

men throughout the world proceed from a like beginning; consist of, and are nourished by like elements, draw from the same principle the same vital breath, enjoy the same care of heaven, pass through life alike, and alike die."*

To which I shall only add, that, as Christianity is the most perfect kind of knowledge, it must essentially produce the most perfect kind of happiness. It is the golden everlasting chain let down from heaven to earth; the ladder that appeared to the patriarch in his dream; when he beheld Jehovah at its top, and the angels of God ascending and descending with messages of grace to mankind. *o! - shit*

LECTURE XIII.

ON THE REVIVAL OF LITERATURE.

In the last lecture, we continued our progress through that general history of science and literature, which we had commenced in the lecture that preceded it; and having, in the first of these studies, brought down the subject from the most celebrated times of Athens and Rome to the decline of the Roman empire, we waded, in the second, through the barren and cheerless period of the dark or middle ages, extending from the fall of Rome before the barbarous arms of the Goths, in the fifth century, to the fall of Constantinople before the no less barbarous arms of the Turks, in the fifteenth century;—exploring our way as well as we were able, by the occasional guidance of a few transitory and uncertain beacons, amid the desolate realms of mental darkness and chaos by which we were surrounded, till we reached the auspicious hour in which the voice of the Almighty once more exclaimed throughout the dead and dreary waste, "LET THERE BE LIGHT!—AND THERE WAS LIGHT!" *and Humboldt*

The period of the revival of letters in Christendom is, in many respects, one of the most brilliant eras in human history. Without the intervention of a miracle we behold a flood of noonday bursting all at once over every quarter of the horizon, and dissipating the darkness of a thousand years; we behold mankind in almost every quarter of Europe, from the Carpathian mountains to the Pillars of Hercules, from the Tiber to the Vistula, waking as from a profound sleep to a life of activity and bold adventure; ignorance falling prostrate before advancing knowledge; brutality and barbarism giving way to science and polite letters; vice and anarchy to order and moral conduct; and idolatry, hypocrisy, and superstition to the pure simplicity of Christian truth. Hence, in some places, we trace the fall of feudal slavery and vassalage—in others of popish tyranny and imposition—and in every place a juster sense of relative duties and of the real dignity of man. Hence the origin of those important inventions, paper and clock-making, printing, telescopes, and gunpowder; and hence, too, the first insight into the modern doctrine of the circulation of the blood; and the wonderful discoveries of the mariner's compass, the sphericity of the earth's surface, and the revolution of the planets around the sun. Hence, Portugal, with a bold and adventurous canvass, doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and realized a maritime passage to India; Spain explored and established herself in a new world; and England, in the person of the intrepid Drake, for the first time circumnavigated the globe; while Galileo, by the marvellous invention and application of his telescope, unfolded to us not another world alone, but systems of worlds upon worlds in endless succession throughout the heavens; all which astonishing series of splendid facts and transactions, together with various others of nearly equal importance, crowd upon each other within the short period to which we are now confining our

* De Nugis Curialium; Harris, ii. 525.

attention, extending from the beginning of the fourteenth to about the middle of the sixteenth century. The heart of man seemed to beat with a new and more vigorous pulsation, and all the energies of the soul to be roused to the proudest darings of adventure.

In contemplating the causes of that wonderful change in the character and pursuits of civilized Europe, which this extraordinary combination of circumstances indicates, the following may, perhaps, be regarded as among the principal.

First, the natural spring or elasticity of the human mind, by means of which, though it may for a time be borne down by a weight of ignorance or oppression, it at length rouses from its torpitude, resumes its innate energy, and shakes off the vampire burden with a recoil proportioned to the pressure that subdued or stifled it.

Secondly, the sudden flight and dispersion of the best and almost the only literary characters of the age from the walls of Constantinople, upon the capture of this elegant and renowned city by the Turks, under the victorious banners of Mahomet II.

Thirdly, the taste for literature which, at this very period, was reviving in many of the Italian states, and more particularly at Florence under the illustrious family of the Medici; and especially the election of the celebrated Giovanni de' Medici to the pontificate, under the name of Leo X.

Fourthly, the facility afforded by the art of printing, discovered at the very period of the fall of Constantinople, to the diffusion of useful and polite learning in every direction.

