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MARCH 13. 1897.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, despite all facts to the contrary, continues to be lauded in popular text-books in our language as the dawn of a new era of enlightenment. According to Protestant historians, education, culture, and progress not only date from the Reformation, but proceed from it as effects from one universal cause. In order to justify this view, they have recourse to a historic stratagem. They make the Reformation antedate itself by half a century at least, so as to take in the great movement of the early Renais sance, and the founding of many of the great universities, and try to make every great man and scholar from Dante to Erasmus a forerunner of Martin Luther. Thus they couple Dante and Savonarola with Martin Luther and Giordano Bruno, and perform many other similar historical

But the fact must be borne in mind that the Reformation began with Martin Luther-and that on the very day on which he posted up his ninety-five heretical theses on the door of the Schlosskirche of Wittenberg, viz, on the third day of October, 1517.

could boast of in the way of culture was due to the fostering care of the Church, and not to the influence of the Protestant Reformation. Here, then, we must draw the line and give each epoch its due share of the credit : not that we are to attribute whatever progress we may find after the Reformation to its influence, but rather to the civilizing work which the Church had been doing for centuries. A period of culture and enlightenment, it should be remembered, is not the work of a day, but the result of the combined efforts and the development of generations.

Luther's public teaching removed every restraint from the animal pas Man was no longer sions of man. accountable for his evil deeds. Good works were no longer necessary for salvation ; bad works, no matter how heinous, were no bar to it. Bloodshed and rebellion were positively encour aged and preached from the house In 1520 Luther writes to friend: "If you understand the Gospel rightly, I beseech you do not believe that it can be carried out without tumult, scandal, sedition. The word of God is a sword, is war,

devastation, is scandal, is perdition, is This is the doctrine which Martin Luther preached in public and in private, in his writings and by word of mouth, and particularly in the pulpit.

Luther lived long enough to see the fruits of his rebellious preaching. The first fruit was the contempt of everything religious. "Peasants and nobles," he says, "now know the Gospel better than St. Paul or Dr. Martin Luther; they are wise and they think themselves better than all their clergy." "Formerly under the Pope," he says in another place, when we were forced and urged to receive the sacrament we went in crowds. Now . . . our behavior to-wards It is so disgusting and shameless that we seem not to be human beings (still less Christians), but only blocks and stones, that stand in no need of Public and private charity had vanished. "Of old under the Pope," says Luther himself, "people gave very largely, indeed, and beyond measure . . They gave in heaps . . for the reward.

measure . . . The for they looked But now, that with the light of the Gospel we are told nothing about our merits, no one is willing to give and to help." "Then they could build convents and churches with an outlay which was quite unnecessary now they cannot repair a hole in the roof to protect the minister from the rain." "Where is there a town at present with sufficient means or piety to contribute enough for the support of a schoolmaster or clergyman?"

The state of morality became appal ing. Luther himself puts this fact in strong and unmistakable language "The more and the longer we preach the worse matters grow." "People are now possessed with seven devils, while formerly they were possessed with one only; the devil now enters into people in crowds, so that men are now more avaricious, unmerciful, im pure, insolent . . . than previously under the Pope." According to Luther's own confession, intemperance, impurity, violence, murder and

suicide became the order of the day. A movement which, according to the acknowledgments of its own authors and promoters, brought about such a state of moral degradation could not be favorable to education And yet men who are supposed to read history put down the Reformation as the most powerful factor in civilization, enlightenment and moral and intellectual progress, and proclaim the apos tate monk of Wittenberg as the apostle of education and culture, while, in fact, he was in word and example the preacher and promoter of every species of barbarism and immorality.

