

PART FIRST.

AFTER labouring for a long time at the work of making France understood in Germany, at the work of destroying those national prejudices that despots so well know how to turn to their account, I am about to undertake a similar and not less useful labour in interpreting Germany to Frenchmen.

Providence, in appointing me this task, will also bestow on me the needful light to perform it. I shall accomplish a work profitable for both countries, and I have entire faith in my mission.

Formerly there prevailed in France the most complete ignorance regarding the intellectual condition of Germany, an ignorance that was most disastrous in times of war. Nowadays, on the other hand, there is springing up a kind of half-knowledge, an erroneous conception of the genius of the German nation, a confusion of old Teutonic doctrines, ominous and most dangerous in times of peace.

Most Frenchmen had persuaded themselves that, in order to comprehend German thought, an acquaintance with the masterpieces of German art was sufficient. But art represents only one side of German thought, and to understand even this requires a knowledge of the other two sides of that thought—Religion and Philosophy.

Only by studying the history of the religious reform proclaimed by Luther, is it possible to comprehend how

philosophy reached its development among us, and only by means of a systematic exposition of our philosophical systems can you appreciate that great literary revolution, which, commencing with a theory, with the principles of a new method of criticism, produced the Romanticism that has become the theme of your admiration. You have been admiring flowers about whose roots you knew as little as about the meaning of their symbolical language. You have only seen the colours; you have only breathed the perfumes.

In order then to unveil German thought I must first speak of religion. This religion is Christianity.¹

Fear not, pious souls! your ears will be offended by no profane pleasantries. These may still be of some service in Germany, where perhaps it is necessary to neutralise, for the moment, the influence of religion. For we Germans are in the same position that you were in previous to the Revolution, when Christianity was inseparably allied to the old order of things. The latter was indestructible so long as the former continued to exercise its influence over the masses. Voltaire's keen laughter must be heard before Samson could strike with the headsman's axe. Yet Voltaire's laugh proved nothing; it produced only a brutal effect, just as did Samson's base axe. Voltaire could only wound the body of Christianity. All his sarcasms derived from ecclesiastical history; all his witticisms on dogma and worship, on the Bible, that most sacred book of humanity, on the Virgin Mary, that fairest flower of poetry; the whole dictionary of philosophical arrows which he discharged against the clergy and the priesthood, could only wound the mortal body of Christianity, but were powerless against its interior essence, its deeper spirit, its immortal soul.

¹ The small figures throughout the work refer to the Notes in the Appendix.

For Christianity is an idea, and as such it is indestructible and eternal, as all ideas are. What then is this idea?

It is because this idea has not yet been clearly comprehended, because the external forms it has assumed have been taken for the reality, that we are still without a history of Christianity. Although Church history has been written by two opposing parties that are perpetually contradicting each other, yet these parties are so far of one mind, that neither the one nor the other will distinctly declare wherein, after all, consists this idea that is the central point of Christianity; this idea that strives to reveal itself in the symbolism, the dogma, and the worship of the Christian Church, and that has manifested itself in the actual life of Christian peoples. Neither Baronius, the Catholic cardinal, nor Schröekh, the Protestant aulic counsellor, approaches this idea. Though you were to run over the whole collection of the Acts of the Councils, the Code of the Liturgy, and the entire Ecclesiastical History of Sacarelli, you would gain no insight into what constitutes the idea of Christianity. What then do we find in the so-called histories of the Eastern and Western Churches? In the former nothing but dogmatic subtilities, a revival of the old Greek sophistry; in the latter mere questions of discipline and disputes concerning ecclesiastical interests, in which the legal casuistry and statecraft of the ancient Romans endeavour to reassert themselves by the aid of new forms and coercive measures. In fact, as men had disputed at Constantinople about the *logos*, so in Rome they contended about the relation between the temporal and the spiritual power: as there they had attacked one another about *homousios*, so here they fought about investiture. But the Byzantine questions—Whether the *logos* is *homousios* to God the Father? Whether Mary is to be called mother of God or mother of man? Whether