And, fifthly, and, perhaps, chiefly, the general attention and spirit of inquiry which were excited throughout every country in Christendom, by the grand and eventful drama of the Reformation at this time exhibiting in Germany.

Let us attend to each of these causes in the order in which I have stated them.

I. Vice and ignorance are the necessary companions of each other: such is the immutable law of nature; and we can no more reverse it, than we can reverse the stars in their courses; and nothing can exceed the extreme to which both were carried during the period of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and to which the whole texture of the feudal system, and the abominations of the Vatican tyranny, equally contributed.

When the barbarous and intermixed tribes of Goths, Huns, and Vandals poured down in successive streams from the north, and overran the different provinces of the Roman empire, the conquered lands distributed by lot, and thence called *allotted* or *allodial*, were held in entire sovereignty by the different chieftains, without any other obligation existing between them than that of uniting on great occasions to defend the community. Additional tribes still succeeded:—wider tracts of country were subdued, and many individuals occupied land to a very considerable extent; while the king or captain-general, who led on his respective tribe to conquest, naturally acquired by far the largest portion of territory as his own share. These lands he found it convenient, in order to maintain his influence, to divide among his principal followers, merely subjecting them, for the grant, to certain aids and military services.

His example was imitated by his courtiers, who distributed, under similar conditions, portions of their estates to their dependants. Thus a feudal kingdom became a military establishment, and had the appearance of a victorious army, subordinate to command, and encamped under its officers in different parts of the country; every captain or baron considering himself independent of his sovereign, except during a period of national war. Possessed of wide tracts of country, and residing at a distance from the capital, they erected strong and gloomy fortresses in places of difficult access; and not only oppressed the people, and slighted whatever happened to be the civil magistracy of the state, but were often in a condition to set the authority of the crown itself at defiance.

As the tenure by which the lands were held was military; as there was no art or science to occupy the mind; as reading was seldom cultivated,

and writing a still rarer accomplishment; every landed proprietor was a mere soldier; and being expert and strong by the daily use of arms, was eager for an opportunity of showing his prowess. Nor was such opportunity ever wanting; for, when not employed in expeditions against a public enemy, he was commonly engaged in some petty enterprise at home, prompted by pride, avarice, or revenge. Hence *feuds*, as, indeed, the term itself imports, were the peculiar characteristic of *feudal* power; vice and idleness were perpetually engendering animosities; gross ignorance disabled the different parties from adjusting them by the address of argument and fair reason; brutal obstinacy rendered them hereditary; and the son who succeeded to his father's estate succeeded also to his quarrels.

While such was the ready aid which the political system of the times administered to the gloomy reign of mental darkness and disorder, the gross misconduct of the church was still more instrumental in promoting the same direful effect. Although nothing is more clear than that, through the whole of this desolate period, God never left himself without a witness of the truth, the purity, and the power of the genuine doctrines of Christianity; although nothing is more clear than that, even in the deepest midnight of this desolate period, a few honest, zealous, and conscientious ecclesiastics, and even laymen, are to be met with who sedulously and manfully opposed themselves to the general corruption of their contemporaries, it is equally clear, that the great mass of the priesthood assumed the sacred habit for the mere purpose of indulging more effectually in the worst and most licentious passions and appetites; and surpassed all the rest of the community in the irregularity and scandal of their lives. Many of them were professed infidels, and exclaimed openly to each other, "*Quantas divitias nobis peperit hac Christi fabula!*"—"What wealth does this fiction of Christ obtain for us!" A sentiment generally ascribed to the free-thinking genius of Leo X., but which, whether ever uttered by him or not, was in frequent use long before his era; while nearly all concurred in the well-known motto that "ignorance is the mother of devotion."

In truth, it requires no ordinary stock of temper to wade through the scenes of abominable filth and barefaced hypocrisy which characterize the *holy fathers* of the church, as they were impiously denominated, at the period immediately before us. Crusades, indeed, had long been in use for the extirpation of infidelity, and there were occasional triumphs of the Cross over the Crescent; but, like most other pretensions to ecclesiastical zeal and devotion, even these had for the most part been perverted to the sinister purposes of avarice, temporal authority, or revenge; while plenary indulgences and remissions of sin, for given periods of time, or, in other words, formal licenses to live a life of unrestrained debauchery, and gratify every libidinous appetite and inclination for the term specified, had, during the existence of many crusades, been openly granted at the Vatican, as well as distributed for this purpose by its commissaries, all over Europe, to every one who would either consent to join the sacred standard in person or hire a substitute to fight for him. And similar indulgences were continued after their cessation, and were notoriously bought and sold at a settled or market-price.

