

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

STUDENT LIFE IN GERMANY.—III.

BY REV. A. B. BAIRD, B.A., EDMONTON, N.-W. T.

There are scholars who have spent part of their student life in Germany, and who come back confessing that they mingled but little with the students—that in fact they never attained to anything more than a mere acquaintance with the few whom chance threw in their way. I am glad that my experience went deeper than acquaintanceship. The time I spent abroad was a most important time for me: it altered my whole mental standard for the rest of my life, and not a little of the influence was due to German students. We of English speech almost instinctively conceal our emotions; not so the German student—he allows his free course, and when we have secured his unreserved confidence by becoming a member of the same club, and he is able to address us in the second person singular, the confidence seems to us almost girlish. Such friends to me were the members of

THE WINGOLF CHRISTLICHE VERBINDUNG, a *verbindung*, or corps, as distinguished from the singing unions and literary societies which abounded in the university; and *Christliche*, as distinguished from those corps whose *raison d'être* was to fight duels. Many things mirthful and pathetic I might relate of club doings and club sayings, on those happy evenings when German wit shone at its brightest. But the peculiarities of the student corps have had numberless chroniclers already. No organization could in the same short time have given me a more intimate acquaintance with the opinions, the motives and the life of these young men, and the more I saw of them the more I liked them. We spent two evenings per week in one another's company, and each member joining promised to make his club life the *mittelpunkt* of his existence. We will claim brotherhood if ever any of us meet again, and in the meantime no letters reach me that come closer home to my heart than those which begin "*Lieber Freund und Verbindungsbruder.*" The club, no doubt, has its faults. Without German song, German lager and German pipes, a German *Verbindung* would be a tame affair; and there is certainly an amount of beer drunk at these gatherings which cannot be justified on any reasonable ground; but it is to be remembered that these young men have been brought up differently from us, and have never seen the effects of intemperance as we have. During all the months I was in Germany, never once did I see a drunk man; never once in all the meetings of the corps did I see the slightest excess in drink or language. Manly and courteous, with a patriotism almost too sensitive, those young men made Leipzig a home to me, and made me feel half a German before we parted.

THE RELIGIOUS SIDE OF GERMAN LIFE.

I confess that the side of German life which I liked least was the religious. The way in which the Sabbath is broken is notorious. Sabbath indeed is put out of the week, and Sunday takes its place. It is the great holiday—the day on which the world worships its God. Leipzig has church accommodation for only about one-fifteenth of its population, and the churches are not filled. In many of them the congregations are not even respectable in size, except on such high occasions as Christmas, New Year's eve, Easter and Whit-Sunday. It is said that in Berlin only two per cent. of the population are church-goers. Pious Germans with whom I talked on this subject would have me believe that the case is not quite as bad as these figures represent—that there is in the land a great deal of religious life, though confessedly of a low type, which does not evidence itself in church-going. I believe there is truth in this; but even if there is, it does not mend the matter very much—such religious life must be low indeed. This much is certainly true, that this Sunday license has been developed, not in opposition to the Church, but—at least in the beginnings—with its consent, tacit or avowed. Every Sunday afternoon theological students are to be found in the public dancing assemblies. I knew one, indeed, with so tender a conscience that he did not feel free to go to the opera in the evening unless he had been at church in the morning. Similar laxity, although of course not so public or in

so pronounced a degree, is to be found among many of the clergy—but there are some noble exceptions. And yet the preaching is simple. I never heard from the pulpit any of those elaborate disquisitions for which German theologians are supposed to be famous; usually the sermons are earnest and manly—not unfrequently they are powerful and eloquent, as when Luthardt or that grand old man Kahnis ascend the pulpit. But as one comes out of church he finds a crowd waiting at the door of the opera house for the ticket-office to be opened, the selection on that day being sure to be unusually fine; the waiters in the bar gardens have on their clean aprons, and their bands of music wear their brightest uniforms and play their most entrancing airs. A friend of mine, a young Scotchman, was a member of the Pauliner Gesang-Verein, one of the University singing societies, when during the summer, as is the custom in such cases, a Sunday excursion was organized to go out to Altenburg by rail, be received by the mayor and corporation of the city, and spend the day in feasting, singing and dancing. My friend asked to be excused, on the ground that his conscience would not allow him to spend the Sabbath in that way. The society was a large one, numbering perhaps one hundred members, more than a few of whom were Divinity students; but the committee seemed quite puzzled with an application of so novel a character; and although they treated my friend with perfect gentlemanliness, they finally decided, with the military strictness that rules over singing societies in Germany, that the excuse could not be accepted. The alternative was a fine amounting, if I remember rightly, to two dollars.

The German Church is the heir of great traditions, and she glories in them; but as she stands there and points back to those days of the 16th century, it is only too evident that her piety is but historic. Sad it is that that land which awoke so early and so grandly to the glory of the Gospel of Jesus, should now feel so little of its life-giving power!

DECLINE OF RATIONALISM.