Christ, in the absence of food, suffered hunger, or only hungered because he desired to hunger?—all these questions were in reality based upon court intrigues; and their solution depended on what was secretly passing in the private apartments of the *Palatium Sacrum*. Everything might be traced to the prattling of women and of eunuchs. Under the name of dogma it is a man, and in the man it is a party that is preferred or persecuted. So likewise in the West. Rome always desired to rule; when her legions fell she sent dogmas into the provinces. Every discussion on matters of faith had reference to Roman usurpations; it was a question of consolidating the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, who was always very tolerant regarding mere articles of faith, but fretted and fumed whenever the rights of the Church were assailed. He did not indulge in much disputation about the persons in Christ, but he was very eager about the consequences of the decretals of Isidore. He centralised his power by canonical law, by installation of bishops, by abasement of the authority of princes, by the establishing of monastic institutions, by celibacy of the priesthood, and so forth. But was this Christianity? Does the idea of Christianity reveal itself to us in reading this kind of history? And again I ask, what is this idea?

We may discover in what manner this idea had already taken historical form, and manifested itself in the world during the first centuries of the Christian era, by surveying, with minds free from prejudices, the history of the Manicheans and the Gnostics. Though the former were branded as heretics and the latter were decried, though both sects were equally condemned by the Church, their influence on dogma still remained; Christian art was developed from their symbolism, and their mode of thought permeated the whole life of Christian peoples. In the ultimate grounds of their beliefs Manicheans did not greatly

differ from Gnostics. The doctrine of the two principles, good and evil, at conflict with one another, is common to both. The one sect, the Manicheans, borrowed this doctrine from the ancient Persian religion, in which Ormuzd, light, is opposed to Ahriman, darkness. The other sect, Gnostics properly so called, believed rather in the pre-existence of the principle of good, and explained the origin of the principle of evil by emanation, by generation of *æons*, which deteriorate in proportion as they remove from their source. According to Cerinthus, the Creator of our world was by no means the Most High God, but only an emanation from Him, one of those *æons*, the veritable *Demiourgos*, that has insensibly degenerated, and that now stands, as evil principle, in hostile opposition to the *logos*, the good principle, emanating directly from the Supreme God. This Gnostic cosmogony is of Indian origin, and embodies the doctrine of the incarnation of God, of the mortification of the flesh, of the contemplative life; it has given birth to asceticism, to monastic abnegation, the purest flower of the Christian idea. This idea manifested itself, very confusedly however, in dogma, and very vaguely in worship. Still we find everywhere appearing the doctrine of these two principles; the perverse Satan is opposed to the good Christ; the spiritual world is represented by Christ, the material world by the devil; the soul belongs to the former, the body to the latter. The whole external world, Nature, is therefore by its origin wicked, and Satan, the prince of darkness, seeks by its means, to entice us to destruction; and we must renounce all the pleasures of the senses, we must torture the body, the fief of Satan, in order that the soul may soar more majestically towards the heavenly light, towards the radiant kingdom of Christ.

This cosmogony, the veritable idea of Christianity, spread with incredible rapidity throughout the extent of the

Roman empire. It raged like a disease; its sufferings, its fever, its extreme tension continued during the whole of the Middle Ages; and we moderns often feel even yet its spasms and its lassitude in all our members. If some one amongst us has meantime been cured, yet is it impossible for him to escape the all-pervading lazaretto atmosphere, and he feels himself unhappy as the only healthy being amidst the multitude of languishing mortals. One day, when humanity will have regained robust health, when peace will have been once more established between body and soul, and they again live together in primal harmony, it will scarce be possible for men to comprehend the unnatural enmity that Christianity has set between them. Happier and fairer generations, born of free unions, and nurtured in a religion of joy, will smile with pity when thinking of their poor ancestors, whose lives were passed in melancholy abstinence from all the enjoyments of this beautiful world, and who mortified the warm, rosy-hued flesh till they became mere pale, cold ghosts. Yes! I declare it with full conviction: our descendants will be a fairer and happier race than we are. For I believe in progress; I believe that happiness is the goal of humanity, and I cherish a higher idea of the Divine Being than those pious folk who suppose that man was created only to suffer. Even here on earth I would strive, through the blessings of free political and industrial institutions, to bring about that reign of felicity which, in the opinion of the pious, is to be postponed till heaven is reached after the day of judgment. The one expectation is perhaps as vain as the other; there may be no resurrection of humanity either in a political or in a religious sense. Mankind, it may be, is doomed to eternal misery; the nations are perhaps under a perpetual curse, condemned to be trodden under foot by despots, to be made the instruments of their accomplices and the laughing-stocks of their menials. Yet, though all

