

Sculpture, Mathematics, Astronomy, in the study of the Greek, Latin and Hebrew tongues, as she was prominent before in Theology and Architecture. Strange to say, her pre-eminence in fine arts and literary pursuits produced a host of enemies. Welcome besides to civilization and progress as this movement was in its chief features, it nevertheless developed a tendency more or less inimical to right worship and morals. The habit of analyzing, unimpeachable in merely secular matters, extended to the Scriptures and all sacred things, causing them, in contempt of religious direction, to be treated with as much freedom as if they belonged to the province of profane science and admitted no higher laws. The disasters of such a course are soon recounted. "Whenever," writes an eminent author, "man proposes to study some object of the material order, reason aided by analysis and criticism can make wonderful progress in knowledge. When, however, his researches are carried to the supernatural world reason finds itself falling short because it has gone beyond the circle of demonstrations to which natural truths are adapted: it is not at home with its object. What necessarily happens. There is either a subjective transformation of the supernatural, in other words heresy, or an absolute denial of the same, that is incredulity." When the mind finds itself unable to rise by its own exertions to the level of supernatural truths, it naturally seeks to reduce them to its own measure and scope by changing them, or if the alteration proves unsatisfactory, by denying them entirely. These were the terms to which men, dissatisfied with revealed religion, were rapidly tending at the time of which we are speaking. The great cry, however, went out against abuses. That religious discipline had relaxed mainly through the stay of the Pontifical Court at Avignon and the great Western Schism cannot be denied. Most of the evils came by a curious interference of political influences in ecclesiastical matters. Princes, taking advantage of the distracted times, usurped the right to confer valuable church livings and in consequence of naming the incumbents. This abuse, a promising source of revenue, often recruited the ranks of God's minis-

ters with individuals scarcely a credit on the score of doctrine and morals. How many vocations responded not to a supernatural call but to the attraction exercised by the honors and wealth of the clerical state. Even at Rome the prevalence of much disorder created alarm. Morals grew corrupt in the same measure as the material ease and wealth of families were consolidated. The very men who by virtue of their attainments or their elevated positions were relied on to furnish the example of simple and virtuous life, in too many instances were distinguished for worldly pomp and for all the extravagance of a luxurious life.

These evils, it was felt, would be corrected only by a General Council. "Princes and nations earnestly called for one," says the historian Alzog. Yet the moment was scarcely propitious. The growing opposition to established authorities and the abuses cried out against, *took alarm*. Europe was disturbed by continual war, whilst the Turks kept Italy and Austria in continual dread. In this unsettled state of things Luther precipitated the crisis in Germany; Calvin, in France; Zuinglius, in Switzerland; Henry VIII, in England; Gustavus Veza, in Sweden. These leaders feigned reform, but really meant the destruction of the Church. Their platform was broad enough. It was offered to the piously inclined as the restoration of primitive fervor; to minds of independent mould, as the ideal of liberty of thought; to enemies of the clergy it promised a share of the spoils; to lax ecclesiastics, abolition of celibacy; to sybarites, the removal of the checks which fasting and confession placed upon their evil passions. Princes warmly supported a change which relieved their authority of a wholesome but unwelcome curb. The aristocracy rejoiced at the downfall of a rival order, whilst middlemen and vassals were cheered by the prospects of abolished rents and tithes. With so many weighty elements of popularity in their favor, it is not amazing to see the new doctrines, secretly encouraged or openly sustained by arms, gaining in a short time a large part of Germany, several cantons of Switzerland, the whole of England and Sweden.

Though these religious divisions were incredible bitter, there was no idea at first of