; of course you will refute them, and you will come back here, after you have completed your studies, and be the brave opponent of this Dr Martin and all his schismatic crew. But, my son, one of my chief objects in sending for you was to bestow on you a most invaluable relic, which will prove a sure and certain charm against all the dangers, more especially the spiritual ones, by which you may be surrounded. Neither Dr Martin nor even the Spirit of Evil himself will be able to prevail against you if you firmly trust to it, Father Nicholas assures me; for it contains not only a bit of the true cross, but a part of one of Saint Peter's fishing-hooks, and a portion of the thumb-nail of Saint James. Let me put it round your neck, my son, and thus armed I shall, with confidence, see you go forth to combat with the world, the flesh and the devil."

Dame Margaret spoke seriously; she was merely giving expression to the common belief in relics entertained, not only by ignorant peasants but by the highest nobility and the great mass of the population, a belief encouraged by the priests, who thus secured a sure market for their own manufactures. The excellent Elector Frederick, who became one of the great champions of the Reformation, had a short time before employed several dignitaries of the Church to collect relics for him, and had purchased a considerable number for very large sums. In the war between France and Spain, every Spanish soldier who was killed or taken prisoner was found to have a relic round his neck with a certificate from the priest who had sold it, that it would render his body invulnerable to the bullets or swords of the enemy. There is a very considerable sale of such articles, even to the present day, in Roman Catholic countries. Eric was therefore well aware of the value his mother would attach to the one she desired to bestow on him, yet he had already imbibed too large a portion of truth from the writings of Dr Luther and others, and the portions of Scripture he had read, not to look on the imposition with the contempt it deserved; still he was too dutiful a son to treat his mother's offer with disrespect. He thought a minute or more, and then replied slowly—

"I will not take your relic, mother, for I am already provided with a protection which will be sufficient for all the dangers I am likely to encounter. I will say nothing now as to the relic. When I have been to Wittenburg I may be able to tell you something more of its actual value."

Nothing that Dame Margaret could say would induce him to take the article. On repeating the conversation with her son to Father Nicholas, she expressed a hope that Eric was not possessed of an evil spirit, which had induced him so pertinaciously to refuse the proffered gift.

Father Nicholas bit his lip, frowned, said he could not say, it might possibly be an embryo one, such as had clearly entered into Dr Martin and many other persons at that time. It would certainly be safe to exorcise him, but the difficulty would be to get so obstinate a young man as Eric to submit to the operation. He would think about it, and try and devise some means by which the ceremony might be performed without the patient having the power to resist.

This promise afforded a considerable amount of comfort to Dame Margaret, who had felt very uneasy ever since the idea had seized her, for she could not otherwise account for her son's refusing so inestimable a gift.

The last night Eric slept at home he had a dream, at least he was not quite certain whether he was awake or dreaming. He opened his eyes and saw a light in the room, and his mother and Father Nicholas, and his sister Laneta, and his father's old henchman, Hans Bosch, who had often carried him in his arms, when he was a child, and still looked on him in the light of one, standing round his bed. His mother held a basin, and Hans a book, and the priest a censer, which he was swinging to and fro, and muttering words, in very doggerel Latin, while ever and anon, he sprinkled him with water from the basin. What Laneta was about, he could not exactly make out, but he thought that she had a box in her hands, which she held open. Had he not been very sleepy and tired he would have jumped up and ascertained whether what he saw was a vision or a reality; but, shutting his eyes, he went off soundly to sleep again, and sometime afterwards, when he awoke, the room was in darkness and he was alone.

His mother, the next morning, regarded him with much more contented looks than her countenance had worn for the last day or two.

It may as well be here mentioned that Eric discovered during his journey the precious relic, which he had declined taking, fastened into the collar of his cloak. He sighed and said to himself—

"Then, poor mother, let it be; should I take it out and should any misfortune happen to me she will say it was for want of the relic; if it remains and I receive damage I may the better prove to her the worthlessness of the thing. No wonder the sheep go astray when they have so ignorant a pastor as Father Nicholas."

Chapter Two.

Eric, on the morning of his departure from home, had a private leave-taking with his father. The Knight, though an old soldier, was a peaceably-disposed man, yet in spite of all he could do he had foes and troubles. A certain Baron Schenk, of Schweinsburg, unjustly claimed rights over a portion of the Knight's property. It was clearly impossible for the Knight to accede to the Count's demands, for had he done so fresh ones would instantly have been made until the Count might have claimed possession of Lindburg itself. The Count had often threatened to come and insist on his claims at the point of the sword, but the Knight had reminded him that as two people could play at that game he might find that he gained nothing by the move. Still he occasionally received a message which showed him that the Count had not forgotten his threats, and this always troubled him, not because he feared his enemy, but because he wished to be quiet and at peace with all his fellow-men. He had a long talk with his son and gave him much good

advice. The two understood each other thoroughly.

"My son," he said, "you are going forth into the world; and will meet with a great variety of characters. Treat your fellow-men with a kindly regard and do them all the good in your power, but put your whole trust in God alone. While you cling to Him He will never forsake you—I know that you are honest and single-hearted. Do that, and I have no fear for you. Take my blessing, Eric. Write when you can and tell me all about Dr Martin and his companions. I wish that I were young enough to go to the University with you; I would give much once more to hear that man speak as he did at Worms."

Eric set forth not as a poor scholar, on foot, but as the son of a Knight and a Noble of the land, on horseback, accompanied by Hans Bosch, who led a sumpter-horse loaded with his baggage. Both were armed, as was necessary in those times, with swords and pistols; the latter being somewhat large and unwieldy weapons. Eric, as befitted his station, had learned the use of his sword, and Hans was an old soldier who had grasped a pike for nearly half a century. Hans and Eric had always been good friends. The old soldier was not ignorant of what was going on in the world, but he had not as yet made up his mind which side to choose. He suspected the bias of his master, and that of his mistress was very evident. As yet, however, he clung to the old opinions. Eric, though high-spirited and manly, was thoughtful and grave above his years, and Hans respected his opinions accordingly. He had before been at the University of Erfurth, but the fame of Wittemburg had reached him, and, what had still more influence, several of the books written at Wittemburg, and he had been seized with a strong desire to migrate thither.

Hans could not read himself, but he was inquisitive. He plied his young master with questions, to which Eric very willingly made replies.

"Then you put no faith in the Pope, nor believe that he is the only rightful ruler of the Church?" observed Hans in reply to a remark made by his young master.

"I have been led to doubt the supremacy he claims from all I have read," answered Eric modestly. "More especially do I believe that he is not a descendant of the Apostle Peter from what I have read in my Greek Testament. I there find that Saint Paul, on one occasion, thus wrote of this supposed chief of the Apostles: 'When Peter was at Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed,' (Galatians two 11.) Peter was also sent especially to preach to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. Paul, when writing from Rome, sends no salutations from him, which he would have done had Peter been there; indeed he never once mentions his name. The third or fourth Christian Bishop of Rome speaks of Saint Paul having suffered martyrdom under the emperors; but, by the way he speaks of Saint Peter, evidently believing that he suffered martyrdom elsewhere in the east, and does not allude to his having been at Rome. If, therefore, the very foundations of the pretensions of these august Pontiffs are defective, what can we think of the rest of their claims? However, when I have been some time at Wittemburg, I hope to know more about the matter."

"But, my dear young master, if you upset the foundation of our faith, what else have we to build on? I, for one, as an old soldier who has seen the world, say that we can not go on without religion," exclaimed Hans, in a tone which showed the perturbation of his mind.

"That is right, Hans," answered Eric, "but, my old friend, we do not destroy the real foundation of our faith, we only overthrow the false and cunningly-devised superstructure. The foundation of our faith is in the sufficient sacrifice once made for man by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross, and the complete justification of all who repent and put faith in that sacrifice. That is what Dr Martin Luther teaches. He says that no man should venture to come between the sinner and God; that Christ is the only one Mediator—the go-between, you understand—that He is all-loving, and all-merciful, and all-kind, that by any one else interfering He is insulted, and that all indulgences, penances, works, are the devices of the Evil One to make man lose sight of the full, free, and perfect redemption which Christ has wrought for us."

"That sounds like a good doctrine," observed Hans, thoughtfully, "the 'pfaffen' will not like it, because it will deprive them of their influence and the chief portion of their gains; but how do you know that it is the true one, my young master?"

"Because it is in the Word of God, the Bible. And I am very certain that God, who has done so much for us, would not have left us without a clear statement of His will—clear rules for our guidance, and therefore I believe that the Bible is the Word of God," observed Eric.

Hans rode on in silence. He was meditating on his young master's remarks. They had not gone more than a league or two when some sharp cries reached their ears. They came from some person before them. They rode on, and arrived in sight of a big youth who was belabouring with a thick stick, in the middle of the road, a young boy. The boy had something under his cloak, which the youth was insisting on his keeping concealed. Eric's generous feelings were at once excited. He could never bear to see the strong tyrannising over the weak. He rode forward and demanded of the big lad why he was thus ill-treating the little one. The youth did not reply, but looked up sulkily at him. Eric turned to the little fellow.

"This is the reason, noble sir," answered the boy, "he is my 'bacchante,' and I am a poor little 'schütz.' We are poor scholars seeking education at the schools. For the protection he affords me he insists that I shall provide him with food. Lately his appetite has been very great, and I have not got enough for him, and to-day he insisted on my stealing this goose, and hiding it under my cloak, that if it was discovered I might be punished and he escape."

"So, my master, and is this the way you afford your protection?" exclaimed Eric, looking angrily at the big bacchante. "What is your name, my little schütz?" he asked of the boy.

"Thomas Platter," was the answer. "I come from Switzerland, and have for long been wandering about, finding it hard to live in one place for want of food."

"Then, Thomas Platter, know that I am going to Wittemburg, where there is a good school; and, if you desire it, you shall remain with me and pursue your studies, and if you ever have to beg for bread, it shall be for yourself alone. Are you willing to accept my offer?"

"Gladly, most noble sir," answered the boy, throwing down the goose and springing out of the way of the big bacchante, who sought to detain him. Hans, who once had a little boy who died when he was of the age of Thomas Platter, approved of his young master's generous offer, and undertook to carry the lad behind him on his horse to Wittemburg. The bacchante grumbled and looked very angry at this, and threatened to come after Thomas and carry him off; but Eric advised him to make no attempt of the sort as the boy was now under his protection. They rode on and left him grumbling and threatening as before. Thomas seemed highly pleased at the change. He was evidently a sharp, clever little fellow, though simple-minded and ignorant of the world. He was the son of a poor shepherd, but the desire to gain knowledge induced him to quit his father's cottage and to go forth in search of that education which he could not gain at home. He had met with all sorts of adventures, often very nearly starving, now beaten and ill-used by his bacchante, a big student, from whom he received a doubtful sort of protection, now escaping from him and being taken care of by humane people, wandering from school to school, picking up a very small amount of knowledge, being employed chiefly in singing and begging through the towns to obtain food. Such was the type of a travelling student in those days. Frequently he had companions, three or four schützen and twice as many bacchantes, the former performing, in fact, in rough style, the part of fags to the older students. The big bacchante, from whom Thomas had escaped, was a relative who had promised to befriend him. It was in the unsatisfactory manner described that he had performed his part.

The next day, as Eric and his companions approached the town of Jena in Thuringia, they overtook a solitary horseman. From his appearance he seemed a knight, as he had a long sword by his side, and a red cap on his head, and was habited in hosen and jerkin, with a military cloak over his shoulders, though he was without armour. He exchanged courteous salutations with the young noble, and enquired whither he was going. On hearing that it was Wittemburg he seemed well pleased.