Luther lived to see the effects of his teaching on education, and has borne unmistakable testimony to it himself. In a former article we have seen what care was bestowed on the home education of the young in Germany before the Reformation. After the introduction of the Reformation Luther says: "It is a shame how badly we now bring up our children. . . . Parents allow their children to do what they please. Mothers do not look after their daughters . . . do not chastise them, do not teach them to live modestly and chastely." "Complaints about the insubordination, lawlessness and impudence of our young people sent his children to school, or allowed them to sent them to be educated; for people had learned from Luther's writings that priests and scholars had so miserably and chastely." "Complaints about the insubordination, lawlessness and impudence of our young people to them to school, or allowed fourteen years preceding 1522, 6485 them to be educated; for people had fourteen years preceding 1522, 6485 them to be educated; for people had fourteen years preceding 1522, 6485 them to be educated; for people had learned from Luther's writings that priests and scholars had so miserably early fourteen years following 1522 only 1935 were duped the world, that-every one because them to be educated; for people had fourteen years following 1522 only 1935 were duped the world, that-every one because them to live priests and scholars had so miserably them to be educated; for people had fourteen years following 1522, only 1935 were duped the world, that-every one because them to live priests and scholars had so miserably them to be educated; for people had fourteen years preceding 1522, 6485 them to be educated; for people had fourteen years following 1522, only 1935 were duped the world, that-every one because them to live priests and scholars had so miserably the fourteen years following 1522, only 1935 were duped the world, that-every one because them to live priests and scholars had so miserably them to be educated; for people had fourteen years preceding 1522, 6485 them to fourteen years preceding 1522, 6485 them to fourteen years preceding 1522, only 1935 were duped the world, that every one because the world of the world of the people had them to live them to be ducated; for them to be ducated;

ness, he assures us, was so widespread possible. among the youth that "the greater The de

Before the Reformation the country was well supplied with schools, so that father of what is now known every child in the land, not only in the all the facilities for an elementary of the country a few years after the Reformation!

berless preachers deliberately used their influence to bring about the downfall of education. There was a system. atic effort made to establish on the ruins of ecclesiastical and educational institutions the ascendency of an ignor-ant populace under the lead of religious demagogues. These proceeded on the same principles as in the fifteenth century the Hussites and Talborites of Bohemia: 'Whoever devotes himself o the study of the liberal arts, or takes a degree in them, is vain and heath. nish and offends against the Gospel. All the principles of philosophy and of the liberal arts, however they may serve the law of Christ, should be ex-Whatever the Reformers themselves cluded from our studies and set aside as pagan; and the schools are to be destroyed.

A contemporary writes in the year "In these most troublous times I fear that all learning, together with all linguistic knowledge, will be lost. That is the object of certain preachers who boast to be the revivers of piety and scourges of the 'Sophists,' while they themselves are much more foolish than the 'Sophists.' I cannot, how ever see how piety can be sustained without learning and the knowledge of the Greek language. And yet these men cry out with wild uproar that there is no need of Latin and Greek, that German and Hebrew are sufficient. They wish to transform Christendom,

as it were, into a Turkish regime.' Melancthon felt greatly chagrined at the tactics of these fanatics, and writes that "Those who go on preaching to the unwary youth to abandon literary studies would deserve to have their tongues cut out.'

Such agitation, together with the rowing corruption and savagery, oon told very unfavorably against he elementary schools. As early as 524 Luther himself bewails the sad "In German lands," he writes, act. in a circular to burgomasters and city fathers, "the schools are allowed to go to ruin." "Wherever the convents and other religious foundations have been secularized," he says, "no one is found willing to send his children to school or have them study." " If the ecclesiastical state, they say, is of no use, we had better leave learning Again he assures us in his characteris tic fashion, that, while under "Popery the devil spread out his nets in such a way, by the erection of convents and schools, "that a child could hardly escape him without a special miracle his satanic majesty was now unwilling

to let his victims learn anything. "When I was young," says Luther, it was a proverb in the schools that it was no less a crime to neglect a pupil than to corrupt innocence. But now children are born and grow up uncared for amongst us ; and alas ! there is no one to take any interest in them or to direct them; they are abuse." The Rector of the University allowed to go as they please. So much writes: "All scientific studies lie money is yearly spent on rifles, roads, bridges, embankments and numberless other such things, for the peace and comfort of the town, why, then, not spend so much on the poor 'shiftless youth as to employ at least one or two competent teachers."

Luther is very modest in his de mands; he only asks the people to contribute one tenth of what they spent voluntarily on "Popery." "We must," he says, "have some one to administer God's word and the sacraments to us, and, to be the spiritual guardians of the people. But whence shall we get such if we allow the schools to go to ruin without building up other Christian schools to take their places?

