

From the Catholic Advocate.

HISTORY

Of the life, works and doctrines of Calvin, by Mr. Audin, Knight of the order of St. Gregory the Great, member of the Academy and literary circle of Lyons, of the Tiberine Academy of Rome, of the Academy of the Catholic Religion of the same city, &c. New edition, revised and corrected. Paris. 1843.

The religious discussions, and discordant sects, of the present times, have awakened in numbers of all denominations, the deepest and most reasonable grief, because it is but too apparent that religion suffers amidst the contests of opinion, and infidelity or indifference gains all those who are disgusted with the warfare of creeds, puzzled by the inconsistent absurdities of irreconcilable articles of faith, and shocked by the uncharitable bitterness of sectaries. If principles should be appreciated by their consequences, if the tree should be judged by its fruits, we have in the present condition of Protestant Christianity, ample reasons for lamenting the day, whose light shed its first rays upon the cradle of the Monk of Wittemberg, and of the scholar of Noyon. Born to be the scourge of the more faithless and negligent children of the church of God, their type is seen in the fate of that bright star, which, followed by a third of the host of heaven, like lightning, fell into the abyss, to be lost for ever.

In the history of revolutions, we perceive that individuals generally become the personifications of the sentiments, feelings, passions and views of parties, and by the magic of some word of undefined and portentous omen, control and govern the popular power, of which they pretend to be the servants. The offspring of passions fermenting amid agitated masses of society, they acquire an undue greatness from the force of circumstances, and though often but blind instruments obeying a resistless exterior influence, they derive credit from success, and, by their contemporaries and by posterity, are esteemed the very causes and authors of the events with which their career is identified.

The Monk of Wittemberg, Dr. Martin Luther, was certainly a man, whose temperament, disposition and intellect, qualified him for the part he acted in the great religious drama of the sixteenth century: In his name is contained a voluminous history of interesting events: His figure occupies a prominent place amid the shadowy personages which history shows us in her lengthened galleries. The grand and imposing figures which there crowd on the mental gaze, with the dazzle of pontifical tiaras, imperial crowns, regal diadems, warrior's swords and plumes, episcopal mitres, abbot's staffs, and green bays of civic or literary fame, do not prevent our notice of the great reformer, who stands before us, with his feet upon the robes of his former monachism and priesthood, with his much loved Catherine by his side, and his first-born clasping his paternal knees, the German vision of the bible in one hand, and the other clenched,

and menacingly directed against some object of denunciation—a vision of anti-christ, perhaps—which he would annihilate with the lightning of his ire which flashes from his eyes. And yet the magnitude of the Saxon's fame was less due to his own genius than to the times in which he lived. He appeared at a period when causes, long in silent operation, were progressing to their mighty results, and as far as excitement, an immense influence and power, and a deathless celebrity, could be desired by an ambitious man, who cared for no destiny but the present, it was most fortunate for him that the star of his nativity marked his birth for that precise epoch. Had he come into the world fifty years sooner, he might have plodded on with the other monks in their routine of specified avocations, and laid his bones in the cemetery of the monastery, beneath the marble monuments of his order. Had his nativity been retarded for half a century, his chances for notoriety would have been diminished, and perhaps some other name would have represented the agitations, passions and outbreaks of the times, and summed up the history of the result of those causes, which favored him and made him great, and which, had he not existed, must still have produced important if not similar events. Those who can only contemplate fragments of history, and whose minds are inadequate to grasp the details and combinations of vast and comprehensive pictures, may perhaps find a solution in the personal genius of the reformer, for the whole problem of that great revolution of which he was the hero. We are content to leave these standing, in mute reverence and admiration, before the colossal statue of their idol, on whose pedestal they have placed the burning incense of their grateful adulation. The apostate monk neither foresaw nor devised the work which he accomplished, and, even were this work itself worthy of praise or approbation, we could not be so blind to the preceding and attending events, as to consider him in any other light, than as a mere instrument, obeying the influence of events and itself ignorant of the end of its operations; like many other heroes, he was, perhaps himself the most of any, astonished at his own deeds and success, and wondered that

"greatness was thus thrust upon him."

Mr. Audin, in his history of Luther's life, has shown the true character, position, and defects of the Saxon monk. He has placed him in a light which exhibits his true claims, and reveals his enormous defects. And this he has done, in a manner, which sets at defiance the cavils of the critic, and the reclamations of the sectary; for he proceeds with a logic that is irrefutable, and a reference to written documents, whose genuineness cannot be questioned.

