

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii: 1.

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LUTHER'S CONFESSION BEFORE THE DIET OF WORMS.

(Concluded from last week.)

Here the inquiry terminated, and Luther was allowed to depart. But there was much commotion both in the council and out of doors, and the knights and burgeses evinced a deep interest in behalf of one who had borne himself with such unflinching resolution. When it was reported that he was to be arrested and sent away, a universal uproar ensued, and a crowd of noblemen rushed to the spot, in order to ascertain that no personal dangers beset him.

The venerable and enlightened Elector of Saxony was not the only prince who was delighted with his conduct; some to whom the lettered page was a mystery, and others, who were known only by their military achievements, and had shown no sort of concern in what they held to be a mere theological skirmish, openly expressed the feeling of admiration which the monk's manly deportment had extorted from them. Erich, the brave Duke of Brunswick-Calenberg, sent him a silver can of Eimbeck beer, to which Luther did ample justice, for he needed its refreshing draught; and as he raised it to his lips, he exclaimed, "For this remembrance of me on Duke Erich's part, may God the Saviour remember him in his dying moments!"

He was visited the following day by several eminent personages, and amongst others, by the young Landgrave of Hesse, who pressed him fervently by the hand, saying, "If right be on your side Doctor, God prosper you." The hostility of many of the leading clergy, also seemed to have undergone a change in his favor: minds such as those which characterized Stadion, the venerable Bishop of Augsburg, Hermann Elector of Cologne, Richard of Treves, and Albert of Mayence, were not of a mould to resist the influence of his eloquent reasonings at every point. Indeed so far as we are informed, Joachim of Brandenburg was the only electoral prince who insisted upon the application of violent measures, and urged the withholding of a safe-conduct as the means of extorting a recantation. But in this he was vehemently opposed by George of Saxony, and other princes, who were hostile, however to the Lutheran heresy. "The olden integrity of German hearts," said he, "demands that we should keep our word with him." In spite therefore, of the papal nuncio, it was resolved by the Emperor's council, that the promised safe-conduct should be granted, although it was signified to the States, that after its period had expired, proceedings would be taken against Dr. Luther, as an open heretic, as well as against his heretical doctrines: and for this reason—that he dared believe that all Christians had hitherto lived in error, and had obstinately persisted in this belief.

The eight succeeding days were spent in debating upon the imperial message, and in attempts, on the part of several minor princes and scholars, to effect a change in Luther's opinions. But their endeavours proved of no avail; and he met the repeated exhortations of the Elector of Treves, and Doctors Vebus, Peutingger, and others, replying, "That he did not set himself against the Pope or the Church, where they acted in accordance with the Scriptures; but that he would, neither then nor thereafter, forsake the Divine word, or submit to a general council, unless it were expressly understood that he should be judged by the declarations of holy writ." The Elector then inquiring of him, with earnestness, in what way the contest could be set at rest, Luther observed, "I am unable to say; may be, Gamaliel's saying shall come to pass; for if this

work be of men, it will come to nought, but, if it be of God, no man shall overthrow it."

Thus ended the last discourses with the reformer. Three hours afterwards, Von Eck and the Emperor's secretary brought him orders to leave Worms; and having promised that he should enjoy full personal security for the ensuing three weeks, they warned him against fermenting the minds of the people either by his pen or by word of mouth on his way back.

In the afternoon of the 26th of April, which was the tenth day after his arrival, Luther took his departure with those who had accompanied him from Wittenberg. When he reached Friedberg, in the Wetter-au, he dismissed the herald, under whose protection he had travelled; and, confiding his safety to the honour of the Hessian sovereign, had journeyed as far as the district of Salzungen, in the environs of the forest of Thuringia, when violent hands were suddenly laid upon him, by Hund of Altenstein, and John of Berlepsch, two knights in disguise, who hurried him away to the Wartburg, where he was concealed for ten months under the assumed name of Younker George. This was the undoubted act of the Elector Frederic, who was urged to it by finding that after Luther's departure, the opinions of those possessed of most influence, gradually became more unfavorable to his cause. On the 5th of May, this prince wrote to John his brother, who had quitted Worms, in the following terms. "This is the state of Martin's business: he is devoted to days of misery, and there is no help for it, albeit the ends in God's hands. When I am again at your side, I will tell you strange and wonderful things."

The disputation which had taken place was not a matter susceptible of being set at rest by any general decision of the diet; for which reason, the Elector Frederic and other princes, who were favorably disposed towards the reformation, as well as the greater portion of the deputies, left Worms in the following week, and the consequence was, that on the 23rd of May, the earlier proposition, which outlawed and excommunicated Luther, in common with all his adherents, his protectors and his publications, was on that day launched against him, in the form of an imperial edict. Such was the termination of this memorable diet, which had sat for four months; a termination no way calculated to allay the general ferment which existed.

The edict never resolved, nor pretended to resolve, a single point of the momentous questions which agitated men's minds; even those yearnings for a clearer light in matters of conscience, which had been most vehemently urged, were left unsatisfied; nor was there, in all probability, one single member of the diet who returned home with a consciousness, that the general welfare had, in one respect, been promoted by its proceedings. A single individual, the papal nuncio, may, however, have congratulated himself, on having attained his ends to a certain extent, and succeeded in warding off the danger for an indefinite period: but there were numbers by whom a far deeper and juster view of the future was taken, and amongst others, Valdesius, the Spanish juriconsult, an attendant in the Emperor's suite who thus writes to his learned friend, Peter Martyr d'Anghiera:—"I have now brought you acquainted with this tragedy, and many would say, with its close; but I feel convinced in my own mind, that we have but seen the first act; for the Germans are in a state of great exasperation against the Roman See."

He was a true prophet. The act of the diet of Worms paved the way for a long series of events, pregnant with the varied misery and excesses which are incidental to a state of a religious warfare. The torch that had been kindled, did not begin to grow dim until after the treaty of Westphalia.