"Yes, I am migrating thither from Erfurth, for I desire to study under one whom I consider the great light of the age, Dr Martin Luther," answered Eric.

"Then you have never met Dr Martin," said the stranger.

"Not personally, but I know him by his works," answered Eric. "That way methinks we may know a man far better than those we may see every day who have written nothing for our instruction. Still I desire to go to Wittemburg that I may drink at the fountain's head, and listen to the words which fall from the Doctor's own lips."

"Young man," said the stranger, turning a pair of dark, flashing eyes upon Eric, "be assured that if you drink at the Fountain Head—the pure spring from which Dr Martin is wont to drink, you will do well—that is, the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. Of them you can never drink too much, and yet no fountain can afford so satisfactory a draught. But



beware how you imbibe knowledge from other sources; from the traditions of men; from mere human learning. It is the too common want of caution in that respect which leads so many men astray. Seek for the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and give your whole heart and soul to the study of the Scriptures. In that way you will most assuredly gain the best of all knowledge."

Talking in this way, old Hans riding up close behind them, to catch the words which fell from the stranger's mouth, they approached the town. Before, however, they could reach it, a fearful storm, which had been threatening for some time, burst upon them. They pushed on as fast as their steeds could move, to obtain, as they hoped, shelter in the town, and now Eric perceived that the stranger, whom he had supposed to be a knight, was no very great horseman, and more than once he feared, when a vivid flash of lightning made the animal he bestrode spring on one side, that he would be thrown to the ground; still he kept his seat, nor seemed to think of danger, every now and

then addressing Eric on some subject of deep interest.

On entering the town they found every one keeping holiday, for it was Shrovetide, and mummers and feasting, and amusements of all sorts were going forward. No one would attend to them, nor could they obtain accommodation of any sort in the town, even where they could dry their damp clothes. At last they were advised to proceed on through the town, where outside the gates, on the other side, they would find an hostelry, the "Black Boar," at which they would obtain accommodation. They were not misled. The landlord received them courteously, and seemed, by the affectionate greeting he gave their companion, to be well acquainted with him. Eric considered that it was too early in the day to stop, and as his and his attendant's horses were fresh, he proposed, after taking some refreshment, to proceed on another stage or two further. During the repast the stranger continued the conversation which had been interrupted by their approach to Jena. Little Thomas Platter, who was sitting at the table as well as Hans, listened with attentive ear to all that was said. When Eric rose to depart, the stranger bade him a cordial farewell.

"I too am on my way to Wittemberg," he observed, "we may meet there, I hope, ere long, and you will then judge whether the tales that have been told of Dr Martin are true or false."

Eric was very much interested in the stranger, and puzzled to know who he could be.

"He is a man of learning and a man of consequence," he observed as he rode along. "I would that I possessed one quarter of his learning. How his countenance lights up when he speaks, and how the words flow from his lips. He is a man to move his fellow-creatures by his eloquence, or I mistake his looks and mode of utterance."

"What think you, my young sir, if he should prove to be Dr Martin himself?" said Hans.

"It more than once occurred to me that such might be the case; but is Dr Martin likely to be out in these parts, and would he be habited in such a costume as that worn by this stranger?" asked Eric.

"It was Dr Martin notwithstanding that," exclaimed the little Platter; "you will see, my masters, when we get to Wittemberg, you will see."

This incident added very much to the interest of the journey. They rode on for some leagues, when, as they were not far off from the place where they purposed resting for the night, they saw a band of horsemen approaching them. It was easy to see by their dress and general appearance that he who rode at their head was their lord, with two companions of inferior rank, and that the rest were his retainers. They had a particular swaggering look which showed that they belonged to a class of persons common in those days, who followed the fortunes of any lawless noble who could employ them, and were ever ready to commit any deed of violence their master might command. Eric kept as close to one side of the road as he could to avoid giving cause of offence. They eyed him narrowly as he passed, and especially looked at Hans, who wore the livery of his house.

"Who can those people be?" asked Eric. "Their looks are far from pleasant, nor did they deign to give us the usual salutation which courtesy demands as they rode by."

"Alas! I know them well," answered Hans. "He who rode at their head is no other than Baron Schenk of Schweinsburg, your father's greatest and, I may say, only enemy. If he guesses who you are, my dear young master, I fear that he will not let us escape unmolested; for he is a man who delights in blood and violence, and were not our Castle a strong one, and defended by brave hearts and willing hands, it is my belief that he would long ago have attacked it, and carried off all he could find of value within. My advice, therefore, is that we put spurs to our horses, and place as great a distance as we can as soon as possible between him and ourselves. Hold on, little Platter, away we go!"

"Your advice is good, Hans," said Eric, as he urged on his steed. It was likely to be of little avail, however, for at that instant the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard, and looking round they saw that half-a-dozen of the Baron's retainers were spurring after them. This, of course, only made Eric and his attendant more anxious than ever to escape. Their horses were good ones, and they might still distance their pursuers.

"Let me drop, kind sir," exclaimed little Platter; "I am only delaying you, and it little matters if I fall into the Baron's hands; I am not worth killing!"

Hans laughed, and answered, "You would break your limbs if I let you go, and your weight is but as that of a feather to my old steed Schwartz. Hold on boy—hold on! We have promised to protect you, and we are not the people to cast you off at the first sign of danger."

They galloped on as fast as their steeds could put feet to the ground; but they had already performed a good day's journey, and were somewhat tired. Their pursuers' horses, on the contrary, were fresh, it seemed, and when Hans looked over his shoulder, he saw at once that they were gaining on them. Still he was not a man to give in without an effort. "We'll try it on a little longer, my young master, and then face about and show them the edges of our swords. Maybe, like bullies in general, they are cowards, and if we put on a bold front, they will make off." This counsel was too good not to be followed. Still the Baron's retainers were gaining on them. A wood was on either side. They might dash into it, and make their escape, but that was not then a mode of proceeding to suit Eric's taste. "Now then we'll do as you suggest, Hans," he exclaimed. Pulling up their steeds, they turned sharply round and drew their swords. This, however, did not produce the effect they had hoped. They now saw, indeed, that the remainder of the band were coming up. At this moment little Platter let himself slip from behind Hans to the ground, saying, as he did so, "I can be of no service to you here; but I can, maybe, if I get away."

Before the horsemen came up he had darted into the wood, where, had they thought it worth while searching, they would have had no little difficulty in finding him.

"There is no use fighting, I fear, my young master," said Hans, unwillingly sheathing his sword.

"We are outnumbered, and it will only be giving our foes an excuse for slaying us should we attempt to resist them."

Eric, seeing the wisdom of the old soldier's advice, likewise returned his sword into the scabbard. When the Baron's retainers came and surrounded them, he demanded, in a firm voice, what they required.

"We are to conduct you to our lord. He will question you as he thinks fit," answered one of the men, seizing Eric's bridle. Another took hold of Hans' bridle, and, with a couple of men on either side of them, they were conducted along the road.

They had not gone far, when they were met by the Baron.

"Ah, my young sir, you are I understand Eric von Lindburg; I have at length got a hostage for your father's good behaviour," he exclaimed, exultingly. "You will find pleasant lodging in the Castle of Schweinsburg, for the next few years or more of your life, if your father does not yield to my demands. I have long been looking for this opportunity, now it has arrived. Ha, ha, ha!"

Eric kept a dignified silence, merely saying, "I am in your power, Baron Schweinsburg. I cannot choose, but do what you command."

This calm reply somewhat annoyed the Baron.

"Ah, we shall find you a tongue ere long, young sir," he observed, with a savage expression, as they rode along.

The party went on at a rapid rate till it was nearly dark, when they stopped at an hostelry to refresh themselves, a strong guard being placed in the room into which the prisoners were conducted. The moon then rising, they continued their journey, and at length, perched on a rocky height, the grey walls of the old Castle of Schweinsburg rose before them. A steep pathway led them up to a bridge thrown across a deep chasm, which almost completely surrounded the building, and had rendered it impregnable to the assaults of foes armed only with the engines of ancient warfare. In the court-yard the Baron ordered them to dismount; and four armed men conducted them up a winding staircase to a room at the top of a high tower, from which, unless provided with wings, there seemed but little chance of escaping.

In a short time their luggage was brought up to them, followed by a tolerably substantial supper.

"The Baron does not intend to starve us, at all events," observed old Hans. "Come, my dear young master, eat and keep up your spirits. Matters might have been much worse. Perhaps we may ere long find some means of escaping, let the Baron guard us ever so carefully. At all events, let us hope for the best."

Chapter Three.

At the time our story commenced Dr Martin Luther was still residing in the Castle of Wartburg, where he had been concealed by order of the Elector Frederick, for nearly a year after leaving Worms, to preserve him from the rage of his defeated enemies. His friends, however, well knew where he was, and he had lately been summoned back to Wittemberg, where his presence was much required.

Several months had passed away since Eric had quitted home, when one day a man, with a large pack on his back, presented himself at the Castle-gate, and demanded to see the Knight. He was admitted.

"Well, friend, what would you with me?" asked the Knight.

"I have books to sell, and will show them to you forthwith," answered the colporteur, unslinging his pack. "Here is one lately printed—worth its weight in gold, and more."

The Knight took it. It bore the simple title—"The New Testament. German. Wittemberg."

"That is the very book I want," exclaimed the Knight, eagerly. "Yes, I doubt not that it is worth its weight in gold. By whom has it been done into German?"

"By Dr Martin Luther," answered the colporteur. "He began the work when shut up in the Wartburg, and has only lately finished it with the help of Dr Melancthon. Here are some other works by him. Will you take them?"

"Yes, three—four—one copy of each. There is payment," said the Knight, laying down some gold pieces.

"I take but the proper price," answered the colporteur, returning most of them to him.

"You are an honest man," said the Knight. "If the books you sell have made you so, they must be good."

"The books certainly are good, and I am more honest than I was. Once I ate the bread of idleness, indulged in sloth, and was of no use to any one. Now I labour for my food, and try to obey my Lord and Master," answered the colporteur.

"Why, what were you?" asked the Knight.

"A monk," answered the colporteur; "a lazy, idle monk. Dr Luther's books came among us, and we read them, and some of my more learned brethren translated the Testament to us who were ignorant of Greek, and we agreed that

as Jesus Christ came into the world to set us an example as well as to die for our sins, and that as He ever went about doing good, our system of life could not be the right one. The more we looked into the matter, the more satisfied we became that it was altogether opposed to the Gospel, and so we resolved forthwith to leave it. Some who had the gift of preaching went forth to preach the Gospel; others have begun to learn trades that they may support themselves; and, as I have a good broad pair of shoulders, I offered to carry throughout our fatherland the Gospel book, and other works of Dr Luther, which had proved so great a blessing to our souls; and though I cannot preach, I can go about and tell people that, through God's love, Christ died for all men; that there is but one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ; and that men will be saved, not by dead works, but by a living faith in Him, which will produce fruits unto righteousness, an earnest desire to imitate Him, to serve Him, to spread these glad tidings among all mankind."

"It seems to me, in my humble wisdom, that you did right," observed the Knight. "However, do not tell Father Nicholas this if you meet him. Whenever you return this way, call here and bring me more books."

"Gladly; and I shall have some portions in German of the Old Testament, in translating which Dr Luther is hard at work," said the colporteur.

"By what name shall I remember you, friend?" asked the Knight.

"John Muntz is my proper name, bookseller and labourer in Christ's service," answered the colporteur, as he bade the Knight farewell.