This was strikingly exemplified during the papacy of Urban II. in the year 1100; while it is admitted by the warmest advocates of the Vatican that the famous fabric of St. Peter's church at Rome was paid for under Leo X. out of the same resources; which they venture to urge, indeed, in justification of the measure;* as though crimes could change their nature by the end for which they are perpetrated.

One of the fittest instruments for this traffic of abomination was the notorious Dominican inquisitor John Tetzel, who, true to his own trade, led so abandoned a life of debauchery that he was at length condemned to death by the emperor Maximilian for the crime of adultery, accompanied with very atrocious circumstances; and was saved from undergoing the punishment

* See Dupin, book ii. ch. i.; as also Roscoe's Life of Leo X. vol. iii. p. 150.

with great difficulty. He had the effrontery to boast that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences, than ever St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching.

This juggler in iniquity, however, was at times himself out-juggled by others; and the following instance of his being overreached, as gravely related by Sechendorf, will show that the mummery of his trading was as ridiculously absurd as it was grossly nefarious. A man of some rank at Leipsic, who was disgusted with his villany, and determined to be even with him, applied to him for information whether he could grant absolution for a sin of a particular kind intended to be perpetrated, but to be kept a secret till the time. Tetzel replied boldly that he could readily do so, provided the payment were made equal to it. The bargain was instantly struck, the money paid down; and the diploma of absolution signed, sealed, and delivered in due form. The purchaser, thus empowered, waited quietly till Tetzel, having collected from Leipsic and its neighbourhood all the money he was able to lay hold of, set off for his home richly freighted. The man of absolution followed him right speedily; overtook him on the road; plundered him of the whole of his fraudulent gain, and, having beaten him soundly at the same time over the shoulders, produced his patent of absolution, avowed that this was the sin he had purchased leave to commit, and sent him back to Leipsic to tell his own story.

If we turn immediately to the Vatican itself, and observe the personal conduct of the direct successors to the chair of St. Peter, and of the sacred college by which they were surrounded, what is the picture which is unfolded to us? We behold pope fighting against pope, cardinals, in a multiplicity of instances, against cardinals;* the former occasionally deposed, and the latter still more frequently strangled. We behold Leo X., when only an infant of seven years old, made abbot of the rich benefice of Fonte-dolce; a few years afterward holding not less than twenty benefices equally rich and valuable at the same time; and nominated to the grave and venerable college of cardinals at the age of thirteen. We behold Alexander VI., a near predecessor of Leo X., living incestuously with his own daughter, the loose but beautiful and accomplished Lucretia Borgia, a common prostitute to her father and two brothers; and we behold one of the brothers assassinating the other, and shortly afterward her legitimate husband, in the precincts of the apostolic palace, and upon the threshold of St. Peter's church, from a jealousy of their superior pretensions to her favour.† While, to close the whole, for it is disgusting to wade in such a slough of moral filth, we behold the council of Lateran inveighing with all its authority against the scandalous lives of many of its own ministers, who, not satisfied with living in a state of concubinage themselves, consented to receive the wages of iniquity, and sell licenses to the laity for the grant of a like indulgence.‡

But it may, perhaps, be said, that in these instances the soft and enervating power of an Italian climate, and the licentious habits which so peculiarly characterized the decline of the Roman empire, and which to the period before us had never been altogether eradicated, laid a foundation for vices which would not otherwise have been exhibited. Let us then direct our attention to a climate of another kind; let us turn to the hardy and proverbially virtuous inhabitants of Scotland, and proverbially virtuous, too, from the very nature of the climate itself: what was the effect of ignorance and papal superstition amid the corruption of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries upon the physical temperance and chastity of the Highlands? The following is Dr. Mc'Crie's account in his Life of John Knox, and which he supports by sufficient authorities:—

"The corruptions by which the Christian religion was universally de-

* Roscoe, vol. ii. p. 104.

† *Ib.* vol. i. Subjoined Dissertations, p. 8—11.