In the same year, 1524, he writes to is followers in Riga and Livland: 'I have preached and written much have good schools maintained in the cities, to educate learned men and women, in order that we might have good Christian pastors and preachers o keep the word of God in vogue ; but the people behave so indifferently in this matter as if every one despaired of his own daily bread and the neces-saries of life, so that it seems to me it school masters and pastors and preachers must give up their professions and devote themselves to menial or other work-they must give up the word of God to save themselves from hunger. In former times, he assures us, a small town of four or five hundred burghers paid to the church 700 florins yearly, and now they are unwilling to con tribute 100 or 200 floring for the support of school and pulpit. Formerly they supported hundreds of priests and beggar Lazarus." "They live like unbelieving heathens," he adds; and therefore he threatens them with the

divine vengeance. A chronicler of the time says: About the year 1525 the schools began to decline, so that hardly any one

THE GERM OF DEGENIRACY. are heard everywhere." Drunken- and insulted him, whenever it was

The decline of the universities went part of the finest and most talented hand in hand with that of the elementyoung men prematurely undermined ary and middle schools. Luther in-their health, their body and their life." veighed mercilessly against universities and higher studies. Aristotle, the every child in the land, not only in the scholastic philosophy, was particularly cities, cut also in country places, had the object of his abuse. To Luther, the Philosopher was "the old pagan, education. How different the aspect in whom there was no art, but only utter darkness." The universities were "dens of assassins," "temples were "dens of assassins," "Wherever the new Gospel was preached," says Dr. Janssen, "numtion." In a sermon published in 1521 "The universities deserve to be ground to powder; nothing more hellish, nothing more devilish, has appeared on earth from the begin-ning of the world, nor will appear to the end."

> Herein Luther was seconded by numberless other preachers of the Word, who indulged in similar invectives. Their abuse was levelled chiefly against the study of the classics and polite literature, which, as we have shown in a preceding article, had stood in high esteem, and were cultivated with great zeal and extraordinary success. The decline was incredibly rapid. As early as 1524 the complaint was general that the students of universities were no longer devoted to solid studies, but wasted their time in religious contentions, in publishing and circulating tracts and pamphlets. While claiming to be the professors of a new philosophy and the reformers of public morals, they themselves degenerated into barbarism

and immorality. In 1523 the Humanist Ecbanus Hes us, professor at the University of Erfurt, wrote: "Under the pretence of the gospel, the apostate monks here are completely undermining the lib eral arts. In their pernicious preaching they rob the true studies of their prestige, in order to paim off their in sanities as wisdom on the public. Our school is deserted; we ourselves are objects of contempt." In another letter the same professor says: "We have fallen so low that only the memory of our former prosperity is left us the hope to regain it has fully van-ished." 'Our school is gone to ruin," writes another professor, and "among our students there reigns such unbridled license that it could not be worse in a camp of soldiers; life here becomes unbearable to me." A third professor testifies to the same effect What an intellectual decline has ome over us! No one can behold without tears how all zeal for learning and virtue has vanished. I am great ly alarmed lest, after the foundation of knowledge has been destroyed, piety may also vanish, and a state of barbarism may ensue that will complete ly demolish the little remnant of religion and science that is still lett us

These evidences, though of a private character, are of the greatest weight. Yet we have the strongest evidence of an official character to the same effect. In 1523, the dean of the philosophica of the same University of Erfurt in an official document, writes If any one had foretold that in such a short time our University would have so degenerated as hardly to retain the shadow of its former splendor—as is now, alas! a patent fact—no one would have given him credence. University matters are so treated in the pulpit that almost every time honored custon or institution is made the subject of prostrate and despised; academic honors are in contempt ; discipline has vanished from among the students."
"But what wonder," he adds, "that
the schools are in such condition, since not even religion, which for so many ages has been held in honor, is secure against outrage? Our sins have brought it about that factious demagogues are permitted to attack every thing with impunity, according to their caprice, so that now hardly anything is in honor but what was form-

erly in contempt." The consequence was that the num ber of the professors as well as of the students of the University declined from year to year. Few could be found to devote themselves to the office of teaching. In the year 1520 21 there were three hundred and eleven students immatriculated in Erfurt; in the following year, the year after, it was reduced to seventy two, and the succeeding year, 1523 24, there were only thirty four matriculations.