Sturdy, honest John Muntz went his way throughout the land, selling Luther's and Melancthon's books, with the New Testament and such parts of the Old as they issued from the press, sometimes reading their contents, sometimes telling to single persons or to small assemblies, in simple language, of the glorious old truths thus brought once more to light. It may be, in the great day, that many far-famed preachers will be surprised that humble John Muntz, and other labourers such as he, in the Lord's vineyard, have turned more souls into the way of righteousness than they.

The Count of Lindburg took his books into his own room and locked them up, that he might read them at leisure. He was not prepared just then to enter into a controversy with Father Nicholas, and he wished for quiet. He knew that his good wife and his daughter Laneta would take the part of the priest, and he had an idea that when Eric came back from Wittemburg he would prove a valuable ally on his side. Now and then, however, as he read on, he felt very much inclined to rush down and proclaim not only to his wife and the priest, but to the whole household and neighbourhood, the wonderful truths here so clearly proved and explained. But though he rose from his seat with the book in his hand and opened the door, he went back and sat down again. Though brave as a lion in war, and often impetuous at home, he was still timid in his own household. His womenkind and Father Nicholas had found out his weak point, and knew where to assail him.

The knight had always wished to act rightly according to his convictions, consequently when some few years before this time—that is, a short time before he paid the visit to Worms, where he first heard Dr Luther speak—he had been urged by Father Nicholas and his wife to allow his youngest daughter Ava, to become, as they called it, the spouse of Christ, or, in other words, to enter a nunnery; she raising no objection, he consented, believing, as he had been assured, that her eternal happiness would thus be secured, and that she would be better provided for than becoming the wife of one of the rough, fierce, warlike, beer-drinking knights, who alone were likely to seek her hand. The knight, however, often sighed as he thought of his fair blooming little Ava shut up in the monastery of Nimptsch, and wished to have her back again to sing and talk to him and to cheer his heart with her bright presence, but he dared not to express his feelings to any of his family, as he knew that they would be considered rank heresy. Often he would have liked to write to his dear child, but, in the first place, he was but a poor scribe, and in the second, he guessed that any epistle he might send would be opened by the lady superior, and its contents scanned before delivery, and adverse comments made, if it was not withheld altogether. So little Ava stayed on at the convent, embroidering priests' dresses and other ornaments for churches, and attending mass. Whether or not she ever felt like a wild bird shut up in a cage, wishing to be free, he could not say; he thought it possible. She was wont once to go about the Castle singing like a bright happy bird, not shut up in a cage then. He wondered whether she sang now. He was sure that the nun's dress could not become her as the bright-coloured bodice and skirt she wore. He wondered, too, whether she ever went out now, as she was accustomed to do when at home, among the cottagers in the neighbourhood, with a basket of food and simples, and distributed them to the sick and needy with gentle words, which won their hearts, or whether when mendicants came to the gate she stopped and listened to their tales of suffering, relieved them when she could, and seldom failed to drop a tear of sympathy for their griefs, which went like balm to the hearts of many. He opined that the high-born ladies of the monastery of Nimptsch would scarcely condescend thus to employ their time. They undoubtedly were brides of Christ, but, as the lady abbess had once remarked, it was the business of His more humble spouses to imitate His example in that manner. After the Knight had been thinking in this style, when he descended into the hall he was invariably accused of being sullen and out of temper. Not that he had any fault to find with his good Frau Margaret, or with his daughter Laneta. They were excellent, pious women in their way. They had embroidered five altar-cloths, seven robes of silk for the Virgin Mary, and three for Saint Perpetua, Saint Agatha, and Saint Anne; they had performed several severe penances for somewhat trifling faults; not a piece of meat had passed their lips during Lent; and they had fasted on each Friday and other canonical days throughout the year. Alms they gave whenever they could get money from the Knight for the purpose, and doles of bread to the poor with stated regularity; indeed, they felt sure that they would richly have merited heaven, even with a less amount of good deeds. Still they were desirous of making security doubly secure.

When, therefore, in the year 1517, that is, before Ava went to the convent, Dr John Tetzl, prior of the Dominicans, apostolic commissary and inquisitor, set up his pulpit and booth in the neighbouring village for the sale of indulgences, they had been among the crowds who had flocked to his market. Near him was erected a tall red cross, with the arms of the Pope suspended from it.

"Indulgences, dear friends," he exclaimed, when he saw a large mob collected round him, "are the most precious and

noble of God's gifts. See this cross; it has as much efficacy as the cross of Christ. Come, and I will give you letters, all properly sealed, by which even the sins which you intend to commit may be pardoned. I would not change my privileges for those of Saint Peter in heaven, for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the apostle by his sermons. There is no sin so great that an indulgence cannot remit; only pay, pay well, and all will be forgiven. Only think, for a florin you may introduce into Paradise, not a vile coin, but an immortal soul, without its running any risk. But, more than this, indulgences avail not only for the living, but for the dead. For that repentance is not even necessary. 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 would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not.'" Then Tetzl had told them how Saint Peter and Saint Paul's bodies were rotting at Rome because the Pope, pious as he was, could not afford to build a proper edifice to shelter them from the weather without their help. "Bring—bring—bring!" he shouted, in conclusion.

Dame Margaret and her daughters were greatly moved by these appeals, though little Ava thought the monk need not have shouted so loudly. The dame, who had just before persuaded her lord to give her a good sum of money, bought a large supply of indulgences, not only for herself and daughters, but for the Knight, who, she secretly believed, required them far more than they did, because he never performed penances, made quick work at confession, and regularly grumbled on fast-days; besides, she could not tell of what sins he might have been guilty in his youth. She did not tell him what she had done, but she felt much more happy than before to think that they would now all go to heaven together. She would even, in her zeal, have made further purchases, had not Father Nicholas expostulated with her, observing that it would be much better if she paid the money to enable him to say masses, which would prove quite as efficacious; and, besides, be spent in Germany instead of going to Rome. She was greatly horrified, some time after this, to hear the Knight inveigh furiously against Tetzl and his indulgences, and call him an arch rogue and impostor. Of course, on this, she did not tell him how she had spent his money, lest he might make some unpleasant reflections on the subject; besides, she suspected that he would not appreciate the advantages she had secured for him. But this was after Ava had been sent away to Nimptsch.

Chapter Four.

Eric, now a close prisoner in the Castle of Schweinsburg, felt very indignant at the treatment he had received, and apprehensive of the consequences of his capture by his father's enemy. Though the fierce Baron would not have scrupled to put an ordinary man to death, he did not think he would venture to injure him or his person further than keeping him shut up. It was on his father's account that he was most anxious, as he guessed that the Baron had seized him for the sake of enforcing his unjust claims on Count von Lindburg, and that unless these were yielded to, he himself might be kept a prisoner for years. Who indeed was to say what had become of him? The Baron and his retainers were the only people cognisant of his capture, except little Platter, and of course he would have run away, and must have been too frightened to be able to give any clear account of the matter. It would be, of course, supposed that he and Hans had been set on by robbers, of whom there were many prowling about the country, and been murdered in some wood, and their bodies buried or thrown into a pond.

"Patience, my dear young master," answered Hans, when Eric had thus expressed his apprehensions; "we are in a difficulty, of that there is no doubt, but I have been in a worse one and escaped out of it. Once your honoured father and I were captured by the Saracens, and we fully expected to lose our heads, but the very last night we thought that we should be alive on earth we had a file conveyed to us in a loaf of bread by a little damsel who had taken a fancy to his handsome countenance, and we were able to let ourselves down from the window of our prison. A couple of fleet horses were in readiness, and we were away and in Christian territory before the morning dawned. I have been praying heartily to the Holy Virgin and to the Saints, and I have no doubt that they will help us."

"I have not the slightest hope of any such thing, my good Hans," said Eric, who had already imbibed many Protestant opinions. "It is God in heaven who hears our prayers. If He will not attend to them, no one else will, for He loves us more than human beings can, whether they are in this world or in another. He often, however, works out His plans for our good by what appear to us such small means that we fail to perceive them. I have read in the Greek Testament that 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground but that He knows it; and that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered.' Is it likely, therefore, that He would employ any intermediate agents between Himself and man, except the one great, well-beloved intercessor, His only Son. Would He even allow them to interfere if they were to offer their services? Our Lord Himself, when, on one occasion, His mother ventured to interfere in a work He was about, rebuked her, though with perfect respect, with these remarkable words, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' Again, when on the cross, He recommended her to the care of His well-beloved disciple, Saint John; he said, 'Behold thy mother!' 'Woman, behold thy Son!' O Hans, I wish that you and all the people of our fatherland, could read the Bible itself in our own tongue, you would then see how different is the religion we have been taught by the 'pfaffs' to that which Jesus Christ came on earth to announce to sinful man. It will be happy for our country should that day ever come, because then the people will be able to understand on what their religion is grounded, and be able to refute the false arguments of those who oppose it. There is a certain young professor at Wittemburg whose works I have read with peculiar delight, as he seems, even more than Dr Martin impressed by a sense of the love God has for man, and His willingness to hear all who go to Him in the name of His dear Son."

Old Hans was silent for some time. At last he looked up, and said, "There seems to me a good deal of truth in what you have remarked, my young lord. I always used to think that God is too great to trouble himself with the affairs of us poor people, whatever He may do with kings and princes, and so He employs the saints to look after us, and the saints, not wishing to come out of heaven on all occasions, employ the 'pfaffs' (priests) to do their works, only it has struck me now and then that they have made great mistakes in their agents, at all events they have got hold of very bad ones."

This conversation took place after Eric and his attendant had been three or four days prisoners in the Castle. They had had a sufficiency of food brought to them, and had altogether been treated better than they had expected. They

were interrupted by the entrance of a young page, who, saluting Eric respectfully, said that he had been sent by his lady, the Baroness, who desired to see him, and that he was ready to conduct him into her presence.

Eric was naturally surprised at this message. He was not even aware that there existed a Baroness Schweinsburg. Hans, as an old soldier, deemed it right to be cautious. He whispered a few words into his young master's ear.

"No, impossible!" answered Eric, giving a searching glance at the page, "the boy is honest. There can be no treachery intended."

"Not quite certain of that," whispered Hans. "I should like to go with you, my dear young master."

"Be assured that no injury will happen to me," said Eric. "I am ready to accompany you to your lady, my boy."

"I suppose that I may come also?" said Hans. "It does not become a young noble to be without his attendant."

"My orders were only to conduct the young gentleman himself into the presence of my mistress," answered the page frankly, "nevertheless, I can ask my mistress; she will probably not object."

"No, no, I will accompany you alone if your noble lady graciously desires to see me," exclaimed Eric, following the page, who led the way down the stairs of the turret.

Hans went to the door and anxiously listened, glancing round the room for something that he might use as a weapon, should it be required in his young master's defence. Eric meantime followed the page without hesitation down the steps and through several passages till they arrived at the door of a room in the lower part of the Castle. The page threw it open, and, with a respectful bow, begged Eric to enter.

He did so, and found himself in the presence of a lady who, although no longer young, was of a handsome and prepossessing appearance. She rose as he entered, and, presenting her hand, begged him to be seated.

"I regret to hear what has happened," she said, "and I have just received a communication from one whom I know, and whose works have had a great influence on me, and have had I trust, also on my good lord. He has heard of your capture on your way to Wittemburg, and of your detention here, and he writes earnestly that you may be liberated forthwith, and allowed to proceed on your journey. My good lord is absent so that I cannot at once, as I would wish, plead your cause with him; but I will write to him and obtain his permission to liberate you, and to make all the amends in my power for the inconvenience you have suffered. I am not ignorant of the quarrel which exists between my lord and the Count, your father; but I consider, that you should not, in consequence, be made to suffer. Still, if what has happened becomes known, it will only still further the increase the enmity which exists between our families; and for that reason, and for the sake of the blessed faith we hold, I would entreat you not to allow the outrage which has been committed against you to become generally known. When, as it is necessary, you mention it to the Count, your father, beg him to overlook it, and not to retaliate, as it is but natural he should do. If you can give me this promise, I shall the better be able to plead with my good lord, and I think and hope his mind might be changed, and that the wounds which have so long existed may be healed."