this be the case, it will be the duty even of those who regard Christianity as an error still to uphold it; and men must journey barefoot through Europe, wearing monks' cowls, preaching the doctrine of renunciation and the vanity of all earthly possessions, holding up before the gaze of a scourged and despised humanity the consoling Cross, and promising, after death, all the glories of heaven².

The duration of religions has always been dependent on human need for them. Christianity has been a blessing for suffering humanity during eighteen centuries; it has been providential, divine, holy. All that it has done in the interest of civilisation, curbing the strong and strengthening the weak, binding together the nations through a common sympathy and a common tongue, and all else that its apologists have urged in its praise—all this is as nothing compared with that great consolation it has bestowed on man. Eternal praise is due to the symbol of that suffering God, the Saviour with the crown of thorns, the crucified Christ, whose blood was as a healing balm that flowed into the wounds of humanity. The poet especially must acknowledge with reverence the terrible sublimity of this symbol. The whole system of symbolism impressed on the art and the life of the Middle Ages must awaken the admiration of poets in all times. In reality, what colossal unity there is in Christian art, especially in its architecture! These Gothic cathedrals, how harmoniously they accord with the worship of which they are the temples, and how the idea of the Church reveals itself in them! Everything about them strives upwards, everything transubstantiates itself; the stone buds forth into branches and foliage, and becomes a tree; the fruit of the vine and the ears of corn become blood and flesh; the man becomes God; God becomes a pure spirit. For the poet, the Christian life of the Middle Ages is a precious

and inexhaustibly fruitful field. Only through Christianity could the circumstances of life combine to form such striking contrasts, such motley sorrow, such weird beauty, that one almost fancies such things can never have had any real existence, and that it is all a vast fever-dream—the fever-dream of a delirious deity. Even Nature, during this sublime epoch of the Christian religion, seemed to have put on a fantastic disguise; for oftentimes though man, absorbed in abstract subtleties, turned away from her with abhorrence, she would recall him to her with a voice so mysteriously sweet, so terrible in its tenderness, so powerfully enchanting, that unconsciously he would listen and smile, and become terrified, and even fall sick unto death. The story of the nightingale of Basle comes here into my recollection, and as it is probably unknown to you I will relate it.

One day in May, 1433, at the time of the Council of Basle, a company of clerics, composed of prelates, doctors, monks of every colour, were walking in a wood near the town. They were disputing about points of theological controversy, distinguishing and arguing, contending about annates, expectatives, and reservations, inquiring whether Thomas Aquinas was a greater philosopher than Bonaventura, and so forth. But suddenly, in the midst of their dogmatic and abstract discussions, they all became silent, and remained as if rooted to the spot before a blossoming lime-tree, wherein sat a nightingale carolling and sobbing forth her tenderest and sweetest melodies. These learned men began to feel in a strangely blessed mood as the warm spring notes of the bird penetrated their scholastic and monastic hearts; their sympathies awoke out of their dreary winter sleep, and they looked on one another in raptured amazement. But at last one of them shrewdly remarked that herein must be some wile of the evil one, that this nightingale could be none other than an emissary

of the devil, seeking to divert them by its seducing strains from their Christian converse, and to entice them into voluptuousness or other alluring sin, and he thereupon proceeded to exorcise the evil spirit, probably with the customary formula of the time:—*Adjuro te per eum, qui venturus est, judicare vivos et mortuos.* To this adjuration it is said that the bird replied, “Yea, I am an evil spirit,” and flew away laughing. They, however, that had listened to its song fell sick that same day, and died shortly thereafter.