On visiting Germany I expected to find her giving up her Rationalism and returning to an evangelical theology, but I found far less pleasure in the contemplation of this change than I had prepared myself for. Of the fact that the land of Luther is much less rationalistic than at the beginning of the century, there can be no manner of doubt. There can be no doubt either that the recoil has been especially noticeable within the last ten years. Yet, as far as I could see, the issue at present is not the embracing of evangelical theology, but the embracing of a hard and bare confessional orthodoxy—the mere resting on authority—a position even more unreasonable than that formerly occupied. The Wingolf *Verbindung* is, *par excellence*, the orthodox club of the university, and as far as I could judge from frequent talks with its members, they seem to have got rid of Rationalism, not by answering it to their own judgments, but by running away from it, and—naturally, perhaps—they have rushed to the opposite extreme of distrusting reason altogether. The Rationalists delight to speak of the change as a revival of mediæval dogmatism; but although I would be far from taking any such view as that, I confess that I could not see in it anything more than an artificial reaction. In making these remarks, I would like to be understood as speaking of Leipzig alone, for I would fain cherish the hope that in other parts of Germany the movement is making itself felt under a guise more likely to attract worthy followers and become a power in the land. Yet I do not know that I could have chosen a more likely place than Leipzig for seeing such a movement at its best. The city is not only an intellectual centre, but it is the seat of one of the largest universities in the kingdom—a university, moreover, which has the reputation of being ultra-orthodox, and would therefore be the more likely to attract students of this way of thinking. That the movement is general is evident from the fact that the representative orthodox universities, such as Leipzig and Erlangen, are crowded with students, while the representative "liberal" universities, such as Heidelberg and Jena, have but a meagre handful. But granting even that Rationalism were out of the way—and not even the most enthusiastic champion of the reaction will claim that the battle is half fought yet—there still remain mighty foes in Pantheism, Agnosticism and Materialism, which now divide the suffrages of the German universities, and claim each a large following of men well armed to fight their battles.

POLITICS.

The state of political affairs is extremely unsatisfactory, too. The people bear but ungraciously the galling yoke of military despotism. Taxation is very heavy—necessarily so, indeed, to keep up the immense standing army. The Social-Democrats, with their demands, reasonable and unreasonable, are giving a great deal of trouble to the Government. One result of this unsatisfactory state of things is that the working people are emigrating in thousands to the United States. It is impossible to convince the peasant that America is not a land flowing with milk and honey. I shall never forget the enthusiasm of a countryman, whom my landlord brought to me for information about America, while I was staying in Heidelberg, and who described himself as a "recht bauer." He had saved up almost enough to pay a passage across the Atlantic for himself and his family, and thought that there could be nothing left to wish for if he were but landed in New York.

Another result of these difficulties, together with the hard times, is that they have rubbed bare and made prominent the seams of the Union. "They thought to make us Germans, and they have only made us Prussians," said an intelligent student whom I hope to see in Canada some day, as we talked together about these matters.

HOMEWARD.

But, in spite of Rationalism and Social-Democrats, I enjoyed my stay in Germany very much, and it was with the deepest regret that I allowed my Canadian engagements to call me away before the session was over. But a couple of weeks of delighted wandering down the Rhine weaned me from Leipzig, and before I reached Canada again my first love had reasserted itself, and I never was gladder to see my old home.

Edmonton, January 23rd, 1882.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. JAMES' SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TORONTO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF DUNCAN M'COLL, B.A.

"He will beautify the meek with salvation."—Ps. cxlix. 4.

The statement of this verse in both particulars, and in the connection of the one with the other, is a striking one; at least it becomes so the moment we apprehend its proper force. "The Lord taketh pleasure in His people." They are not simply objects of His compassion and of His care; they are also objects of His delight. He rejoices over them with joy; He rests in His love; He rejoices over them with singing. And taking pleasure in His people, the Lord adorns them. The delight which He feels in them, leads Him to array them in beauty. He not only saves the meek, He beautifies them in the act of saving them. He not only clothes them "with the garments of salvation," He makes these to become at the same time the adornment of those who are clothed with them. "He will beautify the meek with salvation." It is this last truth which we are to consider this evening, with the help of such light as Scripture and observation throw upon it. The Lord give us eyes to discern, and hearts to appreciate, the beauty to which it refers!

But first, who are the meek here spoken of? There is a meekness, or what, at least, frequently goes among men by that name, which is nothing more than a pliant and facile disposition. It is a simple matter of temperament—a purely natural quality, having no connection with the person's state of heart towards God, and possessing, therefore, little or no moral value. The meekness which is so often commended in Scripture is a widely different quality. It is essentially moral; the effect, not of temperament, but of grace; a "fruit of the Spirit." It denotes the fitting attitude towards God of one who is at once dependent and sinful; who has no good but what he receives, and no claim, no right to receive any, even the smallest, save that which is accorded to him in the exercise of grace; who submits readily, therefore, to the Divine appointments, humbling himself before Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," and making daily appeal to His mercy in the spirit, if not in the very words, of the man who "smote upon his breast" and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The grace is not only a high; it is, at least in its more marked forms, a rare attainment. It is one not easily reached. The human heart is by nature proud and rebellious, disposed to plume itself on its own fancied goodness, and to assert its own prerogatives, rather than to