Eric, much struck by the words spoken by the Baroness, and by her tone and manner, without hesitation gave the promise she requested. Who could be the friend who had pleaded with her on his behalf, and by what means had he been informed of his capture? He would ask the lady.

"My informant is the most excellent and pious Dr Martin Luther," she answered. "He encountered you on his journey to Wittemburg, to which place he has just returned from his long residence in the Castle of Wartburg. You had with you a little 'schütz,' who, escaping when you were attacked by our people, whose livery he knew, watched the direction in which you were taken. Immediately he set off to Wittemburg to give information of what had become of you, and the very first person he encountered was Dr Martin whom he at once recognised as your companion on the road, in spite of his change of dress. The Doctor knew well that I could not be cognisant of what had occurred, and he hoped that my good lord would not be insensible to a direct appeal from himself. I feel sure that he did not miscalculate his influence with my lord; still it would ill become me, as a wife, to set you at liberty without his cognisance, and I must beg that you will allow me, in the mean time, to treat you as an honoured guest."

Some further conversation shewed Eric that the Baroness had attentively read many of the works of Dr Luther, Melancthon, and others; and that they had produced a great influence on her mind, and had not been without some effect, as she supposed, on that of her husband. It was thus that the principles of the reformers were affecting all ranks and conditions of men, while a still greater effect was shortly to be produced by the wide circulation of the translation of the Holy Scriptures made by Dr Luther in Wartburg, and at this moment being printed in Wittemburg.

Suddenly Eric found his condition completely changed. He had given his word that he would not quit the Castle till the Baroness had heard from her lord, and he was now treated by all with the greatest respect. The lady herself was not the only one who had imbibed the principles of the Reformation, and Eric found several works of the Wittemburg Doctor, parts of which, with her permission, he read aloud to her household. At length the Baron returned. He had a long interview with his wife, and not without a struggle did he yield to Dr Martin's request; but the better spirit prevailed, he acknowledged himself in the wrong, entreated Eric's pardon, and having given him a farewell feast, escorted him on his way until they came in sight of Wittemburg.

"Truly, my master," observed Hans, "the Gospel, of these Wittemburg doctors is a wonderful thing. It has changed a fierce, boasting, hard, grasping Baron into a mild and liberal man. It has procured us our liberty, who were doomed, I feared, to a long captivity. I must ask leave to remain with you at Wittemburg that I may learn more about it."

This permission was easily granted, and thus, as Hans did not return home, the Count of Lindburg was not made acquainted till long afterwards of the insult which had been put on him by the Baron of Schweinsburg, and they had

been happily reconciled in all other matters, both professing the same glorious faith, and united in the bonds of a common brotherhood.

Eric took up his abode with the family of Herr Schreiber Rust, to whom he had been recommended. The next day, as he went forth to attend the lecture of Dr Martin Luther, he found little Platter eagerly looking out for him. Great was the boy's delight when he saw him. "I knew that my young lord would come here without delay to hear the Doctor, and so I have been every day waiting for you," he exclaimed. "I find too, that it was he himself whom we rode with and talked with so long. Ah! he is a great man."

Eric had much for which to thank little Platter, and that he might prove his gratitude effectually, he at once added him to his household, that thus the boy might pursue his studies without having to beg for his clothing and daily bread. It was interesting to see Hans Bosch, the old soldier, following his young master from hall to hall, and also to church, endeavouring to comprehend the lessons he heard. All the important truths he did understand and imbibe gladly, and great was his satisfaction when the little Schütz Platter undertook to teach him to read that he might study by himself the Gospel in German, which Dr Luther had just translated, and was, at that time, issuing from the press. Well might the supporters of the Papal system exclaim with bitterness that their power and influence were gone when the common people had thus the opportunity of examining the Bible for themselves, by its light trying the pretensions which that system puts forth. Would that all professing Protestants, at the present day, studied prayerfully the Word of God, and by its light examined the doctrines and the system of the Church of Rome. It would show them the importance of making a bold stand for the principles of the Reformation, unless they would see the ground lost which their fathers so bravely strove for and gained.

Chapter Five.

Eric at once set steadily to work to study, attending regularly the lectures of the various professors, more especially those of Dr Luther. That wonderful leader of the Reformation was now giving a course of sermons on important subjects in the chief church in the town. On all occasions when he entered the pulpit the church was crowded with eager and attentive listeners. He had a difficult task to perform. During his absence at Wartburg various disorders occurred. Several enthusiasts, from various parts of the country, mostly ignorant, and little acquainted with the Gospel, assumed the title of prophets, and violently attacked every institution connected with Rome—the priests in some places were assailed with abuse as they were performing the ceremonies of their Church—and these men, at length, coming to Wittemburg, so worked on some of the students that the churches were entered, the altars torn up, and the images carried away and broken and burnt. The enthusiasts were known as the prophets of Zwickau, from the place where they first began to preach their doctrines. To put a stop to these disorders, Luther had been entreated to return from the Wartburg to Wittemburg. The proceedings which have been described were in direct opposition to the principles on which he, Melancthon, and other leaders of the Reformation had been acting. Their whole aim from the first, was to encourage learning, to insist on the study of the Scriptures, to do nothing violently, and to persuade and lead their fellow-men to a knowledge of the truth.

No great movement ever advanced with more slow and dignified steps than the Reformation. The existence of gross abuses produced it. Had the Romish hierarchy been willing to consent to moderate reforms, they might not humanly speaking, have lost their influence, and the whole of Europe might still have groaned under their power. But God had not thus ordered it. By their own blindness and obstinacy they brought about their own discomfiture. Luther himself was eminently conservative. He never altogether got rid of some of the notions he had imbibed in the cloister. Step by step he advanced as the light dawned on him—not without groans and agitations of mind—yielding up point after point in the system to which he had once adhered.

Eric was present at one of the first of the important series of sermons which the great Doctor preached on his return to Wittemburg. The enthusiasts had refused to be guided by the Gospel. They had asserted (misunderstanding the Apostle) that it mattered little how a man lived, provided he had faith, and that they had a right to compel others by force, if necessary, to adopt their views.

"It is with the Word we must fight," said the great Doctor, in reply to these opinions. "By the Word we must overthrow and destroy what has been set up by violence. Let us not make use of force against the superstitious and unbelieving. Let him who believes approach—let him who believes not keep away. No one must be constrained. LIBERTY IS THE VERY ESSENCE OF FAITH."

Entering the pulpit, he addressed the congregation in language full of strength and gentleness, simple and noble, yet like a tender father inquiring into the conduct of his children.

"He rejoiced," he told them, "to hear of the progress they had made in faith," and then he added, "But, dear friends, WE NEED SOMETHING MORE THAN FAITH, WE NEED CHARITY. If a man carries a drawn sword in a crowd, he should be careful to wound no man. Look at the Sun—two things proceed from it—light and heat. What king so powerful as to bend aside his rays? They come directly to us, but heat is radiated and communicated in every direction. Thus faith, like light, should be straight, RADIATE ON EVERY SIDE, AND BEND TO ALL THE WANTS OF OUR BRETHREN. You have abolished the mass, in conformity, you say, to Scripture. You were right to get rid of it. But how did you accomplish that work? What order—what decency did you observe? You should have offered up fervent prayers to God, and obtained the sanction of the legal authorities for what you proposed doing; then might every man have acknowledged that the work was in accordance with God's will.

"The mass is, I own, a bad thing. God is opposed to it, but let no one be torn from it by force. We must leave the matter in God's hands. His word must act, and not we. We have the right to speak; we have *not* the right to act. LET US PREACH; THE REST BELONGS TO GOD. Our first object must be to win men's hearts, and to do this we must preach the Gospel. God does more by His word alone than by the united strength of all the world. God lays hold upon the heart, and when that is taken all is gained. See how Saint Paul acted. Arriving at Athens, he found altars raised to

false gods. He did not touch one; but, proceeding to the market-place, he explained to the people that their gods were senseless idols. His words took possession of their hearts. Their idols fell without Paul having raised his hand.

"I will preach, discuss, and write, but I will constrain none, for faith is a voluntary act. Observe what has been done: I stood up against the Pope, indulgences and other abominations, but without violence or tumults. I put forward God's Word. I preached and wrote. This was all I did. Yet while I slept or gossiped with my friends, the Word that I had preached overthrew Popery, so that not the most powerful prince nor emperor could have done it so much harm. What would have been the result had I appealed to force? Ruin and desolation would have ensued. The whole of Germany would have been deluged with blood. I therefore kept quiet and let the Word run through the world alone. 'What, think you,' Satan says, when he sees men resorting to violence to propagate the Gospel, as he sits calmly, with folded arms, malignant looks, and frightful grin? 'Ah, how wise these madmen are to play my game!' But when he sees the Word running and contending alone on the battle-field, then he is troubled, his knees knock together, and he shudders and faints with fear."

Speaking of the Lord's Supper, his remarks are of great importance. "It is not the outward manducation that makes a Christian, but the inward and spiritual eating, which works by faith, and without which all forms are mere show and grimace," he observed. "Now this faith consists in a firm belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that, having taken our sins and iniquities upon Himself, and having borne them on the Cross, He is Himself their sole and almighty atonement; that He stands continually before God; that He reconciles us with the Father, and that He hath given us the sacrament of His body to strengthen our faith in His unspeakable mercy. If I believe in these things, God is my defender; although sin, death, hell, and devils attack me, they can do me no harm, nor disturb a single hair of my head. This spiritual bread is the consolation of the afflicted, health to the sick, life to the dying, food to the hungry, riches to the poor."

These sermons caused much discussion, not only in the University, but throughout Germany. Eric was among those who entered most eagerly into the subjects brought forth by the Reformers. He soon formed several friendships with his brother students. His most intimate friend was Albert von Otten, who was rather older than himself, and had been some years at the University. He was intimate, too, with Melancthon, Armsdorff, and others.

"Dr Philip has written on that subject," observed Albert, speaking of the last of Dr Martin's sermons. "Here are some remarks from fifty-five propositions, which were published some time back."

"Just as looking at a cross," he says, "is not performing a good work, but simply contemplating a sign that reminds us of Christ's death, just as looking at the sun is not performing a good work, but simply contemplating a sign that reminds us of Christ and His Gospel, so partaking of the Lord's Supper is not performing a good work, but simply making use of a sign that reminds us of the grace that has been given us through Christ.

"But here is the difference, namely, that the symbols invented by men simply remind us of what they signify, while the signs given us by God not only remind us of the things themselves, but assure our hearts of the will of God.

"As the sight of a cross does not justify, so the mass does not justify.

"As the sight of a cross is not a sacrifice either for our sins or for the sins of others, so the mass is not a sacrifice.

"There is but one sacrifice—but one satisfaction—Jesus Christ. Besides Him there is none other." Dr Carlstadt was the first to celebrate the Lord's Supper in accordance with Christ's institutions. On the Sunday before Christmas-day he gave out from the pulpit that, on the first day of the New Year, he would distribute the Eucharist in both kinds to all who should present themselves; that he would omit all useless forms, and wear neither cope nor chasuble. Hearing, however, that there might be some opposition, he did not wait till the day proposed. On Christmas-day, 1521, he preached in the parish church on the necessity of quitting the mass and receiving the sacrament in both kinds. After the sermon he went to the altar, pronounced the words of consecration in German; then, turning to the people, without elevating the host, he distributed the bread and wine to all, saying, "This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant." At the end he gave a public absolution to all, imposing no other penance than this, "Sin no more."

