

From the Catholic Address.

HISTORY

Of the life, works and doctrines of Calvin, by Mr. Audin, Knight of the order of St. Gregory the Great, member of the Academy and literary circle of Lyons, of the Tiberine Academy of Rome, of the Academy of the Catholic Religion of the same city, &c. New edition, revised and corrected. Paris. 1843.

(CONTINUED.)

CALVIN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOURGES, 1529—1532.

"The ideas of Gerard Calvin underwent a change. Whether because he had divined the religious tendencies of his son, or foresaw the contests into which Catholicism was about to enter, and, amid which the faith of the neophyte might have succumbed, or because theology presented to his view but a rude career replete with perils, and without profit or glory, he desired to give a different direction to the studies of his son. Wordly thoughts agitated the paternal breast, as Calvin himself remarks."

The law was then the path to emolument, to honors, and to glory. Francis I. had invited Andrew Alciati to Bourges, where, for the large salary of 1200 *ecus* he was teaching law, and giving celebrity to the university of that city. Thither Gerard determined to send his son, who, without murmur, went first to Orleans, to attend the lectures of the famous Counsellor (*jurisconsulte*), Pierre de l'Estoille, in order to qualify himself for the university of Bourges. Pierre de l'Estoille taught Calvin how to argue more closely, to cut off from his phraseology its too great exuberance, to use ornaments and figures with sobriety, and to give more freshness to his style. Calvin was acute, studious and much esteemed by his master. But Francis Baldwin, Balduinus says, "that Calvin at College played no other part but that of calumniator of his companions: that these called him *accusativus*, saying of him, 'John knows how to decline even as far as the *accusative*.'"

From Orleans he went to Bourges, where his studies were suddenly interrupted, by a summons home to the bedside of his sick father.

"Gerard Calvin slept in the faith of his ancestors, reconciled with the Church which he had saddened, and muttering a prayer with his lips for the salvation of a son, about to be exposed to the temptations of the world. Calvin has recorded no description of the last moments of his father; probably because he would have been obliged to paint the hopes of a soul, which was breaking its terrestrial ties to soar at the words of the priest.—*Depart, Christian soul, from this body of clay, and go to your God. Behold the first lines, traced by the student in a letter to Nicholas Duchemin:*

"On leaving I had promised to be with you soon. I was waiting: but my father's sickness has delayed my departure. The physicians induced me to hope for a return to health, then I thought of thee.

Days glide on, at length there is no hope, death approaches. Happen how it may, I shall see you again. Embrace Francis Daniel, Philip, and all your household. Have you already acquired a name among the professors of Literature?"

By the bedside of a dying father, whose end has been announced by the physicians, and when the priest is administering the last rites of religion, Calvin writes this letter, and,

"He has no tear to announce this news to his friend! See if he asks Duchemin for a single prayer? He describes the scene as we would speak of an ordinary drama. 'There is no hope of health, death is certain.' The Doctor, who goes forth from the room of the sick man in his agony, would not speak of it otherwise; and yet the kiss which he was about to impress on the lips of his father was to be the last: he will never see him again: the father and the child will never meet again.

Gerard, an impenitent papist according to Beza, has no dwelling but one of fire; John, the evangelist, chosen by God, will see the Lord face to face.' 'Thus the reformation has already extinguished filial sensibility in this young heart. Luther had not the sad consolation to see the aged Hans expire. Far distant from his father, he learns that the last hour has sounded for the miner of Mærha, and then he also writes to a friend, but with what bitter sadness, and what poignant sorrow!"

Calvin returned from Noyon to Bourges, to learn from the man of all sciences, Alciati of Milan. He heard him and was in admiration. Always among the first at the lessons, he took his post near the professor's chair, and, with gaping mouth, fixed gaze, listened in a sort of extacy to the words of Alciati. In his own room, he filled his note books with the fine things he had just heard.

"He wrote and studied till night, and to enable himself to do so, ate little at supper; afterwards, in the morning, while yet in his couch, he ruminated upon what he had learned the evening before."

He also attended the lessons of Melchior Wolmar, a German Lutheran, who seems to have soon directed his attention towards the scholar of Noyon, as likely to be of great aid in advancing the principles of the reformation. In a letter, which this professor wrote to Farel, we may perceive what great hopes he founded upon Calvin's *pettish humour*.

"As to Calvin, I do not so much fear his tortuous genius, as I hope well from it; for this vice is suited to the advancement of our affairs, to make him a great defender of our opinions, because he will not so easily be taken himself, as he will be able to envelop his adversaries in greater snares."

Calvin, to his praise be it known, long remembered the friendship of this professor, and in his commentary on the epistle to the Corinthians, speaks gratefully of his good Wolmar.

The advice of Wolmar, it is said, induced Calvin to resume the study of theology. One day, while professor and pupil were taking their usual evening promenade, Wolmar said to him: Do you know that your father has mistaken your vocation? You are not called to preach law like Alciati, nor to spout Greek as I do; give yourself to theology, for theology is the mistress of all the sciences."