There was a similar decline at Wit tenberg. In 1523 Melanchton, who was at this time professor at Wittenberg, writes to his friend Eobanus saries of life, so that it seems to me it "I see you chagrined, as I am myself, will come to such a pass that both at the degeneracy of our studies, which but a short time ago were a matter of pride, but now begin again to decline. Those who despise profane learning, it seems to me, have no higher esteem for the sacred sciences." In the preface of his works "If that golden age had he says: come, which we formerly anticipated from the flourishing condition of let ters, my writing would have dis-played more grace, elegance and splendor, but the unfortunate discord, monks, gave them lands and cities and castles: and now they treat their preachers "as Dives treated the ments: "I live here as in a desert. I hardly meet any but narrow-minded men. Therefore, I sit in my room like a lame cobbler." This decay of education Melancthon clearly attributes

to the work of the Reformers. Similar was the condition of the other universities of Northern Ger-

lation of 300 students yearly, the num ber dwindled down to 88 in 1524, and

Basel, Heidelberg and Freiburg, in South Germany, present the same sorry spectacle. "The university is sorry spectacle. dead and buried; the students' benches are empty and so are the chairs of the professors." This is the report from Basel from the year 1524. only twenty-nine students were registered: in 1525 they were reduced to six. In 1525 the number of professors at Heidelberg was in excess of the number of students. "I have barely five regular hearers," writes Ulrich Zasius, the great jurist, from Freiburg in 1528, "and these five are Frenchmen, to boot. I am dis-charging the duties of my office as professor with great painstaking though I do not know what pupils shall have, or whether I shall have any at all or not; however, my position becomes irksome to me, as the science of the law is thoroughly despised." 1524 the same professor writes: "There is a remarkable dearth of students here, and I see no prospect of

improvement. The University of Vienna, one of the very first in Europe, which in Catholic times had some hundreds of professors on its staff and 7,000 scholars, was reduced to such a state that there was hardly a dozen of students left in it. The law faculty had to be discontinued altogether for a while, and for a long time no degrees ould be conferred in theology for lack of professors.

This was the boasted period of enphtenment brought about inGermany the Reformation! truly a lux a no

The decline in every other phase o culture kept even pace with that of education. Before the Reformation in Germany the publishing business was in a most flourishing condition. works in large and numerous editions were printed and circulated among all classes of the population. Now truly meritorious works were supplanted by flood of controversial pamphlets scurrilons satires and unseemly representations of Popes, Bishops, and monks, which were peddled about throughout town and city. The laws of license and copyright were utterly disregarded.

Erasmus, in his writings, makes fre quent reference to this literary degenracy. "In Germany," he says, there is hardly anything for sale but Lutheran and anti-Lutheran litera-In a letter to a friend he ture. reigns literature is in abeyance. They only look for two things-a wife and a pension. The Gospel (i. e., the Lutheran religion) supplies the rest, viz., to live as they please."

Such was the sudden check which the Reformation put on education and culture in Germany. A golden age was fast approaching when the religious upheaval took place. It was re tarded for three centuries by that un fortunate catastrophe. three hundred years hardly anything was produced in art and polite letters in the Fatherland but what every cultured German of our time would be shamed of. True, the Catholic coleges and universities, which were hiefly in the hands of the Society of esus, wherever they were tolerated, did much during that time to stay the tide of barbarism; but in such an unsettled state of affairs, amid such fanaticism, bloodshed, cruelty and demoralization, their fruits could scarcely be expected to ripen to perfect matur-

What we have said in these pages and preceding articles presents but a very imperfect idea of education in dermany on the verge of the Middle Ages and the first years of the Refornation-the old regime and the new But meagre as our sketch is, it will, we trust, supply a sufficient answer to those who go on, parrot-like, to repeat the patent old historic lie, that the Re ormation was the dawn of enlightenment and intellectual culture. who would have more information on the subject we refer once more to Mgr. Janssen's History of the German People, to which we gladly acknowledge our indebtedness for most of the facts and authorities used in these articles—Rev. James Conway, S. J. Abridged from March Messenger of he Sacred Heart.

