

### Martin Luther.

The dark clouds of ignorance and moral night had long enveloped Europe. The first light amid the darkness that portended a coming reform was the revival of letters and the growth of literature. The former awakened the mind from a long, dull sleep, and opened up for it boundless fields, in which human genius could revel. The revival of learning was the key that unlocked the treasures of knowledge that had been so long concealed, and led the mind into paths which it pursued with marvellous energy and delight. The world seemed to be waiting in expectation. The growing twilight was upon the verge of day. There was something in every class of society to indicate a reformation at hand. New ideas had already awakened in many minds, and the human intellect, roused from the sleep of centuries, was striving to redeem the past by its renewed activity. The spirit of chivalry was leaving the world and giving place to a new spirit, which breathed at the same time from the sanctuaries of learning and from the homes of the common people. The art of printing had also given wings to the written Word. The boundaries of the known world were also enlarged by new discoveries. In the Old World the sacred fountains of ancient classics were once more unsealed, and by the aid of printing were sending forth a stream for the moral and intellectual healing of the nations.

But as yet it was not known who should strike the final blow which would cast down the ancient edifice, and build upon its ruins a better superstructure. Who would do this was an unanswered question. Who had more wisdom than Frederick? Who had more learning than Reuchlin? Who had more talent than Erasmus? Who had more more courage than Lickingen? These had done their work. They had undermined some of the old foundations. But there they stopped, and the hand of power to be the instrument for the final blow was not yet revealed.

It was under these circumstances that Martin Luther, the leader of the German Reformation, appeared upon the scene. His birthplace was Eisleben. He was born on St. Martin's Eve, Nov. 10th, 1483. Being born on St. Martin's Day, he was given that name, which reveals one characteristic of the religious sentiments of that age. The senses and the imagination were more employed in the service of religion than the heart. In

imagination the infant child was brought in connection with a saint, and the parents believed that such an association of the name would tend to awaken in him a corresponding association of ideas.

His father seems to have been dependent upon his own industry for a livelihood. When little Martin was but six months old, his father left Eisleben and moved to Mansfield. The castle of the Counts of Mansfield, which is now in ruins, stood at that time upon a rocky eminence and overlooked the vale in which the town was situated. The scenery around the spot where Luther spent the first years of his life was wild and romantic. It was in this place, so favored by nature's gifts, that Luther's physical powers were first developed. It was here that his activity began to show itself. The plain of Mansfield and the banks of the Vepper were the theatre of his first sports. His early training was under pious, but severe and rough, discipline. He was early accustomed to toil and frugal fare. The father established two furnaces for melting iron, and by the side of these little Martin grew up. No one had foretold that from beside this miner's furnace should go forth one who would recast vital Christianity.

His parents sought to bring him up in the fear of God, and to reverence the institutions of religion which were then in the world. His parents are to be commended for what they did. If there were faults in their discipline, they were to be attributed more to the age in which they lived than otherwise. It was pre-eminently an age of rudeness and severity. The parents possessed more talents than culture. They had more force and sternness of character than of skill to awaken and foster the generous impulses of childhood.

The spirit of inquiry and research seemed to pervade the very atmosphere. The influence of the times excited the ambition of Martin's father. He paid great attention to the educated, and often invited the ecclesiastics and schoolmasters of the place to his home and hospitality. This was to the son's advantage, and there is little doubt that the respect shown the educated who visited his father's house awakened in the heart of the young and ambitious youth an earnest desire to be a man of letters.

The day came when the school at Mansfield no longer met his wants. Magdeburg was the next place towards which his steps were turned.

(To be continued.)