‡ Quia verò in quibusdam regionibus nonnulli jurisdictionem habentes, pecuniaris questus à concubinaris percipere non erubescunt, patientes eos in tali feditate sordescere, sub pœnâ maledictionis eternæ præcipimus, ne deinceps sub pacto, compositione aut spe alterius questus, talia quovis modo tolerant, aut dissimulent.—S. S. Concil. tom. xiv. p. 302.

praved, before the Reformation, had grown to a greater height in Scotland than in any other nation within the pale of the western church. Superstition and religious imposture, in their grossest forms, gained an easy admission among a rude and ignorant people. By means of these the clergy attained to an exorbitant degree of opulence and power; which were accompanied, as they always have been, with the corruption of their order, and of the whole system of religion. The full half of the wealth of the nation belonged to the clergy; and the greater part of this was in the hands of a few of their number, who had the command of the whole body. Avarice, ambition, and the love of secular pomp reigned among the superior orders. Bishops and abbots rivalled the first nobility in magnificence, and preceded them in honours. They were privy-counsellors and lords of session as well as of parliament, and had long engrossed the principal offices of state. A vacant bishopric or abbacy called forth powerful competitors, who contended for it as for a principality or petty kingdom: it was obtained by similar arts, and not unfrequently taken possession of by the same weapons. Inferior benefices were openly put to sale or bestowed on the illiterate and unworthy ministers of courtiers; on dice-players, strolling bards, and bastards of bishops.—There was not such a thing known as for a bishop to preach:—the practice was even gone into desuetude among all the secular clergy, and wholly devolved on the mendicant monks, who employed it for the most mercenary purposes.

“The lives of the clergy, exempted from secular jurisdiction, and corrupted by wealth and idleness, were become a scandal to religion, and an outrage on decency. While they professed chastity, and prohibited, under the severest penalties, any of the ecclesiastical order from contracting lawful wedlock, the bishops set the example of the most shameless profligacy before the inferior clergy; avowedly kept their harlots; provided their natural sons with benefices, and gave their daughters in marriage to the sons of the nobility and principal gentry; many of whom were so mean as to contaminate the blood of their families by such base alliances for the sake of the rich dowries which they brought.

“Through the blind devotion and munificence of princes and nobles, monasteries, those nurseries of superstition and idleness, had greatly multiplied in the nation; and though they had universally degenerated, and were notoriously become the haunts of lewdness and debauchery, it was deemed impious and sacrilegious to reduce their number, abridge their privileges, or alienate their funds.

“The ignorance of the clergy respecting religion was as gross as the dissoluteness of their morals. Even bishops were not ashamed to confess that they were unacquainted with the canon of their faith, and had never read any part of the sacred Scriptures, except what they met with in their missals.”*

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that, under so repugnant and scandalizing a state of things, notwithstanding the darkness and deformity of the times, mankind should in every part of Europe be growing ripe for a change, and that the still small voice of the conscientious few, who exposed and resisted the corruption around them, should be working with a wholesome ferment amid the general mass; that that elastic power of the human mind, which, in our own day, we have seen in Spain, in Russia, in Germany, and may yet, perhaps, see in France,† rising with indignant recoil against the domestic or foreign tyranny by which it had been long bowed down, should be swelling, and labouring, and maturing to the same effect, in the case before us; co-operating with the intrepid voice of Wyckliff in our own country, and with the ashes of Huss and Jeremy of Prague, that were not in vain sprinkled over the guilty soil of Switzerland, and effecting that important revolution, which reason, religion, and common sense equally vilified and insulted, equally called aloud for and sanctioned.

II. At this very period, in the year of our own era 1445, Constantinople, the

* Life of John Knox, p. 14—20.

† The prediction is fulfilled. The passage was delivered, during the usurpation of Napoleon, in 1813.

delight and glory of Constantine, who founded and named it after his own name; the metropolis of the eastern empire; the rival of ancient Rome; the seat of elegance, refinement, and luxury; the asylum of science upon its banishment from the west of Europe, by the savage incursions of the northern tribes; where the language of Homer, and Herodotus, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Sophocles, and Demosthenes, was still spoken as the common tongue, and their writings still studied and idolized,—fell prostrate before the haughty banners of the Turks; the most enterprising, but at the same time the rudest and most barbarous of all the Saracen powers. All Europe trembled at the intelligence, and an utter extinction was predicted to the little learning and virtue which were now beginning to glimmer in the midst of the general darkness.