This story needs no commentary. It bears the terrible impress of a time when all that was sweet and lovely was decried as the agency of the devil. The nightingale itself was declared a bird of evil fame, and men made the sign of the cross when it sang. The true Christian walked abroad with his sentient being wrapped in anxious reserve, like an abstraction, like a spectre in the midst of smiling nature. I shall perhaps, in a later work, speak more at length of the relation established between the Christian soul and nature; for in order to elucidate the spirit of modern romantic literature, I shall be obliged to discuss minutely German popular superstitions.* For the present I can only remark that French authors, misled by certain German authorities, have fallen into gross error in supposing that during the Middle Ages popular superstitions were identical throughout the whole of Europe. It was only with regard to the principle of good, the kingdom of Christ, that the same views were universally entertained in Europe. The Church of Rome took care that it should be so, and whoever deviated on this subject from the prescribed opinion was a heretic. But with regard to the principle of evil, the empire of Satan, opinions varied in the various countries. In the Teutonic north, men’s con-

* Heine (in part at least) fulfilled this promise in his “Elementary Spirits.”—Tr.

ceptions of this principle differed entirely from those held in the Latin countries of the south. This difference arose from the fact that the Christian priesthood did not reject as idle dreams the old national divinities, but conceded to them a real existence, asserting however, that all these deities were but male or female devils, who through the triumph of Christ had lost their power over men, and were now seeking to allure them back to sin by wiles and sensual delights. All Olympus had become an ærial hell; and if a poet of the Middle Ages celebrated the epos of the Greek divinities, sang he ever so sweetly, the pious Christian beheld in his song only goblins and demons. The dismal anathema of the monks fell most rudely on poor Venus; she especially was held to be a daughter of Beelzebub, and the good knight *Tanhäuser* tells her even to her face—

“O Venus, O thou goddess mine,
Thou’rt but a devil fair and fine !”

For Venus had enticed this knight *Tanhäuser* into that wonderful cavern in what is called the Mountain of Venus, wherein, as the legend tells, the beautiful goddess and her attendants lead, amidst pastime and dance, the most dissolute life. Poor *Diana*, too, despite her chastity, was not exempt from a like fate, and was accused of scouring the woods by night with her nymphs; hence the legends of the fierce huntsman and the wild nightly chase. Here we have indications of the true Gnostic conception as to the deterioration of the previously divine, and in this transformation of ancient national beliefs the idea of Christianity most profoundly manifests itself.

National faith in Europe, though more strongly marked in the northern than in the southern countries, was pantheistic. Its mysteries and symbols were referable to a worship of nature; in every element men adored some marvellous being, every tree revealed a deity, all the phe-

nomena of the universe were informed by divinity. Christianity reversed this view; nature, ceasing to bear the impress of the divine, became diabolised. But the joyous and artistically beautiful forms of Greek mythology that were still potent side by side with Latin civilisation in the south, could not so readily be transformed into the hideous and repulsive features of Satan as the Teutonic gods, over whose creation certainly no artistic thought had presided, and who were always as dreary and as sad as their northern abodes. Thus in France you could produce no such gloomy and terrible kingdom of Satan as we in Germany, and the world of apparitions and sorcery even assumed with you a genial aspect. How beautiful, how distinct and many-coloured are the popular legends of France compared with those of Germany; those monstrosities of blood and cloud that glare at us with such wan and cruel countenances. Our poets of the Middle Ages, selecting in general such materials as had either been first imagined or first treated in Brittany and Normandy, imparted to their works, perhaps intentionally, as much as possible of the genial old French spirit. But our national poetry and our traditional folk-lore preserved that dismal northern spirit of which you can hardly form any idea. Like us you have many kinds of elementary spirits, but ours differ as widely from yours as a German differs from a Frenchman. How brightly coloured and especially how cleanly are the demons of your *fabliaux* and wizard romances in comparison with the rabble-rout of our colourless and very often filthy ghosts! Your fays and sprites, whether borrowed from Cornwall or from Arabia, become quite naturalised among you, and a French ghost is distinguished from a German ghost much as a dandy wearing kid gloves and dawdling along the Boulevard Coblence is distinguished from a clumsy German porter. Your water sprites, such as Melusine, have as little resemblance to ours as a princess