No one opposed him, and in January the Council and University of Wittenberg regulated the celebration of the Lord's Supper according to the new ritual.

Thus fell the mass—the chief bulwark of Rome. It, and Transubstantiation, had for three centuries been established. "It had tended to the glory of man—the worship of the priest. It was an insult to the Son of God; it was opposed to the perfect grace of His Cross, and the spotless glory of His everlasting Kingdom. It lowered the Saviour, it exalted the priest, whom it invested with the unparalleled power of reproducing, in his hand, and at his will, the Sovereign Creator."

From the time of its establishment the Church seemed to exist not to preach the Gospel, but simply to reproduce Christ bodily. The Roman Pontiff, whose humblest servants created at pleasure the body of God Himself, sat as God in the temple of God, and claimed a spiritual treasure, from which he issued at will indulgences for the pardon of souls. (Note 1.)

Luther at length agreed to have a conference with the prophets of Zwickau. They said that they could work miracles. He desired them to do so. They became furiously enraged. He quickly upset their pretensions, and they, the same day, quitted Wittenberg, thoroughly defeated. Thus by the wisdom of one man, tranquillity was restored, and the Reformation was able to proceed with sure and certain footsteps, unmolested.

The work of all others with which, next to the Testament, Eric was most delighted, was Melancthon's "Common-places of Theology," written during the time Luther had resided in the Wartburg.

It was a body of doctrine of solid foundation and admirable proportion, unlike any before written. He considered that the foundation on which the edifice of Christian theology should be raised is “a deep conviction of the wretched state to which man is reduced by sin.”

Thus the truth was promulgated through the length and breadth of the land, while Luther, by his translation of the Bible, was preparing the means by which all classes could imbibe it from its fountain head. Not only the students at the universities, but women and children, soldiers and artisans, became acquainted with the Bible, and with that in their hands, were able successfully to dispute with the doctors of the schools and the priests of Rome. Eric had been very anxious to learn more of the early life of Dr Luther than he before knew, that he might refute the statements Father Nicholas had been fond of making concerning him. He could not have applied to a better person than Albert, who had been acquainted with the family of Conrad Cotta, with whom Martin had resided while at Eisenach, and who had ever after taken a deep interest in his welfare and progress.

It is that Ursula, Conrad Cotta's wife, the daughter of the burgomaster of Ilfeld, who is designated in the Eisenach chronicles as the pious Shunamite, Martin, while singing to obtain food with which to support himself while pursuing his studies at the school of Eisenach, and having often been harshly repulsed by others had attracted her attention. She had before been struck by hearing his sweet voice in church. She beckoned him in, and put food before him that he might appease his hunger. Conrad Cotta not only approved of his wife's benevolence, but was so greatly pleased with the lad's conversation that he from henceforth gave him board and lodging in his house, and thus enabled him to devote all his time and energies to study.

“John Luther, Dr Martin's father, was a miner, residing at Eisleben, where, on the 10th of November, 1483, our Doctor was born,” began Albert. “When he was not six months old, his parents removed to Mansfeldt. John Luther was a superior man, industrious and earnest. He brought up his children with great strictness. Believing that Martin had talent, he was anxious that he should study for the law, and he obtained for him the best education in his power. First he was sent to Magdeburg, but finding it impossible to support himself at that place, he moved to Eisenach. Among the professors was the learned John Trebonius, who, whenever he entered the schoolroom, raised his cap. One of his colleagues inquired why he did so? ‘There are among those boys, men of whom God will one day make burgomasters, counsellors, doctors, and magistrates. Although you do not see them with the badges of their dignity, it is right that you should treat them with respect,’ was the answer. Martin had been two years at Erfurth, and was twenty years old, when, one day, examining the books in the public library, he found a Latin Bible—a rare book—unknown in those days. Till then he imagined that the fragments selected by the Church to be read to the people during public worship composed the whole Word of God. From that day it became his constant study and delight. A severe illness, brought on by hard study, gave him time for meditation. He felt a strong desire to become a monk, under the belief that by so doing he should attain to holiness. All this time living with the excellent Cotta family, nothing could be more exemplary and orderly than his life. Though animated and lively and delighting in music, he had, from his boyhood, been serious-minded and earnest in the extreme, and at no period did he give way to the excesses of which his enemies accuse him. On his recovery from his illness, he paid a visit to his parents at Mansfeldt; but he did not venture to express the wish he entertained of entering a monastery, from fearing that his father would disapprove of it. On his return journey he was overtaken by a fearful storm, and he made a vow that, should he escape destruction, he would devote himself to the service of God. His whole desire was now to attain holiness. He believed that he could not find it in the world. He bade farewell to his friends, he entered the cloister, his father's exhortations and anger caused him grief, but he persevered. In spite of all the penances and severities he underwent, he could not attain to the holiness he sought. It was not to be found in the convent. He found, too, a true friend in Staupitz, the Vicar-general of the Augustines for all Germany, a man eminent for his learning, his liberality, and true piety. The elector, Frederick the Wise, founded, under his direction, the University of Wittemberg, to which, by his advice, the young doctor was shortly appointed professor. It is worthy of remark that, long after Dr Martin had ceased to think of purchasing heaven by his abstinence, so simple were his tastes, that a little bread and a small herring often composed his only meal in the day, while often he was known to go days together without eating or drinking. The great movement owes much to Staupitz. Dr Martin opened all his heart to him, and told him of all his fears about his own want of holiness, and the unspeakable holiness of God. ‘Do not torment yourself with these speculations,’ answered the Vicar-general. ‘Look at the wounds of Jesus Christ—to the blood that He has shed for you; it is there that the grace of God will appear to you. Instead of torturing yourself on account your sins, throw yourself into your Redeemer's arms. Trust in Him—in the righteousness of His life—in the atonement of His death. Do not shrink back, God is not angry with you; it is you who are angry with God. Listen to the Son of God, He became man to give you the assurance of Divine favour. He says to you, You are my sheep, you hear my voice; no man shall pluck you out of my hand.’ Still Dr Martin could not understand how he was to repent, and be accepted by God. ‘There is no real repentance except that which begins with the love of God and of righteousness,’ answered the venerable Staupitz. ‘In order that you may be filled with the love of what is good, you must be filled with the love for God. If you desire to be converted, do not be curious about all these mortifications, and all these tortures, Love Him who first loved you.’ A new light broke on Dr Martin's soul, and, guided by it, he began to compare the Scriptures, looking out for all the passages which treat on repentance and conversion. This was his delight and consolation. He desired, however, to go further; Staupitz checked him. ‘Do not presume to fathom the hidden God, but confine yourself to what He has manifested to us in Jesus Christ,’ he said; ‘Look at Christ's wounds, and then you will see God's counsel towards man shine brightly forth. We cannot understand God out of Jesus Christ. In Him the Lord has said, You will find what I am and what I require; nowhere else, neither in heaven nor in earth, will you discover it.’ Again Staupitz advised him to make the study of the Scriptures his favourite occupation, and represented to him that it was not in vain that God exercised him in so many conflicts, for that He would employ him as His servant for great purposes. Truly have the words of the good old man come true. Yet Dr Martin was far from enlightened. He was to obtain full emancipation from the thralldom of Rome in Rome itself. He was sent there to represent seven convents of his own order, who were at variance with the Vicar-general. He had always imagined Rome to be the abode of sanctity. Ignorance, levity, dissolute manners, a profane spirit, a contempt for all that is sacred, a scandalous traffic in divine things. Such was the spectacle afforded by this unhappy city. Even when performing their most sacred ceremonies, the priests derided them. Some of them boasted that when pretending to consecrate the elements, they uttered the words ‘*Panis es et panis manebis; vinum es et vinum manebis.*’ While himself performing mass, on one

occasion, the priest near him, who had finished his, cried out, '*Passa—passa—quick—quick!*—have done with it at once!' It was the fashion at the Papal Court to attack Christianity, and no person could pass for a well-bred man unless he could satirise the doctrines of the Church. These, and numberless other abominations, which he saw and heard, must greatly have shaken his faith in the sanctity of Rome; and, at length, on a certain occasion, his eyes were completely opened. The Pope had promised an indulgence to all who should ascend on their knees a staircase, which it is pretended was brought from Pilate's Judgment-hall, and that down it our blessed Lord had walked. It is called 'Pilate's Staircase.' While he, with others, desirous of obtaining the promised indulgence, was laboriously climbing up the stair on his knees, he thought that he heard a voice of thunder crying out, '*The just shall live by faith.*' He rose at once, shuddering at the depth to which superstition had plunged him, and fled from the scene of his folly. Yes, those words are the key-note of all the arguments by which our glorious work must be supported," exclaimed Albert. "Yes, *faith without works justifies us before God;* that is the fundamental article Dr Martin holds. Soon after his return he was made Doctor of Divinity, and could now devote himself to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and, which was of the greatest importance, lecture on them. While thus engaged, he ever, from the first, pointed to the Lamb of God. The firmness with which he relied on the Holy Scriptures imparted great authority to his teaching. In him also every action of his life corresponded with his words. It is known that these discourses do not proceed merely from his lips—they have their source in his heart, and are practised in all his works. Many influential men, won over by the holiness of his life, and by the beauty of his genius, not only have not opposed him, but have embraced the doctrine to which he gave testimony by his works. The more men love Christian virtues, the more men incline to Dr Martin. But I need say no more to refute the calumnies which have been uttered against him. See what instances he has given, too, of his dauntless character. When the plague broke out here he refused to fly, but remained employed in translating the New Testament. See how boldly he nailed his theses against indulgences to the church doors; how bravely he burnt the Pope's bull. Although the Elector would not allow Tetzal to enter his dominions, he got to a place within four miles of Wittemburg, and many people purchased indulgences. While Dr Martin was seated in the confessional, many of these poor dupes came to him and acknowledged themselves guilty of excesses. 'Adultery, licentiousness, usury, ill-gotten gains'—still they would not promise to abandon their crimes, but trusting to their letters of indulgence obtained from Tetzal, showed them, and maintained their virtue. Dr Martin replied, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' This circumstance still further opened his eyes to the abuses and evil system of the Church to which he belonged, but not even yet had the idea of separating from her occurred to his mind, not indeed until the Pope anathematised Dr Martin for speaking the truth did he acknowledge that he was indeed Antichrist, and that no true Christians could hold communion with him."

Eric soon became as warm an admirer of Dr Martin Luther, as was his friend, Albert von Otten. The Reformation movement was now proceeding, seemingly with far more rapid strides than before. The Bible was being disseminated; the convents thrown open—or, at all events, their inmates were leaving them—superstitions were being abolished; a pure form of worship was being established in numerous places; and, what was of the greatest importance, young men of high talent and courage were being educated in the principles of the Reformation to spread the pure light of the Gospel throughout all parts of Germany.

Little Thomas Platter made great progress in his studies, and bid fair to grow up an earnest Christian and industrious man, amply paying Eric for the care he bestowed on him.

Hans Bosch, when his young master was about to return home, begged that he might come back with him to Wittemburg.

"I there got an abundance of substantial food for my soul, while Father Nicholas serves us out only piecrust, filled with dry dust that is neither meat nor drink," said the old man, as he looked up while packing his young master's valise.

Note 1. Merle D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation."