The fear, however, was without foundation; and the very event which was apprehended, and with much reason, to be most fatal to the cause of true religion and science, proved most propitious to their promotion. Thus inscrutable are the ways of Providence, in a thousand instances, to the calculations of man, and thus triumphant the Divine government when it seems most trampled upon. The career of the Crescent, though it overran the most delightful provinces of the Greek empire, and spread to an enormous extent towards the East, did not, except in a few instances, advance farther in a north-western direction than the borders of Transylvania and Hungary; while Italy, whose most renowned scholars had found an asylum at Constantinople, upon its general ravage by the Goths, now offered, in return, to the scholars of Constantinople an asylum from Turkish fury and oppression; thus enabling the elegant and accomplished Greeks, a second time, to give letters to Europe; at this period to the modern world, as they had done two thousand years before to the ancient.

Several of the Italian governments had, indeed, for half a century, begun to feel the importance of literature and science, and, consequently, to offer protection and patronage to scholars of every description. Florence, Naples, and Ferrara are particularly entitled to this eulogy; and, in a somewhat inferior degree, Venice, Urbino, Mantua, and Milan. It was a growing spirit, and a growing patronage; till, at length, upon the introduction of Giovanni de' Medici, into the college of cardinals, in 1490, and more especially upon his election to the pontificate in 1513, Rome surpassed every other state in the splendid and extensive encouragement it afforded to wit and wisdom of every kind (with the lamentable exception of that it ought chiefly to have prized), but especially to classical literature and the fine arts.

III. The Latin tongue was, at this time, so far revived as to become cultivated and understood in all its elegancies; and Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Trissino, Sanazzaro, Ariosto, and a bright galaxy of other writers, too extensive to be enumerated, had progressively given a character and almost a mature polish to modern Italian. But a knowledge of Greek, the master-tongue of the world, of Attic eloquence and refinement, was but very limited and imperfect, amid the best scholars of the day; and hence, as I have already observed, the fugitive scholars of Constantinople were hailed in almost every part of Italy and especially by the splendid and illustrious family of the Medici, first at Florence, and afterward at Rome. The directors, indeed, of the early studies of Leo X., or Giovanni de' Medici, as he was then called, were partly drawn from this well-spring of genuine taste and genius; Demetrius Chalcondyles and Petrus Ægineta, both native Greeks, being among the more prominent of his tutors. While, in the very first year of his election to the pontificate, he founded a Greek institute of great extent and magnificence in the centre of the apostolic see; gave a general invitation to young and noble Greeks to quit their country, and take up their residence under his protection; purchased for the accommodation of these illustrious strangers the noble palace of the Cardinal of Sion, on the Esquilian hill, which he splendidly endowed as an academy; and, as far as their talents or education fitted them for the purpose, inducted them into the Roman church, and conferred upon them some of its highest dignities and distinctions.

IV. Nothing could occur more auspiciously to the zeal and splendour which this munificent and sumptuous pontiff was prosecuting the revival of literature than the invention of PRINTING;—that wonderful discovery which has since effected, and which is so well calculated to effect, the most important revolutions among mankind: the noblest art of man, next to the invention of letters; the winged commerce of the mind; the impregnable breastplate of freedom. We may fairly call it an *invention*, even at the period here adverted to, since, though the same art, as well in the form of stereotype or wooden blocks, and of moveable type, had at this time been in use in China ever since the close of the ninth century, and was encouraged by the patronage of the emperor Teen Foh*, there is not the smallest ground for supposing, as there is in the case of the mariner's compass, that it was introduced into Europe from any communication with the Chinese empire. Strasburg has the honour of having given birth to this invention in the middle of the fifteenth century, at the very period when Constantinople fell prostrate before the standard of the Crescent. It was for some time kept a profound secret; but it was an art of far too much importance to remain concealed long; and was soon eagerly laid hold of by a variety of spirited and noble Italians, whom the fashion and ardour of the times had stimulated to try their respective powers in the generous contest for literary fame and distinction; and applied, upon an extensive scale, to a publication of correct and almost immaculate editions of the best Greek, Roman, and vernacular authors.