"These words decide the future of Calvin, and that very day, he threw aside his Homer and set himself to study the word of God. Now, this word which he found in the bible, was not the Latin of the Vulgate, still this day read in the church and the school, but it was the French of Le Fevre d'Etaples, or perhaps of John Olivetan, which with the zeal of a neophyte, he sought to explain, as he might have done one of those ancient comedies, upon which Melchior was commenting. A Catholic professor would not have forgotten to tell him that a beautiful exegesis of the holy books existed, having been transmitted from age to age, from Jesus to Leo X, and against which no human voice could prevail, were it that of Arius, Berengarius, or of Luther—authority. The master would have shown him at that very moment the bible amid the contests of men loving novelties, of Zuinglius, Luther, Melancthon, Ocolampadius, Capito, Hedio, Bucer, who could not understand themselves, and were building a Babel, whose construction still remains."

Among the pupils, that thronged round the chair of Melchior Wolmar, was Beza, who has been, by Catholicism, less harshly judged than by Protestantism, which calls him "the opprobrium of France, a simoniac, and an infamous libertine." "A fine young man," says Bolsec, "quite perfumed with amber and posey, who at the same time made court to women, to the muses, and to his professor, Wolmar. The professor spoiled him, the muses inspired him with songs which Catullus would not have disavowed, the women deceived him. It appears that the scholar of Vezelay had reason to complain of them, and he was compelled to seek in a sanburg of Paris for a health comprised in their service. He is the sole artist which the Genevan reformation has produced." He then thought less of the word of God than of Anacreon and Horace, and spent his time in celebrating his amorous conquests in trochees and iambers, which he read to his companions.—He sang the praises of his loved Audebert in verses which might have been applauded at Rome at its most corrupt epoch, but which should have been burnt in France. In after life these caused him lively chagrin, and had they not have been made imperishable by the type of the printer, Robert Etienne, he would have torn them from his book of epigrams. "We must summon Catullus to give testimony to the virtues of Beza, in default of Christian poets, ancient or modern, whom we would vainly exult as bail for the innocence of his verses to Candida and Audebert.

Worse even than Luther, who, over his strong beer of Thorgan, at the tavern of the Black Eagle, was wont to treat of wo-

man more like an anaesthetist than an apostle of the gospel, Beza, finds his type in Gorydon chanting his loved Alexis, an shocks chaste ears with strains of equivocal love. Yet it is he, who dares tell us of the sad state of morals at Orleans and Bourges before the arrival of Calvin, and who assert that.

"The spark of faith burned only in two or three bosoms,—in those of Daniel, the lawyer, and of Nicholas Duchemin; that then hope in Christ, our redeemer, was extinct; that his blood was no longer invoked for sinners; calumnies which Luther spread upon his path, when he appeared at Wittemberg, Ocolampadius, on his entry into Bale, Zuinglius on his mountains of Schwytz, and Bucer at Stratsburg.

Some have wished to compare Beza and Melancthon, two natures entirely dissimilar. With Beza, it was matter poetically organized; his ear could be shocked by the jar of limping verses, and offended by the sound of a doubtful epithet, and his brain was fertile in the production of all sort of metres—but his soul took no part in his mechanical labour. You may see him in the abbey of Cloney slightly moved by the devastation caused by the reformers: The mutilated statues, the arabesques shattered by the lance of a soldier, the richest works of art ruined by a vandal fanaticism may claim a slight tribute of regret. But cold and unmoved as the marble, does he behold those priests whose zeal and taste had raised these stones, blessed them, and consecrated to the Lord, driven from their holy dwelling, shelterless, and without bread. Melancthon was not constituted thus, he had a soul which lived and felt.—Had you seen Melancthon when Luther, at Coburg, wished to break to pieces the clerical hierarchy, you might have surprised the tears trembling on his eyelids, for the ruin of the episcopacy.

"If he chanced, like Beza, to hear at Stratsburg the stones of the sacred edifice chanting a concert of Catholic souvenirs, he will not insult the faith of the Bishops who sleep in the vaults of the church. He will not damn them like Beza, the scholar of Vezelay. Because his mother was a Catholic, as was the mother of Beza and Calvin, and he cannot imagine that God will not have pity on her whose milk had nourished him. Calvin, in his puritanism, sent to eternal flames, all who did not march by the light of the reformation. You are mistaken if you imagine that God placed Beza near Calvin, in order to temper his ferocious zeal. Beza indeed has a lyre, but he will not use it: and besides, will Calvin who compares himself to a prophet, listen to it? Music and poetry will never assume empire over a soul so cold as that of Calvin."

Beza and Calvin, by wordly ties of friendship, were united for the work of ruin. Hatred of the papacy, of priests of the Catholic religion, bands them together. In their unholy zeal, they trample into dust the loftiest and most perfect creations of genius and art. To rob the saints of veneration they allow the prized labours of the half inspired sculptor to be broken to pieces; and the canvases, immortalized by

* Calvin preface ad psal.

* Ms. ex Bib. Genev.