Chapter Six.

Eric, with his friend, Albert von Otten, arrived unexpectedly one day, to the Knight's very great satisfaction at Lindburg. The Knight embraced his son affectionately.

"I have a great many questions to ask, and difficulties for you to solve, my son," he said, as he beckoned him to come to his room.

"And I, father, have very many things to say to you, so that we shall have plenty to talk about. Albert will, in the meantime, entertain my mother and Laneta."

"And now, Eric, what do you think of this Dr Luther?" asked the Knight, after he had looked along the passage which led to his room, and locked the door.

"Think, father! That he has brought light out of darkness—that he has made the boldest stand that ever man has done against the power, the tyranny, the impositions of the Pope, and the superstitions which he and his predecessors have ever encouraged for the sake of filling their pockets, utterly regardless of the souls they led away from Christ and salvation," exclaimed Eric, warming as he proceeded. "He has done, and he is doing a glorious work, and though his foes were to burn him to-morrow, they could not extinguish the light he has kindled. He teaches that man is by nature sinful and alienated from God, but that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to become a sacrifice for man's sins, to suffer instead of man, and thus to enable him, through repentance and faith in that sacrifice, to be reconciled to Himself; that Christ is the only Mediator between God and man; neither His mother Mary, nor the Saints, have anything to do in the matter; that they required His sacrifice as much as others, and that, therefore, fasts, penances, invocation of saints, masses for the dead, purgatory, indulgences, are all the inventions of

the popes to put money into their pockets, or into the pockets of the priests, their supporters, or of the devil, to lead souls astray."

"I heartily agree with him, Eric. See, I have read something about the matter already," said the Knight, going to the oak chest in which he kept his treasures, and bringing out the Testament and some of Dr Luther's works. "I never found myself a bit the better for fasts or penances, whenever I thought that I ought, for my sins, to endure them; and, as for indulgences, I felt very much inclined to kick that scoundrel Tetzl out of the place when I heard that he had come to sell them in this neighbourhood. Now, tell me, does your friend, Albert von Otten, preach? He looks as if he had the gift of speech."

"Indeed he has," said Eric. "He has the power of moving the hearts of his hearers."

"Then he shall preach in our church next Sunday, and to all in this Castle as well, in spite of what Father Nicholas may say to the contrary!" exclaimed the Knight. "I have long wanted you, Eric, to take Father Nicholas in hand; you may be able to convince him, and your mother too—she is a good woman, but bigoted and obstinate, begging her pardon, and I should have had no peace if I had once begun, unless I had come off the conqueror at once. Albert von Otten will help you."

Eric gladly undertook the task. It was the chief object he had had in view since he had himself been converted to the truth. He immediately broke ground. His mother and Laneta were very much astonished at his doctrine, but they would not acknowledge that he was right. Father Nicholas had scarcely a word to say in return, so he put on the stolid look of a schoolboy brought up unwillingly to receive a lecture.

"Young men's dreams," he muttered, "or devices of Satan to draw men from the true Church. Ah, the Bible is, as I always said, a dangerous book. Little did those who wrote it dream what mischief it would cause in the world."

The minds of the whole household were much agitated by the subjects of which Eric and his friend spoke to them. Still more so was the Knight himself the next day, when the colporteur, John Muntz, presented himself at the gate, and, demanding to see him, put into his hand a letter from his own little daughter Ava. He read it over and over again, and his countenance beamed with satisfaction. He immediately called Eric to him, ordering refreshment to be brought in the meantime for John Muntz in the hall, and desiring him to talk to his people and to sell any of his books if he could. Ava, after sending greeting to him and her mother, and love and duty, continued:

"And now, dear father, I must tell you that I cannot longer endure this life. It was only while I believed that I was doing God service that I loved it. Now I am certain that it is directly contrary to His law. I have read the New Testament carefully with prayer, and I can find nothing there to sanction it. We are told not to bow down to images—not to use vain repetitions in prayers; we are employed the greater part of each day in doing these two things. We invoke dead saints, we worship the Virgin Mary, we fast, we perform penances to merit heaven, and all the time the Bible tells us that there is but one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, and that by repentance and through faith in Him can we alone become righteous and meet to enter the kingdom or heaven. I cannot tell you one-half of the objections I have to remain here. There are also eight other nuns who desire to leave, and they have written to their parents to the same effect, though some of them tremble as to what will be the answers; others say that there was so much grief when they went away, that they are certain that there will be rejoicing to get them back. I know how sorry you and mother and Laneta were when I left home, that I have no doubt that you will be glad to have me return. But how are we to get away?—there is the difficulty. We know that we are watched, and that every effort will be made to detain us."

"I have no doubt that there will!" exclaimed Eric. "Sister Ursula, as they call their lady abbess, would move heaven and earth to detain them if she knew that they wished to escape. Do not write, lest the letter should fall into the old dame's hands; but let me go with Albert, and depend on it we shall find means before long of letting out the caged birds."

The Knight, without saying what Albert proposed, showed Ava's letter to Dame Margaret. She was horrified.

"What! a professed nun break her vows?" she exclaimed. "A bride of Christ forsake her bridegroom! Horrible profanity! No. I love Ava as my daughter, but I can never receive one who is so utterly neglectful of all her religious obligations. You must write and tell her that is impossible to comply with her request. I am sure Father Nicholas will agree with me."

"Dear wife," said the Knight, calmly, "When I allowed our little Ava to become a nun, it was to secure, as I thought, her happiness in this life and the next. She tells us that, in one respect, our object has signally failed, and there is a book I have been reading which convinces me that it will not advance in one single respect our object with regard to the other. Therefore, let our dear Ava come home, and do you and Laneta receive her as should her mother and sister. I mean what I say, Margaret, and advise Father Nicholas to hold his tongue about the matter."

The Lady Margaret, watching her lord's eye, and being a discreet woman, came to the conclusion that it would be wise to keep silent, but she secretly resolved to use every exertion to prevent so terrible a scandal taking place in her family. The Knight, however, was an old soldier, and suspecting what was passing in the mind of his better half, determined to be beforehand with her.

"She will be writing to that Sister Ursula to keep the poor little dove under double lock and key," he said to himself. "Eric will have a difficulty even to get a sight of her. I must tell him what I suspect, and leave it to him to foil the plans of his lady mother; she is a good woman though, an excellent woman in her way, but she would have been much the better if we had never been saddled with Father Nicholas. I will make him go the right-about one of these days, when he least expects it, if he does not reform his system. And here, Eric you will want money. Don't stint in the use of it. It will accomplish many things. Silver keys open locks more rapidly than iron ones, and I would give every coin I possess to get our dear little Ava back again."

Eric and his friend, meantime, were making preparations for their journey, and as soon as their horses could be got ready they rode off. They were, however, seen by Dame Margaret, who immediately suspected where they were going. Unfortunately, Father Nicholas had just then entered the Castle. She forthwith told him all she knew and thought, and urged him to find a quick messenger, who would outstrip the young men and warn the lady abbess. Father Nicholas hurried off with a purse which the lady put into his hand, to find a person to carry his message, resolving to take the credit to himself of the information he was sending.

Ava Lindburg and her companions in the monastery of Nimptsch were eagerly awaiting the reply to the letters they had written to their homes requesting permission to return. They were all young, and several of them pretty; but as they had been among the most sincere of the sisterhood, so they had the most rigidly performed all the fasts, penances, vigils, imposed on them, and already the bloom of youth had departed, and the pallor or the ascetic had taken its place.

Poor girls! they had sought peace, but found none; they desired to be holy, but they had discovered that fasts, penances, and vigils—the daily routine of formal services—long prayers, oft repeated, had produced no effect; that their spirits might be broken by this system, but that it could change their hearts.

“We are shut out from the great world, certainly,” wrote one of them, “but we have one within these walls, and a poor miserable, trivial, life-frittering, childish, querulous, useless, hopeless set of inhabitants it contains. This is not the house of Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus—this is not such an abode as Jesus would desire to lodge in. If He were to visit us, it would be to tell us to go forth into the world to fulfil our duties as women, not, like cowards, to shrink from them, to fight the good fight of faith, to serve Him in the stirring world into which He came, in which He walked, in which He lived, that He might be an example to us. Though He has not come to our convent, He has sent us a message full of love and compassion—His Testament, the Gospel—and it has given us fresh life, fresh hopes, fresh aspirations; and through its teaching we are sure of the Holy Spirit which He promised. Other books have been sent us to assist in opening our eyes. We are convinced that this mode of life is not the one for which we were born; that it is a life, not of holiness, but of sin, for it is useless, for it is aimless, for it is against the teaching of the Gospel.”

The answers came at length. Tears flowed from the eyes of some, sobs burst from the bosoms of others, while several turned paler even than before, and their hands hung hopelessly by their sides. Many of the letters were full of kind expressions, while other parents chided their daughters harshly for contemplating the possibility of breaking their vows, and abandoning the life of holiness to which they were devoted; but one and all wound up by declaring that they would not allow such a stigma to rest on their noble families as would arise were they to encourage a daughter to abandon her holy calling. Little Ava received no answer to her epistle sent by the colporteur, and she was eagerly looking out for his return. He had told her how eagerly her father had bought his books, and she had still some hopes that the reply would be favourable. She could not, however, fail to observe the severe look with which the lady abbess regarded her, and she was still more alarmed when she found that her Testament, and several books by Drs. Melancthon and Luther, had been taken out of her cell. In truth, the lady abbess had received the communication sent by Father Nicholas, and was on the watch, expecting to see the gay young student, Eric of Lindburg, and his companion arrive, intending afterwards to commence a system of severe punishment on the offending Ava. The lady abbess was not aware that Ava was only one of many whose eyes had been opened, and who desired their freedom.

Chapter Seven.

One bright afternoon, in the month of May, 1524, a light waggon, driven by a venerable-looking person with a long white beard, stopped before the gate of the convent of Nimptsch, and from out of it stepped a merchant of equally venerable and still more dignified appearance. He begged the portress to present his humble respects to the lady abbess, with a request that he might be allowed to offer for sale to the noble ladies numerous articles which they might find acceptable. The lady abbess, having carefully surveyed the venerable merchant and his driver through a lattice above the gate, was satisfied that they might, without danger, be admitted into the court-yard. The horses were, however, somewhat restive, and it required, evidently, all the strength the old driver possessed to keep them quiet while his master took out his bales and boxes, and conveyed them, with somewhat feeble steps, into the room where strangers, such as he, were received. An iron grating ran across it, within which the nuns were collected; but there existed a small window, through which articles could be handed for inspection.

The merchant evidently understood the tastes and requirements of nuns. There were silks for embroidery and gold-thread, and beads, and pencils, and brushes, and colours for illuminating missals, and paper and writing materials, and various manufactures for making artificial flowers; he had even spices and mixtures for making confectionery. There was linen also, coarse and fine, and all the materials of the exact hue required by the sisters for their dresses; indeed, it would have been difficult to say what there was not in Herr Meyer's waggon which the nuns could possibly require. The price, too, at which he sold his goods was remarkably low, and the nuns of Nimptsch were not at all averse to making good bargains. Unfortunately, however, he discovered that he had only brought specimens of many of the articles. His large waggon he had left at Torgau. He would, therefore, take the orders with which the holy ladies might honour him, and return next day with the goods.

The merchant, Herr Meyer, was better than his word, for he returned the next day not only with the articles ordered, but with many other curious things, which he had brought, he said, for the inspection and amusement of the ladies, and the servants and attendants in the house; the good portress especially was remembered. There were carriages and animals which ran along the ground by themselves, and a house in which a door opened, when out of it came a cock which crowed, and then a small bird came out of an upper window and sang, and then a woman looked out to ascertain what the noise was about. Numerous toys of a similar character the merchant had brought, he said, from Nuremberg.