Among this excellent group, worthy of all praise and immortality, stands first in order of time, and foremost in that of merit, the well-known name of Aldo Manuzio, or Aldus Manutius Bassianus, the intimate friend of Erasmus, born at Bassiano, a village within the Roman territory, in the year 1447: he established his printing school at Venice; invited all the scholars of the age to his assistance; and, in 1494, produced, as the first fruits of the Aldine press, the first Greek poem or Greek book that ever appeared in print, the Hero and Leander of Musæus; which was followed, not many years afterward, by an accurate edition of the entire works of Plato, at that time the most popular of all the Greek philosophers; introduced by an elegant copy of Greek verses composed by Marcus Musurus, one of the most learned Greeks of the day, who had carefully superintended the press, and justly complimentary to the talents and princely munificence of the head of the church: who, with a singular coincidence of facts, was at that very moment addressing a letter to Musurus, requesting his assistance in the formation of his Greek seminary at Rome. I need not add, that to Musurus, to Aldo, to Agostino Chisi, who also founded, and at Rome itself, a printing establishment of great extent and celebrity, to scholars and artists of every description and country, his patronage, his high approbation, and his pecuniary aid, were dealt out to an extent, and with a liberality, that no other age has ever witnessed either before or since.

Nor did he confine his attention to a restoration of the Greek and Roman languages, or an improvement of his vernacular tongue. Under his auspices a study of the oriental dialects, so necessary to a perfect knowledge of the sacred writings, now first began to engage the attention of the learned. He invited ecclesiastics from Syria, Ethiopia, and other eastern countries. In order to carry this important object into due effect, he established a Syriac chair in the university of Bologna, and appointed the celebrated canon Teseo Ambrogio to be the first professor, who is said to have been acquainted with eighteen different languages, and to have delivered his instructions in the Syriac and Chaldee tongues with the fluency of a native. He patronised the Psalter of Agostino Giustiniani, published at Genoa in 1516, in four different languages; personally perused and superintended, as long as he lived, Pagnini's translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew; and, to sum up the whole, gave every encouragement to that masterpiece of learning and labour,

* Morrison's Philological View of China, p. 27.

the Complutensian polyglot of Cardinal Ximenes; which, with the strictest justice and propriety, was dedicated to him upon its completion: so that, with perhaps a single exception, we may adopt the following elegant eulogy of Mr. Pope:—

“But see, each Muse in Leo's golden days
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays;
Rome's ancient genius, o'er its ruins spread,
Shakes off the dust, and rears her reverend head.
Then Sculpture and her sister-arts revive;
Stones leap'd to form, and rocks began to live:
With sweeter notes each rising temple rung;
A RAPHAEL painted, and a VIDA sung.”

The exception in these verses, to which I refer, is the intimation that the service of the temple was now more pure and appropriate. For the general history of Leo's pontificate, as well domestic as public, abundantly shows that pure, undefiled religion was a very subordinate concern in the estimate of this accomplished high priest. He is accused, indeed, of having been a direct infidel; and of having invented the blasphemous exclamation I have already noticed, “What wealth does this fiction of Christ obtain for us!” I cannot affirm that he never repeated this burst of blasphemy, but it is well known to have been in use long before his day. Nor ought it to be forgotten that it was Leo X. who excited Vida, as he himself tells us, to write his *Christiad*, upon the simple unadulterated language of the Bible, with an utter omission, for the first time, of all that absurd introduction of heathen mythology into its sacred mysteries, in which Sannazaro, Torquato Tasso, and even Camoens, have so largely indulged: an omission, which it is difficult to conceive that an infidel, whether secret or open, could ever have suggested or ever allowed. Yet the measures he too often pursued, and especially the sale of indulgences, which we have already touched upon, and shall once more have to notice presently, and the profligate characters whom he employed, or knowingly allowed to be employed, as his delegates in negotiating their sale, as well as in effecting various other objects; more particularly that abandoned wretch, John Tetzels, some of whose exploits have already passed before us, give abundant proof that he was satisfied with the pomp and splendour of the church, and had no religious principle at heart. He had a love for its ceremonials, as they gratified his leading propensity of unbounded splendour and magnificence. And as the externals of the church displayed to him a wider field for an encouragement of learning, and criticism, and translations; of founding professorships for foreign tongues; of hunting up sacred manuscripts and records from the East; and for building churches and palaces of unrivalled grandeur and beauty, than any thing else could open to him; he was eager, and even profligate in following up such pursuits, and adding them to his earnest desires to obtain the finest poetry, and music, and eloquence, and sculpture, of his own or any former age: but of genuine vital religion, the spiritualized breathings of Gregory I., we have no proofs whatever in any part of the pontificate of Leo X.