has to a washerwoman. How horrified your fay Morgana would be did she chance to meet a German witch, naked, smeared with ointment, riding on a broomstick to the Brocken! This mountain is no fair Avallon, but a meeting-place for all that is abominable and hideous. On the summit of the mountain sits Satan in the form of a black goat. Each witch approaches him bearing a lighted candle, and kisses the spot where the back ceases. Thereafter the whole crazy sisterhood dances round him, singing *donderemus, donderemus!* the goat bleats, the infernal rabble shouts. It is an evil omen for a witch to lose a shoe in this dance; it betokens that she will be burnt that same year. But the mad sabbat-music, worthy of Berlioz, overpowers all foreboding anxiety, and when the poor witch wakes in the morning from her intoxication, it is to find herself lying naked and exhausted among the ashes of the dying fire.

The best information concerning these witches is to be found in the "Demonology" of the honourable and learned Doctor Nicolas Remigius, criminal judge to his serene highness the Duke of Lorraine. This sagacious man had certainly the best opportunity for becoming acquainted with the doings of the witches, for he conducted the prosecutions against them, and in his time eight hundred women in Lorraine alone were burnt at the stake, after being convicted of witchcraft. Proof of their guilt was mainly established in this wise: their feet and hands being bound together, they were thrown into the water. If they sank and were drowned, they were innocent; but if they remained floating on the surface, they were pronounced guilty, and were burnt. Such was the logic of the time.

The main feature in the character of German demons is that everything ideal has been stripped from them, and thus they exhibit a mixture of the vile and the horrible. The more coarsely familiar the form in which

they present themselves the more terrible the effect they produce. Nothing can be weirder than our hobgoblins, cobolds, and gnomes. Prætorius, in his *Anthropodemus Plutonicus*, has a passage on this subject which I quote from Dobeneck.*

“The ancients could not conceive hobgoblins (*Poltergeister*) as other than veritable men of the stature of diminutive children wearing parti-coloured little coats or dresses. Some add that they have a knife sticking from their backs, they having been done to death with this instrument; and as thus represented they have a hideous aspect. The superstitious believe them to be the souls of former occupants of their houses, who had been murdered. They tell, also, many a story as to how these cobolds, after rendering good service to the maids and cook-wenches in the house, so won their affections that many of these servants became enamoured of the cobolds to such a degree that they experienced an ardent desire to see the manikins, and eagerly longed for their appearance. But the spirits would never willingly gratify this longing, making the excuse that they could not be seen without inspiring horror. Though, when the maids persisted in their desire to behold them, the cobolds would indicate some part of the house where they would present themselves corporeally. The persons wishing to see the cobolds must, however, bring with them a pail of cold water. Now it sometimes happened that one of these cobolds would lay himself down naked and as if dead on the ground with a long knife sticking in his back. On seeing the creature thus lying, many a servant became so sorely terrified that she would fall down fainting. Thereupon the thing would immediately spring up, seize the water-pail and souse the girl with its contents in order to bring

* Dobeneck's "German Popular Superstitions and Heroic Legends of the Middle Ages."

