

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR.

I. ANTECEDENTS.

The Protestant Revolution of the 16th century was essentially a politico-ecclesiastical movement. So far as Lutheranism differed on the one hand from the Roman Catholicism of the time, and on the other hand from the old evangelical movement which it to a great extent supplanted and destroyed, it represents an effort to carry out a doctrinal reform by arraying the princes of Germany against the Emperor and the Pope, and it resulted in bringing ecclesiastical affairs into a state of complete subserviency to these princes. The Thirty Years' War may with entire propriety be regarded as the culmination of the struggle for ascendancy between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant powers, and the Peace of Westphalia as the first settlement, that had any chance of being permanent, of the struggle begun under Luther's leadership in 1517. It is interesting to speculate on what might have been, however futile such speculations may appear. When Luther appeared, the old evangelical party was at the height of its influence, and had its hundreds of thousands of adherents distributed throughout Europe. The revival of learning which began in Italy during the 15th century had, from the beginning of Luther's movement, extended its influence all over Europe, and was at this time making rapid progress in the diffusion of enlightenment, in the overthrow of human authority, in bringing into contempt the superstition and the intolerance of the middle ages. The old evangelical Christianity was coming into close and harmonious relations with the new learning, and the Papal Court was so dominated by the spirit of the new learning as to have little disposition to persecute evangelical Christians so long as they refrained from personal attacks on ecclesiastical institutions. We may well ask ourselves, whether the old evangelical Christianity and the new learning, working hand in hand, would not have brought about a far different state of things in Europe from what we find in 1648. The Thirty Years' War does not represent the beginning of the politico-