In few words, such was the general taste for learning and science that characterized the immediate period before us, that there was scarcely an Italian state which had not its university, its printing press, numerous literary institutions, and poets, historians, grammarians, architects, and musicians, of high and deserved celebrity; while the sacred flame, spreading in every direction, arts, literature, and a bold and adventurous spirit of philosophical research, foreign travel, and commercial speculation, blazed forth, in every direction, from the Po to the Elbe, from the Thames to the Tagus.

V. I have said, that ignorance and vice are inseparable associates. But is the converse of this proposition equally true? We have now seen mankind advancing in the path of knowledge—are knowledge and virtue equally inseparable? I have a pride in answering this question; and dare appeal to every page in the history of the times before us for the truth of its affirmative.

From the first moment that the dawn of literature began to glimmer in the

horizon of Italy, where, as I have already observed, it shot forth its earliest twinklings, it pointed, as with the finger of reprobation, to the abominable abuses of the church, and stung to the quick in the satires and brilliant wit of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio; the first of whom, in his incomparable "Divina Commedia," assigned, without scruple, situations and torments in hell to not less than three or four of the most debauched or most despotic of the popes, apportioning their sufferings to their respective vices and degrees of tyranny while on earth;* the second of whom characterizes the papal court, in one of his sonnets by the name of Babylon, and declares that he has quitted it for ever, as a place equally deprived of virtue and of shame, the seat of misery, and the mother of error; and the last of whom made it his direct object, in his very popular and entertaining work, the "Decamerone," to expose the whole priesthood to ridicule and contempt; his entire argument consisting of the debaucheries of the religious of both sexes. As learning advanced, these attacks became more frequent; and as the art of printing established itself, the assaults of the more celebrated writers, of Poggio, Burchiello, Pulci, and Franco, were published at Antwerp, Leipsic, and in other parts of the Continent, as well as in France and Italy; till at length the church, becoming sensible of her danger, and, at the same time, equally sensible of her utter inability to repel the shafts that were levelled against her, attempted, like the grand tyrant of the present day,† to suppress the voice of truth and of public feeling by severe denunciations and punishments; and hence, in the tenth session of the Council of Lateran, immediately before the elevation of Leo X. to the pontificate, decreed, that no one under the penalty of excommunication should dare to publish any new work, without the approbation either of the ordinary jurisdiction of the place, or of the holy inquisition.

Such denunciations, however, had by this time, in a very considerable degree, lost their authority; and even Leo himself, in the zenith of his potency and popularity, and in many respects not popular without reason, fell a sacrifice to practices which, however supported by custom, are equally repugnant to religion and common sense.

I have already described a part, though comparatively but a small part, of the enormous expenses into which the prodigal but refined magnificence of this genuine descendant of the Medici was annually plunging him. His taste for luxury was unbounded; his foreign diplomacy was conducted upon a scale of still greater splendour than his domestic court or his literary establishments; while he was at the same time in the regular disbursement of almost incalculable sums for embellishing the Vatican, and augmenting its library with manuscripts collected from every quarter of the globe, and in completing the immense fabric of St. Peter's church, commenced by his predecessor Julius II. The vast revenues of the apostolic see, both temporal and spiritual, were incompetent, by their ordinary channels, to these wide and multifarious demands: he had exhausted the pontifical treasury; and, following an example which had too often been furnished by his predecessors, he fell into the absurdity of granting a sale of indulgences for its repletion.