her to her senses. After this the maid would lose all desire for the creature, and would never again seek to behold little Chim. For you must know the cobolds all have particular names, though generally called *Chim*. It is said also that for the men and maid servants to whom they are devoted they will perform all kinds of house-work: currying and feeding the horses, cleaning the stable, scouring up everything, tending the cows, doing whatever is necessary in and about the house, and paying such attention that the cattle grow fat and sleek under their care. In return the cobolds require to be much indulged by the domestics, who dare not cause them the slightest offence either by laughing at them or by neglecting to provide their food. And a cook-wench having taken one of these little creatures into her secret service, must set down for it daily at the same hour and in an appointed place in the house, a dish of well prepared and well seasoned food, and then go her way without looking behind; after that she may pass her time in idleness, and go to bed when she pleases; yet at early morning she will find all her work carefully performed. But should she on a single occasion neglect her duty, as by omitting to set down the food, she will be obliged to do her work without assistance, and will meet with all kinds of mishaps: either getting herself burned with hot water, or breaking the pots and dishes, or spilling the sauce and so forth—misadventures that infallibly bring upon her a scolding from the master or mistress of the house, at which the cobold may often be heard tittering and laughing. And such a cobold is accustomed to remain in a house even though the servants are changed. Indeed, a maid when she is leaving a house ought to recommend the cobold to her successor, so that it may continue its services in the household. Should the new servant pay no heed to the recommendation she will not fail to meet with per-

petual misfortunes and will speedily be forced to quit the house."

The following anecdote is perhaps one of the most terrible of its kind.

A maid-servant had during many years an invisible familiar spirit that sat beside her by the hearth, where she had set apart for it a little place, entertaining herself with the creature during the long winter evenings. Now the maid once begged Heinzchen (for so the spirit was called) to show himself to her in his natural form. Heinzchen, however, refused to do so. At last, after much entreaty, he consented, and bade the maid descend into the cellar and there she would see him. The girl, taking a candle, goes down into the cellar, and there in an open cask she beholds a dead infant swimming in its blood. Now this servant had many years before given birth to a child, and had secretly murdered and concealed it in a cask.

Such is the idiosyncrasy of the Germans that they often seek in the horrible their merriest jests, and the popular legends relating to cobolds are frequently characterised by diverting traits. The most amusing of such stories are those about Húdeken, a cobold that carried on his pranks at Hildesheim in the twelfth century, of whom there is so much talk amongst our gossiping spinsters and in our romances of the spirit-world. I borrow from the Chronicle of the Monastery of Hirschau, by the Abbot Tritheim, the following narrative :—

"In the year 1132 there appeared to many persons in the bishopric of Hildesheim, being seen of them during a considerable time, an evil spirit in the form of a peasant with a hat on his head ; whence the country people called it, in the Saxon language, *Húdeken* (little hat). This spirit took delight in haunting people, being sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, in asking questions and in replying

to their queries. He gave offence to no one without cause. When, however, any one mocked at or otherwise insulted him, he avenged the injury done him in the completest manner. The Count Burchard of Luka having been killed by the Count Hermann of Weissenburg, and the territory of the latter being in danger of falling into the hands of the avengers of the murdered count, Hudeken awoke the Bishop of Hildesheim out of sleep, and spoke to him in these words: 'Arise, bald-head! the county of Weissenburg is abandoned and become vacant through the murderous deed of its seigneur, and thou may'st easily obtain possession of it.' The bishop speedily assembled his men-at-arms, fell upon the land of the guilty count, and united it, with permission of the emperor, to his bishopric. The spirit repeatedly and importunately gave warning to the said bishop of impending dangers, and frequently appeared in the kitchens of the episcopal palace, where he conversed with the scullions and rendered them all manner of service. The domestics having by degrees become very familiar with Hudeken, a young scullion was daring enough to tease him and even to souse him with dirty water as often as he made his appearance. The spirit besought the chief cook or steward of the kitchens to forbid the impertinent boy's indulgence in such mischief. To this request the chief cook answered, 'Thou art a spirit and yet art thou afraid of a mere boy!' Whereupon Hudeken replied in a menacing tone, 'Since thou wilt not punish the boy, I shall show thee within a few days how far I am afraid of him.' Soon after this it happened that the boy who had offended the spirit was in the kitchen quite alone and asleep. In this condition the spirit seized him, stabbed him, cut the body in pieces and threw the fragments into the pots placed over the fire. When the cook discovered what had been done, he cursed the spirit; and next day Hudeken spoiled all the roasts that were on the spits, by