The Penitential Season.

The Lenten season never requires any especial commendation to obtain from Catholics a becoming observance. conscious that during its days excep ional opportunities are afforded the oul of gaining large spiritual profit or itself, the faithful, as a rule, of their own accord, welcome the coming of this season of grace and enter agerly into its spirit, as the crowded attendance at the Lenten devotions bundantly attests. It is but a brief eriod, after all, from Ash Wednesday Easter : and the more fully we com passionate with the suffering Saviour, in commemoration of Whose forty days' fast in the desert Lant is kept by the Church, the more largely we will share in the triumphs and joys of His Resurrection. - Sacred Heart Review.

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LUTHER'S DEATH.

About the death of Martin Luther there has always; been some mystery, and of such a character that it will now probably never be cleared up. Much has been written on the subject both by Protestants and Catholics-the former especially vehement in the effort to make it appear that the noted "Refermer" died under perfectly natural circumstances; and the latest addition to the literature relating to this matter is a work by Father Kleis, viewed in the current issue of the American Catholic Quarterly Revie

Father Kleis alludes again to the fact that the strange and contradictory accounts of the circumstances attending the decease of Luther given b his nearest friends lead to the inevitable conclusion in the minds of un biased readers that something happened in connection with his passing away from this life that needed de What was it that they sought to conceal?

The statement that Luther committed suicide is an old one, dating from a period almost immediately after he had died, and this has been freely dis cussed-only a year or so ago by a Lutheran clergyman in Brooklyn, who, in a sermon, gave at much length reasons why he regarded the report as unfounded. One version has it that Luther hanged himself; another that he was found dead in bed; and it seems that one of Luther's servants was the authority for the former statement The whole subject is enveloped to this day in a cloud of mystery and suspicion, which should not have been the case in regard to the last hours of a man so widely known as Luther, concerning whose end there must have naturally been at the time widespread curiosity.

One may say, at least, considering all the circumstances, that it is not incredible that Luther should have com mitted suicide. He was a man much subject, after he had left the Church, to "black humors"—to periods of dark despondency-and to extraordin ary hallucinations; and his erratic and contradictory promulgations, and the obscene character of much of his Table Talk," suggests, indeed, species of insanity. That his head was turned by the notoriety he had

gained is avowed by many of his contemporaries, including some hardly anything for sale but of those identified with the and anti-Lutheran literation a letter to a friend he "Wherever Lutheranism terature is in abeyance." Is the word almost certainly be classed with the "degenerates." Every one knows that in his revolt against the Church he went much further than he dreamed of in the beginning. Realizing in some of his dark and despondent hours the ruin he had wrought, what more natural than that he should have impulsively put an end to his existence?-Balti nore Mirror.

Drawing Closer.

Fifty years ago a Protestant writer who should advocate auricular confes sion would be hounded out of church meeting as a heretic. The marvellous change wrought since then may be est appreciated from these three prininles laid down by a writer in the Columbus Theological Magazine:

1. Private confession is neither commanded nor forbidden in the Sacred Scriptures. By private confession we understand the personal confession of the individual penitent, and tent by the confessor. 2. Private conession is not an essential mark of a truly Christian congregation, and therefore those churches that do not practise it are not to be denied Christian fellowship. 3 Private confession is of great advantage and a special comfort to the believer, and

should be encouraged in the churches. But the writer takes care to note that there is no obligation to mention all one's sins, naively adding that this might be "distressing"-and Protest antism is nothing if not comfortable. Aside from the question of the priestly power to absolve sins, it may safely be said that the Catholic doctrine of confession, consoling and indispensable as it is to all who have the true faith, will never be acclimatized in the sects; though it would be no surprise if some Protestant theologian were to assert that private confession is commanded in the Sacred Scriptures. - Ave Maria.

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