Meantime the horses in the waggon became very frisky, the merchant, therefore, went down, with most of his boxes

to help quiet them, he said, leaving the abbess and her nuns busily engaged with the toys; the portress, too, was still watching the cock coming out of the house and crowing, and the bird singing, and the woman looking out to see what it was all about.

"These horses will be doing some mischief, Karl, if they stay shut up in this court-yard," exclaimed the merchant. "I will open the gate, and then if they choose to gallop off they will soon get tired, and you can come back for me and my goods."

Suiting the action to the word, he undid the bars of the gate, and Karl drove through, pulling up, however, directly he was outside. The portress ran out, for such a thing as allowing a stranger to open the gate was against all rule.

"Stay, I have some more curious things," said the merchant. And he stepped into the waggon.

Just at that moment something must have startled the horses, for they set off at full speed, the driver in no way attempting to stop them. The lady abbess and the nuns looked out through the bars of the windows, expecting to see Herr Meyer, after his horses had had a good gallop, return with the other curiosities he had said he possessed. They looked and looked, but they looked in vain. At last they came to the conclusion that some accident had happened. For this they were very sorry, as they all agreed that a more pleasant-spoken, liberal merchant they had never seen. The opinions, however, of the lady abbess and some of the elder sisters were somewhat modified, when at vespers, as all the nuns were assembled, Sister Ava, and another young and pretty nun, her great friend, Sister Beatrice, were missing. They were not in their cells. The whole convent was searched; they were not to be found. Never had there been such a commotion among the authorities and elder sisters, though most of the young ones took the matter very quietly, and did not search for what they knew well was not to be found. Remembering the warning she had received, the lady abbess had a strong suspicion that Eric Lindburg was at the bottom of the matter. This was only the beginning of her troubles. Somehow or other, fresh heretical books were introduced into the convent, and the young nuns had so completely mastered the contents of those of which they had been deprived that they were able to discuss them and explain them to the elder sisters. Even the abbess herself could not answer many of their arguments which they boldly put forth, nor indeed could the father confessor, nor the other visiting priests. Of the last one heartily agreed with them, and the others boldly acknowledged that there was a great deal of truth in what they said. Gaining confidence, nine young ladies at last united to support each other, and positively refused to attend mass or any services when adoration was paid to the Virgin Mary or to the saints, and demanded that as their vows were taken in ignorance, and that as they were directly contrary to the Gospel, they should be released from them, and allowed to return into the world to fulfil their duties as virtuous women and citizens.

Those in authority were astonished and utterly confounded, and hesitated to take any harsh measures. Public opinion they well knew outside the convent walls ran pretty strongly in favour of the nuns' opinions. As their friends would not receive them at home, the young ladies resolved to repair in a body to some respectable place with order and decency. Through some means their resolution was made known to two pious citizens of Torgau, Leonard Koppe and Wolff Tomitzsch, who offered their assistance. "It was accepted as coming from God Himself," says an historian of that time. Without opposition they left the convent, and Koppe and Tomitzsch received them in their waggon, and conveyed them to the old Augustine convent in Wittenberg, of which Luther at that time was the sole occupant.

"This is not my doing," said Luther, as he received them; "but would to God that I could thus rescue all captive consciences, and empty all the cloisters. The breach is made."

Catharine Bora, who afterwards became his wife, found a welcome in the family of the burgomaster of Wittenberg, and the other nuns, as soon as their arrival was known, were gladly received in other families of similar position. It may here be remarked that the facts of the case completely refute the vulgar notion, put forth by the enemies of the Reformation, that Luther commenced the work of the Reformation for the sake of enabling himself and other monks and priests to marry. His mind was long in doubt whether monks ought to marry. Many months after he became acquainted with the excellent Catharine, when his friends pressed him to marry, he replied:

"God may change my heart if it is His pleasure, but I have no thought of taking a wife. Not that I feel no attractions in that state, but every day I expect the death and punishment of an heretic."

Not till more than a year after Catharine Bora had escaped from the convent did she become the wife of Martin Luther.

Chapter Eight.

The Count von Lindburg had been anxiously waiting news from Eric, but none had arrived. The Lady Margaret had been assured by Father Nicholas that his message had been safely delivered to the Abbess of Nimptsch, and that, in spite of all master Eric and his plausible friend might do, she would take very good care her little prisoner should not escape her.

The Knight was growing anxious; he was afraid that something had gone wrong, when, one afternoon, a light waggon, the horses which drew it covered with foam, drove up to the gate of the Castle. Over the drawbridge it dashed, for the porter did not hesitate to admit it, and a venerable-looking old gentleman, habited as a merchant, descending, handed out two young girls in peasants' dresses. The Knight caught sight of the waggon, and hurrying down, one of the girls was soon in his arms.

"My own Ava! My pet little bird, and you have escaped from your cage! Welcome—welcome home, and praised be God who has given me this great blessing!" he exclaimed, again and again kissing her cheek.

His child wept as she hung on the old man's neck. While this was taking place, the other young lady looked about

very much astonished and frightened, though there was nothing particularly to frighten her, and the grave merchant was doing his best to reassure her.

"Well done, Eric, my boy—well done, Albert von Otten!" exclaimed the Knight, when he could bring himself to turn his attention for a moment from his recovered daughter.

"Oh! thank Albert, father; it was he thought of the plan; he designed the whole of it. I merely acted the part he selected for me," answered Eric.

"I thank him heartily, then; for very well done it has been, and you have both my eternal gratitude," said the Knight. "And this young lady, I conclude that she helped you in the undertaking?"

"No; it was they helped me to run away, as Ava did not like to go alone, and she promised me an asylum under your roof."

"And you shall have it, if the Pope and all the cardinals were to come and demand you. They shall pull the walls down before I will give you up. And now tell me who you are, my dear fraülein?"

"I am Beatrice von Reichenau, of Swabia. My father, Count von Reichenau, and my mother decline to receive me, and yet they love me, I am sure; but, alas! they little know the horrors of the life to which they had devoted me."

"Better times will come, my sweet fraülein!" said the Knight, who just then saw everything in a bright light.

Meantime, Dame Margaret, Father Nicholas not being in the Castle, having seen the waggon and the young ladies get out of it, and guessing what had happened, and that her fine scheme had failed, went to the great hall, accompanied by Laneta, that she might receive Ava with becoming dignity, and reprimand her in a manner suitable to her offence. She had just taken her post when the Knight entered with timid little Ava clinging to his arm, looking more sweet and lovable than ever in her becoming peasant's dress, and not a bit like a wicked runaway nun. As soon as she saw her mother, she ran forward and threw herself into her arms, half weeping and half smiling.

"Oh, mother—mother, I am so thankful to see you again!" she cried.

Dame Margaret began her speech, but it would not come out. Nature asserted her rights over bigotry and superstition; she burst into tears, and, folding her daughter to her bosom, exclaimed, "And I, Ava, am glad to have you, darling!"

"I always said that she was a good woman, and now I am convinced of it," said the Knight. "Father Nicholas has done his best to spoil her, but, thank Heaven! he has not succeeded, and his reign is pretty well over, I suspect."

Laneta, who really in her way loved her sister, followed her mother's lead, and embraced Ava affectionately. The Dame Margaret was also not a little gratified when she found that her daughter's companion in her flight was so high-born a girl as Beatrice von Reichenau.

"If a young lady of her rank could do such a thing, it surely could not be so very wrong," she said to herself.

Her reasoning was not very good, but it served just then to smooth matters.

Ava and her friend were not idle in the Castle, nor did they confine their labours to it. Their mild, gentle, subdued manners and earnest and zealous spirits attracted all hearts with whom they came in contact. The glorious truths they had received into their own souls they were anxious to impart to others, nor did they feel that any trouble, any exertion, was too great for them to take to forward that object. Still it was very evident that to effect any speedy change on a large scale among the peasantry a preacher was required. Albert von Otten had been made a priest in the days of his ignorance, before he went to Wittemburg, and he remembered the Knight's offer to let him preach in the neighbouring church. Father Nicholas somewhat demurred, but the Knight assured him that Albert von Otten, he was sure, would only preach sound doctrine, and advised him to hold his tongue. Such a sermon as Albert preached had never been heard in that church. He said not a word about himself. He held up but one object—Christ Jesus walking on earth, Christ Jesus crucified, Christ rising again, Christ ascending into heaven, Christ sitting on the right hand of God pleading for sinners. Then he added:

"Dear friends, once a man came among you to sell you what he called indulgences; were they indulgences to commit sin, or indulgences to obtain pardon? What impious imposition! Oh! dear friends—dear friends! God's gifts of grace are free—are priceless. The blood of His only Son purchased them for us once for all. Gifts, gifts—free, free gifts—are what God offers; no selling now, no purchasing now—that has all been done. Christ has paid the price for every sin that man has committed or ever will commit, and man can by his works not add one jot, one tittle, to that all-sufficient price. God's offer is all of free grace. Man has but to look to Christ, to repent, to desire to be healed, and he will be forgiven, he will be accepted and received into heaven. Dear friends, when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt, the land of persecution, of slavery, of idolatry, through the wilderness, they were visited by a plague of venomous serpents whose bite sent fiery pains through their bodies, which speedily terminated by their death. God then ordered Moses to make a brazen serpent (the serpent being among the Egyptians the emblem of the healing power, which was well understood by them (Note 1)). This serpent he was to raise up on a pole in a conspicuous part of the encampment, and all who simply looked at it, desiring to be healed, were instantly to be healed. Moses asked no price, no reward; the bitten sufferers were only to exert themselves to look to ensure being healed. Christ Himself told His disciples, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of man be lifted up'—that was Himself on the cross, 'that all'—of every tongue, and kindred, and nation,—'who believe in Him'—that is to say, look on Him as the Israelites at the brazen serpent—'shall not perish'—shall not die of the fiery bite of sin—'but have eternal life.' This is Gospel—Gospel truth. Then what becomes of indulgences, penances, fasts, invocations to saints, to the Virgin Mary, gifts, alms, if bestowed with the idea of purchasing aught? All useless, vain, insulting to God's

generosity, mercy, kindness. It is as if a great noble were to pardon a poor man who had grossly offended him, and, moreover, to bestow a favour on him, and the poor man were to offer him a groat as payment, saying, 'No, I cannot receive your pardon and your favour as a free gift; I must return you something; indeed, a groat is not much, neither do I very greatly value your pardon, because I do not think my offence was very great, nor your favour, which, after all, is but small.'

"'Foolish man,' the lord would say, 'I bestowed that pardon and that favour on you in my beneficence. I require nothing in return but your gratitude and your obedience, and that you should speak of my name and fame among my other vassals, and live in amity with them, doing them all the service in your power. Say, foolish man, what else can a poor, helpless, decrepit, broken-down creature like yourself do for me?' What should you say, dear friends, if this poor wretched man were to answer, 'No, but there are a set of people in your dominions, who assume to be your ministers, though to be sure they make a mockery of your name and love to send people over to serve your enemies,' I can buy of them what they call indulgences, which they say are much better than your free pardon; besides, I may offend as often as I please, and you will be compelled to forgive me because I have paid them; and if it were not for these indulgences, I could fast, I could beat myself, and perform numberless other penances; I could mumble petitions to you, not thinking of what I was saying; indeed, I have no fear but what I can make ample amends to you for this gift which you have bestowed, for this pardon which you have offered. Dear friends, you will say what a weak, conceited, foolish, impudent wretch is that man of whom you speak; and yet what are you doing when you perform penances, and fasts, and such-like works? What did you do when you purchased that mountebank impostor Tetzels indulgences? Confess—confess that he swindled you out of your money, but O do not, by trusting to them, which you might as well do as a sinking man to a feather or a straw in the raging ocean, allow the arch-deceiver Satan to swindle you out of your souls."