pouring over them the venom and blood of vipers. The thirst for revenge suggested to the cook new insults, until finally the spirit enticed him on to an enchanted false bridge, thus causing him to fall into the castle moat. After this Hudeken made the walls and towers of the town his nightly haunt, causing much anxiety to the sentinels, and obliging them to keep a diligent watch. A citizen that had an unfaithful wife said jestingly, one day as he was about to set out on a journey, 'Hudeken, my good friend, I commend my wife to thy charge; guard her carefully!' As soon as the husband had gone his faithless wife permitted her lovers, one after another, to visit her. But Hudeken did not let a single one of them approach her, and threw them all out of bed on to the floor. When the husband returned from his journey, the spirit went to meet him, and said to him, 'I am heartily glad of thy return, whereby I am relieved of the burdensome duty thou didst lay on me. I have with unspeakable difficulty preserved thy wife from actual disloyalty, and I beg thee never again to place her under my care. I had rather have the keeping of all the swine in the whole Saxon land than of a woman that seeks by deceit to throw herself into the arms of her lovers.'"

I ought, for the sake of historical accuracy, to remark that the hat worn by Hudeken differs from the ordinary costume of cobolds. They are generally clad in grey, and wear a red cap; at least this is the garb they assume in Denmark, where nowadays they are to be met with in greatest numbers. I used to be of opinion that they had chosen Denmark as their favourite resort from their fondness for red groats. But a young Danish poet, Herr Andersen, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in Paris this summer, positively assured me that the favourite food of the *nissen* (as the cobolds are called in Denmark) is frumenty with butter. Once these cobolds have taken up

their abode in a house they are not disposed readily to quit it again. Yet they never come without previous announcement, and when desiring to settle down anywhere they give notice of their intention to the master of the house in the following manner:—They carry into the house by night a great quantity of wood-chips and strew the ordure of cattle in the milk-cans. If the master of the house does not throw out the wood-chips, if he and his family consume the milk thus made foul, then the cobolds instal themselves permanently in his house. A poor Jutlander became at last so much annoyed at the enforced companionship of such a cobold, that he determined to abandon his whole house to the creature. Loading his goods and chattels on a cart, he drove off with them towards the next village, in order to settle there. But on the way thither, chancing to look round, he espied, peeping out of one of the empty milk-churns, the little red-capped head of the cobold, who called out to him complacently, “*Wi flütten!*” (we are flitting).

I have perhaps lingered too long over these little demons, and it is time that I should return to the great ones. Yet all these legends illustrate the character and the beliefs of the German people. These beliefs were formerly just as powerful in influence as was the creed of the Church. By the time the learned doctor Remigius had completed his great work on witchcraft, he believed himself to be so completely master of his subject as to imagine that he could himself exercise the power of sorcery; and, conscientious man that he was, he did not fail to denounce himself to the tribunals as a sorcerer, and was burned as such on the strength of his own testimony.

These atrocities did not originate directly in the Christian Church, though indirectly such was their origin; for, the Church had so cunningly inverted the old Teutonic religion, that the pantheistic cosmogony of the Germans

was transformed into a pandemonic conception; the former popular divinities were changed into hideous fiends. But man does not willingly abandon that which has been dear to his forefathers, and his affections secretly cling firmly thereto, even when it has been mutilated and defaced. Hence popular superstitions, travestied as they have become, may in Germany outlive the official creed of our days, which is not, like them, rooted in the ancient nationality. At the time of the Reformation, faith in the Catholic legends disappeared with great rapidity; but not so belief in enchantments and sorcery. Luther ceases to believe in Catholic miracles; but he still believes in the power of the devil. His "Table-Talk" is full of curious anecdotes of Satanic art, of cobolds and witches. He himself, in his distress, often fancies that he is engaged in combat with the devil in person. On the Wartburg, where he translated the New Testament, he was so much disturbed by the devil that he threw the inkstand at his head. The devil has ever since that day had a great dread of ink, and a still greater dread of printing-ink. Of the craftiness of the devil many a diverting anecdote is told in this same book of "Table-Talk;" and I cannot forbear here quoting one of these—

"Dr. Martin Luther related that one day certain boon companions were sitting together in a tavern. Now amongst them was a wild disorderly fellow, who said, were any one to offer him a stoup of good wine, he was ready to sell his soul therefor.

