

Eisenach was a town which nestled in a valley under the very shadow of Hartburg Castle, and next to Hartburg and Eurfurt it is the richest in historical recollection of Martin Luther. Here is where he first met with sympathizing and skilful teachers. Here ended his sorrows arising from poverty. Here his musical talent, as well as his imagination, was cultivated and developed. This threw a cheerful serenity over his hitherto sorrowful and beclouded mind. It is, however, but fair to state that Luther never despised the days of his poverty. He confessed that his humble beginnings were the origin of his glory. He did not fail to remind all that the voice of him whose accents electrified the empire and the world had not very long before begged a morsel of bread in the streets of a petty town.

The advantages which he enjoyed for the acquisition of learning seemed but to intensify his thirst for knowledge, and he longed to go where that thirst could be satiated. In July, 1501, at the opening of a new and great century, he directed his steps to Eurfurt. Here was the university which surpassed all others in influence in that part of Germany. He found himself in the midst of a thousand students, and upon the threshold of a new era. He had a decided preference for solid and practical work.

At this time everything wore the garb of the middle ages. There were no experiments in Natural Philosophy and no actual criticism in either language or history. Martin was not satisfied with memorizing the authors. He sought rather to comprehend them, to fathom their thoughts, to imbibe their spirit, and to enrich his own mind with their weighty sentences and brilliant descriptions.

Metanctton says, "the whole university admired his genius. He won golden opinions from his fellow students on account of his superior intellectual power. The father was proud of his talented son, and looked forward to the time when he would fill some honorable position among his fellow citizens, gain the favor of Princes, and shine upon the great stage of the world."

It would be difficult to imagine what were the father's feelings when it was announced that Luther had entered the Augustine convent. Luther had come to feel that he had more to do than merely to improve his mind. Religious thoughtfulness filled his heart and deep sense of his dependence upon God. If it were a simple,

it was also a powerful conviction. He earnestly implored the Divine blessing. Each day was begun with prayer. To pray well, he said, was the better part of study.

One day, while opening the books of the library, he chanced to open one which more especially claimed his attention. Nothing like it had ever been seen by him until that hour. It was the Holy Bible. Until then he had known but fragments of the Scriptures, such as were read in the churches. Here he discovered the Book, which through his efforts his own countrymen and the world might read in the ages to come. The book which until then had been laid away upon the shelves of a dark room, was soon to be the light of a whole nation.

The reformation, as a religious movement, is to be traced to the fact that Luther went into the Convent at Eurfurt. There he tested the value of that legal form of religion which had nearly banished the Gospel from the earth. There he groped his way through the mazes of Papal error, and found the path which led to Christ as the simple object of his faith and love. He claimed for himself the elements of an evangelical religion. In this he found himself almost alone. He spent years in reconciling his experience with well established truths, and in trying upon others the same experiment which he had made upon himself. Luther says, "God ordained that I should become a mark, that, being taught by experience, I might take up my pen against the Pope."

To a superficial view this might seem a mistake. It might seem like a waste of time, but seclusion often contributes to success, by holding a man at the very fountain head of thought and reflection. And none can so well understand a false system as one who has made the most perfect trial of it. And for these reasons we may believe with Luther that his experience in the Convent was ordered of God. We cannot follow him through his nightly vigils and his daily toils, his mortifications of the flesh, the reproach attached to his state of poverty, the weariness of fasting, and the keen anguish of soul.

Luther possessed an individuality which separated him from the mass. In the mental processes through which he passed he was alone and without sympathy. There was too great a measure of originality to be controlled even by the iron forms which the Order of Augustine laid upon all its members. He was driven almost to despair. The youthful flush had faded from his countenance. The black, piercing, and fiery eyes were sunken.