Among the co-labourers of the German reformer, there are many, whose names are held in particular esteem by Protestants, but certainly none of them played a more important part than did John Calvin, the Theocratic despot of Geneva. With less genius and fewer good qualities than Luther had, with less in his character

to awaken sympathy, and far inferior talents for moving popular masses, the scholar of Noyon, by some means, was enabled to throw his spell over the once famed merchant of Geneva, taint thousands with the poison of his heresies—vest himself with the mantle of an usurped priesthood,—make himself the prominent object of veneration in the temple, and of honor in the state,—give his own portrait to be revered by men and women, in place of the images of the saints and of the cross of Christ,—and persuade his disciples that for the love of God they should desecrate churches, pillage convents, destroy the most valuable creations of the arts; seize upon the goods and the wives of their neighbors; reject the sacraments; control conscience; corrupt the bible; and do all manner of iniquity,—while, forsooth, he, the heaven-sent apostle assured to them the right to a place among "the elect," whom God, from all eternity, had, by unalterable decree, destined for salvation.

Calvin, therefore, next after the great Saxon, has deserved to find a biographer in Mr. Audin, who has presented to the public, a work in two octavo volumes of upwards of 500 pages each, in which we find many passages of stirring dramatic interest, proofs of laborious and careful research, a correct analysis of the doctrines of Calvin, a striking exposition of the incongruous symbols of the reformation and the same well-woven logic, and detailed reference to historical authorities which characterise the author's "Life of Luther."

The readers of the Catholic Advocate will no doubt, be content to accompany us in our proposed excursion with Mr. Audin through parts of that historical domain which he has so thoroughly explored. We will point out, for their observation, some of those things which most struck ourselves, and at times we shall allow the learned and graphic writer to address them in his own words, and make them participators of his thoughts, feelings, and inspiration.

In this introduction, the author causes us to remark the difference between the reformation of Wittemberg and that of Geneva.

"At Wittemberg it was a revolt of the cloister; at Geneva, a political movement. Under this double form, the reformation of the 16th century deceived the souls which it bore away. In Saxony, it was destined to result in anarchy; in Switzerland, in despotism."

First years of Calvin, 1509, 1529.—On the 10th of July, in the year 1509, John Calvin was born at Noyon, in the house where now hangs the sign of the stag, and which his father had purchased at the wheat market. He was baptised at St. Godeberte, having the canon, Jehn de Vaines, for his godfather. "I retain my baptism," Calvin often said to Beza, but I renounce the Christ."

His father, Gerard Cauvin, a native of Pont-le-veque, had two wives, the first of whom was Jeanne le Franc, native of Cambrai, and daughter of a tavern-keeper, who had retired at Noyon. By this

wife, Gerard had six children, four sons and two daughters. The sons were Charles, John, Anthony, and a fourth, whose name is unknown. The two daughters were married in the Catholic Church.

At the birth of John, those present were astonished by an unusual phenomenon, for an account of which we must refer the reader to the third page of his original. If true, his entrance into life, as well as his exit, was visibly noted by that Divine Providence, whose hand holds the scales by which men are to be weighed, and whose judgment reverses the sentence, which the world passes upon human deeds.

Gerard, whose eye read the future, destined this child for the study of theology.

"The limpid and prominent eye of the child, his large brow, his nose susceptible of gentle inflexions, such as the ancients delighted to contemplate in their statues, his lips curled with disdain and sneers, his leaden and billious complexion, were the indicia of cunning, stratagem, and obstinacy. When in the Library of Geneva, you meet the portrait of Luther beside that of Calvin, you immediately divine the psychological faculties of the two reformers. The one, with his florid face, in which the blood courses and boils; with his eagle-eyes, and brilliant tints of colours quite Venetian, represents popular eloquence, brutal force, and lyrical enthusiasm; for him, the tribune, the public place, the tavern. The other, with his face of an anchorite, emaciated with vigils or disease, his faded flesh, his unquite air, his cadaverous hue, his prominent bones, piercing the skin, will figure obstinate sophistry and argument. He is the man of the school, of the temple, of the cabinet,—the diplomatic theologian, the fox, who, to disguise himself, has assumed the monk's cap."

(To be continued.)

DISTRESS AMONGST THE LABOURERS AT LACHINE.—Since our last, we understand that several humane individuals from this City have visited Lachine, who report that the distress existing amongst the labourers is far greater than they had been prepared to witness; *two hundred and fifty souls are actually without a morsel to put to their mouths*, in a state of starvation. A subscription was commenced in town yesterday towards relieving these poor creatures, which Mr. Killaly headed by a donation of £25—Messrs. Tobin and Holmes each contributing £5. A quantity of oatmeal has been forwarded to the spot to ward off the immediate danger, and other steps will be immediately taken to relieve this mass of misery till the commencement of the works, which we believe, we may now state pretty positively will not be deferred beyond Monday week. But in the meantime, what a prospect for these poor creatures, without the aid of a generous public extended towards them! Half a day more of the misery they have already endured would send hundreds to their graves.—*Mon. Transcript.*