Indulgences were a ticklish subject in the worst of times;‡ and in the times before us the more conscientious and enlightened churchmen were as little disposed to endure them as the laity. In this respect, the feelings of Eras-

* Those whom he has more especially signalized by their sufferings in the infernal regions are, Pope Nicholas III., whom the poet finds tortured in the gulf of Simony, Pope Boniface VIII., and Pope Clement V. The confession of Nicholas III. is peculiarly striking, who at first mistook Dante, in his transitory visit, for his own successor in the papal chair, whom he had been long expecting:—

"Poi sospirando, e con voce di pianto
Mi disse: Dunque che a me richiedi?
Se di saper ch'io sia ti col cotanto
Che tu abbi però la ripa scorsa,
Sappi, ch'io fui vestito del GRAN MANTO," &c.
Inferno, canto xix.

† Napoleon Buonaparte; the day alluded to being, as already observed, 1813.
‡ Yet the Council of Trent has long since established their use as a part of wholesome discipline, by formally decreeing that "the power to grant indulgences by Jesus Christ, and the use of them, is beneficial to salvation."

mus, Melancthon, Bucer, and Luther, coincided: but the three former, being of mild, conciliatory tempers, remained quiet; while the natural hardihood and high spirit of the last incited him to open resistance. Our time will not allow us to enter into the dispute: the high pontiff, whose natural disposition, it must be admitted, was also conciliatory, stood aloof from it as long as it was possible; but his delegates were, for the most part, incautious, violent, and overbearing; and Luther, in almost every instance, had the advantage of them, as much in dexterity of management as in soundness of cause. The controversy grew wider and warmer: one step led on to another; and the inflexible champion who, at first, only intended to controvert the infallibility of the Pope, at length found himself compelled to controvert that of the Church, and, finally, to regard the high pontiff as ANTICHRIST. The contention had now reached its extreme point; and the only alternative that remained to the intrepid monk of St. Augustin was retraction or excommunication. He halted not between two opinions, but boldly braved the latter; and addressing himself to the emperor Charles V., who presided at the august and crowded diet before which he was summoned, "As your majesty," said he, "and the sovereigns now present, require a simple answer, I reply thus, without vehemence or evasion: Unless I be convinced, by the testimony of Scripture, or of plain reason (for on the authority of the Pope and Councils alone I cannot rely, since it appears that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other), and unless my conscience be subdued by the word of God, I neither can nor will retract any thing; seeing that to act against my own conscience is neither safe nor honest." After which he added, in his native German, the preceding having been spoken in Latin, "Here I take my stand. I cannot act otherwise. God be my help. Amen."

Hic stehe ich. Ich kan nicht anders. Gott helff mir. Amen.

With this noble protest was laid the key-stone of the REFORMATION: the pontifical hierarchy shook to its centre; and the great cause of truth and regenerate religion, which had already made its appearance in Switzerland, under the honest-hearted and undaunted Ulric Zwingli, spread with electric speed over a considerable portion of Germany; and, within the space of four years, extended itself from Hungary and Bohemia to France and Great Britain. That, in the infancy of its progress, various enormities were perpetrated, and that even the conduct of its mighty leader was, in this respect, not at all times irreproachable, must be equally admitted and lamented; but they were enormities merely incidental to the inexperienced season of infancy, and which disappeared as the cause ripened into mature age; while, whatever may have been the occasional violence of Martin Luther, "all parties must unite in admiring and venerating the man who, undaunted and alone, could stand before such an assembly, and vindicate, with unshaken courage, what he conceived to be the cause of religion, of liberty, and of truth; fearless of any reproaches but those of his own conscience, or of any disapprobation but that of his God."*

Such is a brief glance at the wonderful periods that anticipated and have introduced our own unrivalled era. Long and doubtful was the conflict between intellectual life and death: glimmering slowly succeeding to glimmering; light still struggling with suffocating darkness, not for weeks, or months, or years, but for centuries upon centuries, before the day-spring became manifest. Yet, no sooner had the long-delayed and long-wished-for fulness of the times at length arrived, than the marble tomb of ignorance and error gave way, as it were, of a sudden; a thousand glorious events and magnificent discoveries thronged upon each other with pressing haste, to behold and congratulate the mighty birth, the new creation of which they were the harbingers; when, with a steady and triumphant step, the peerless form of human intellect rose erect; and, throwing off from its freshening limbs the death-shade and the grave-clothes by which it was enshrouded, ascended to the glorious resurrection of that noontide lustre which irradiates the horizon of our own day, rejoicing like a giant to run his race.

* Roscoe's Life of Leo. X. vol. iv. p. 36.