This address, of which many similar were delivered at that time throughout Germany and Switzerland, produced a great effect in the village. No one heard it more eagerly, or with greater delight, than Ava and her companion. It brought out clearly so much of what they had read in the convent.

"God's free grace! God's free grace!" they repeated to each other. "Oh, what a loving, merciful God he must be!"

It made Father Nicholas very uncomfortable. Had he, then, all his life been encouraging a system of imposture? It was a question he would have to answer somehow. Dame Margaret also went back to the Castle sorely troubled in mind. She thought that she had by purchasing Tetzels indulgences, secured the salvation of herself and all her family. She was fond of a bargain, and she thought that really she had made a good one by the expenditure of a few gold ducats, considering the advantage to be gained. And now she was afraid that she, and her husband, and children were no nearer heaven than they were before she had bought the indulgences; and from the description Tetzels gave of it, purgatory must be a very disagreeable place, but she comforted herself by thinking that Tetzels might have imposed on his hearers in that matter also.

As, however, there was no lack of Testaments in simple, clear German, and parts of the Bible also, and Albert, and Eric, and Ava, and Beatrice too, able and anxious to explain it, gradually both Dame Margaret's and Laneta's eyes were opened, and their faith in the system to which they had before clung was greatly shaken. Father Nicholas, however, could not be so easily turned from his old notions, and now came that terrible convulsion caused by the outbreak of the peasantry and the sad blood-shedding which followed.

"Ah," he exclaimed, triumphantly, "see the work which Luther and his followers have produced!"

"No such thing," answered the Knight, indignantly; "you ought to know that these attempts were commenced long before Dr Luther was heard of. Discontent has been fermenting among them for many years. They have some reason and a great deal of folly on their side. They have done their work like foolish savages as they are, and they will suffer the fate of fools, though, in the meantime, they may do a great deal of mischief."

Note 1. An interpolation of the author's, this fact probably not being known in Luther's days.

Chapter Nine.

It was at the eventful period described in the last chapter that the Count von Lindburg was first introduced to the reader, leaning on his elbow, with a book before him, in his turret-chamber. He had great cause for thoughtfulness. Eric and Albert had gone to Wittemburg. Ava and Beatrice had continued earnestly labouring among the surrounding peasantry, and the minds of the poor people had been awakened by Albert's sermons with great success; Dame Margaret and Laneta continued wavering; and Father Nicholas, though he did not openly oppose the Gospel, persevered in all his old practices, and remained ready to take the winning side. Public events were one cause of the Knight's anxiety, and, besides, it was rumoured that insurgents were appearing in his neighbourhood, threatening to attack his, among other surrounding castles. It would be wrong to deny that the Reformation was not in a certain degree connected with the rebellion of the peasants, but in this manner: the liberty which the Gospel demands for all men when the spirit of that Gospel is received into their hearts, makes them ready to submit to rulers and endure persecutions patiently; but when, though men know its truths, their hearts have not been regenerated, they being aware of their rights as men appeal to the sword to obtain them.

Certain fanatics, also, had appeared, who, though professing to found their doctrines on the Bible, were greatly opposed to the principles of the Gospel. The most notorious of these was Thomas Munzer, pastor of Alstadt, in Thuringia; another was John Muller, of Bulgenbach, in the Black Forest, the inhabitants of which he rallied round him, and raised the standard of rebellion. Here the insurrection began. On the 19th of July, 1524, some Thurgovian peasants rose against the Abbot of Reichenau, who would not accord them an evangelical preacher. Ere long thousands were collected round the small town of Tengen, to liberate an ecclesiastic who was there imprisoned. The

revolt spread rapidly, from Swabia as far as the Rhenish Provinces, Franconia, Thuringia, and Saxony. At Weinsberg, Count Louis, of Holfenstein, and seventy men under his orders, were condemned to death by the rebels. A body of peasants drew up with their pikes lowered, whilst others drove the Count and his soldiers against this wall of steel. At the approach of the peasants, the cities that were unable to resist them opened their gates and joined them. Wherever they appeared they pulled down the images and broke the crucifixes. Many nobles, some through fear and others from ambition, joined them.

In vain Luther wrote to them, "Rebellion never produces the amelioration we desire, and God condemns it. What is it to rebel if it be not to avenge one's self? The devil is striving to excite to revolt those who embrace the Gospel, in order to cover it with opprobrium; but those who have rightly understood my doctrine do not revolt."

At length the princes threw off their lethargy; the imperial forces marched to encounter the peasants, and defeated them in every direction. The nobles were soon victorious, and retaliated with most terrible severity on the misguided men. The peasants were hung up by hundreds at the roadside, the eyes of numbers were put out, and some were burnt alive, and in all parts of the country the Romish style of worship was re-established. Still the rebellion was far from being stamped out, and large bodies of insurgents were in arms in different parts of the country besides those in the neighbourhood of the Castle of Lindburg. The Knight had done his best to put his Castle in a state of defence, and his own tenantry promised to come in and fight to the last gasp should it be attacked. Ava and Beatrice, notwithstanding the state of things, went about the country as before, fearless of danger. "We are doing our duty," they answered, when Dame Margaret expostulated with them; "we are carrying out the work to which we devoted our lives, in helping our suffering fellow-creatures, in making known the love of God through His dear Son, and He will protect us."

The Knight, as I have said, having done all that a man could do, sat down in his study, to quiet his mind by reading. He found it, however, a difficult task. Even when he managed to keep his eyes on the page, his mind let them labour alone, and refused to take in the matter they attempted to convey. It was a positive relief when he heard a horse's hoofs clattering into the court-yard. He hurried down to hear the news brought by the horseman. It was truly alarming. The scout who had been sent out by the Knight to gain information, stated that a body of some thousand men were advancing, threatening to destroy all the Castles in the district, and that Lindburg was the first on their line of march. Not a moment was to be lost. He instantly sent out messengers, some to summon his retainers, and others to bring in provisions. The drawbridge was raised, the gates secured. Dame Margaret and Laneta were greatly alarmed. Father Nicholas, who had arrived with all the ornaments of the Church, and as much as his mule could carry, urged the ladies, and all he could get to listen to him, to invoke the protection of the saints. "These new-fangled doctrines brought about all these disorders; ergo, you must go back to the old system to avert them, if it is not already too late."

The Knight advised him to talk sense or keep silence, but the time was opportune, he thought.

"Religion must be supported," he answered, meaning the Romish system, "or we shall be undone."

From the top of the watch-tower a cloud of dust was seen rising. It was caused by the insurgent peasants, horse and foot, approaching.

"Poor people, they have many real causes of complaint. I wish they had remained quiet, for their own sake, and allowed the law to right them," observed the Knight.

"Let us pray for them that their hearts may be changed, and that they may see their folly and wickedness," said Ava; and Beatrice repeated the sentiment.

Just then three horsemen were seen approaching the Castle at full speed. The Knight soon recognised his son and Albert von Otten; the other was a stranger.

"Ah, they come to bring us the aid of their swords," exclaimed the Knight. "Three gentlemen will be a host in themselves when opposed to those unhappy serfs."

The drawbridge was lowered to admit them. Eric directed that it should be left down, as they were going again to sally forth immediately. He embraced his father and mother and sisters, and he might have said a few words to Beatrice, as certainly Albert did to Ava, and Eric introduced the stranger as Frederick Myconius, professor of divinity.

"Welcome, gentlemen; but I thought, I confess, that you were fighting men come to aid in defence of the Castle. I was counting on your good swords."

"Our good swords you shall have, father," answered Eric, taking off the belt to which hung the scabbard of his weapon. "But we ourselves cannot wield them. We go forth with other weapons than those of steel, and trusting to other strength than an arm of flesh to quell these misguided men. Dr Myconius will address them, as Dr Martin Luther has already addressed thousands, and turned them aside from their purpose of vengeance. We have, though, no time to lose."

"Go forth, my son—go forth, my friends; I feel sure that God, who sees all our actions, will protect you with His Almighty arm in so noble and pious an object," exclaimed the Knight, holding the sword which had been given to him.

The three brave young men rode forth from the Castle unarmed, and hastened towards the rebel host. They well knew the danger, humanly speaking, to which they were exposing themselves, but not for a moment did they hesitate doing what they knew to be right. They were soon face to face with the insurgent band, led on by a man in a red cloak and hat and white plume. They were a wild savage set of beings in appearance. Many a bold man might have hesitated to encounter them. Those who now advanced to meet them trusted not in their own strength to deliver them. Dr Myconius rode first. As he drew close to the insurgents, he lifted up his arm and said, "Bear with me,

dear friends, while I address a few words to you, and ask you what you seek? what are you about to do? what object do you desire to gain? Is it one well-pleasing to God, or is it not rather one He abhors? Is it revenge? The Gospel of Jesus Christ will not permit its indulgence. Is it to overthrow principalities and powers? The Gospel orders us to obey them. Is it to oppose the power of the Papacy? The light of truth can alone do that. Is it lust, rapine, murder, you desire to commit? Those who do such things can never inherit the kingdom of heaven. Listen, dear friends, to those who love you, who feel for you, who know that you have souls to be saved—precious souls above all price in God’s sight, for them He sent down His Son on earth to suffer far more wrongs than you have ever suffered. Endanger not these precious souls by the acts you contemplate. Turn aside from your purpose, fall on your knees, and pray to God to enlighten your minds, to give you patience above all things to bear your sufferings here for a short time, that, trusting in the merits of Christ Jesus, who once suffered for you, and now reigns and pleads for you, you maybe raised up to dwell with Him, to reign with Him in happiness unspeakable for ever and ever.”

Such was the style of eloquence with which one of the great leaders of the Reformation addressed the lately infuriated insurgents. It went to their hearts; they acknowledged its truth, the power from which it flowed, and yielded to its influence. Peaceably they divided into small parties; thus they returned to their villages, to their separate homes, speaking as they went of the love of Christ, and the sufferings He had endured for their sakes, and praying that they too might endure any sufferings it might please their heavenly Father to call on them to bear with patience for His sake, that thus the Christian character might be exalted in the eyes of the world.

The three friends returned to the Castle. The success of their undertaking was heard of with astonishment. The Knight went to his Testament, and came back exclaiming, “I see, I see, it was the right way to do it. It was the way Jesus Christ would have acted, and I doubt not He was with you to counsel and guide you.”

Dame Margaret and Laneta, and even Father Nicholas, confessed that the mode they had employed with Dr Martin Luther and others, to put down the insurrection, was far more satisfactory and sensible than that which the Roman Catholic nobles and knights had pursued with cannon-balls, bullets, and sharp swords. The two ladies at length, through the gentle influence of Ava and Beatrice, completely abandoned the errors of Rome, and embraced the truths of evangelical religion. Father Nicholas, still clinging to the idolatry to which he had been accustomed, was compelled to give up his cure, and thankfully accepted a small pension from the Knight, on condition that he should keep silence till he had learned the truth. Albert von Otten, notwithstanding his rank, gladly became the humble pastor of Lindburg, and little Ava as gladly became his most efficient helpmate, while Beatrice von Reichenau married Eric. The Knight arrived at a green old age, and though there was little peace in the world, he found it in his home and in his heart, and saw his grandchildren grow up pious Christians and sound brave Protestants.

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