"A little while afterwards there comes into the room one that seats himself beside him that had been so fool-hardy, drinks with him, and amidst other talk, says to him—'Listen, said'st thou not but a little ago, if any one should give thee a stoup of wine thou would'st sell him thy soul therefor?'

“Then said the other—‘Yea, and I hold to it; let me drink and carouse and be right merry to-day.’

“The man, who was the devil, said ‘Yes,’ and soon slipped away again from him. Now when this same drinker had passed the whole day jovially, and had at last become drunk, then the aforesaid man, the devil, returns, seats himself again beside him, and says to the other toppers—‘Good sirs, what think you; when one buys a horse, do not saddle and bridle also become his?’ They were all taken with great fear. At last the man said, ‘Come, tell me without more ado.’ Then they all avowed it was so, and said, ‘Yea, saddle and bridle also are his.’ Whereupon the devil takes hold of that same wild unruly fellow and carries him off through the roof, and no one could tell whither he went.”

Although I entertain the highest respect for our great master, Martin Luther, still I cannot but think he has quite mistaken the character of the devil. The devil does not look upon the body with such contempt as is here represented. And, however evil-spoken of the devil may be, he can never be accused of being a spiritualist.

But Martin Luther misjudged the sentiments of the Pope and the Catholic Church even more seriously than he did those of the devil. In my strict impartiality, I must take the two former, as I have taken the devil under my protection, against the all-too-zealous man. In truth, if asked as a matter of conscience, I should admit that Pope Leo X. was in reality far more reasonable than Luther; and that the Reformer had quite misunderstood the fundamental principles of the Catholic Church. For Luther did not perceive that the idea of Christianity, the annihilation of the life of the senses, was too violent a contradiction of human nature ever to be capable of complete realisation. He did not comprehend that Catholicism was a species of concordat between God and the

devil, between spirit and matter, whereby the autocracy of the spirit was theoretically admitted, whilst matter was placed in the position of carrying out in practice all its annulled rights. Hence a subtle system of concessions devised by the Church for the benefit of the senses, though so conceived as to stigmatise every act of sensuality and to preserve to the spirit its arrogant usurpation. Thou art permitted to lend an ear to the tender emotions of the heart and to embrace a pretty girl, but thou must acknowledge that it is an abominable sin, and for this sin thou must do penance. That such penance might take the form of money payment was as advantageous for humanity as it was profitable for the Church. The Church ordained, so to speak, a ransom to be paid for every fleshly indulgence; and thus was established a tariff for every species of sin. There were religious pedlars offering for sale throughout the land, in the name of the Romish Church, indulgences for every taxable sin. Such a pedlar was Tetzels, upon whom Luther made his first onslaught. Our historians hold the opinion that this protest against the traffic in indulgences was an insignificant event, and that it was only through Romish obstinacy that Luther (whose zeal was at first directed merely against an ecclesiastical abuse) was driven to attack the authority of the Church in its most important position. But this is certainly an error; indulgence-mongering was not an abuse, it was a consequence of the whole ecclesiastical system, and in attacking it Luther attacked the Church itself, and the Church must condemn him as a heretic. Leo X., the subtle Florentine, the disciple of Politian, the friend of Raphael, the Greek philosopher with the tiara conferred on him by the conclave, possibly because he was suffering from a disease in no wise caused by Christian abstinence, and which was still very dangerous—how must this Leo de Medicis have laughed at the poor, chaste, simple monk

who imagined the Gospel to be the charter of Christendom, and that this charter must be a truth! He may perhaps have quite overlooked what Luther was seeking, much busied as he then was with the building of St. Peter's, the cost of which was to be defrayed by this very sale of indulgences, vice being thus made contributory to the erection of this edifice, which thereby became a kind of monument of sensual desire, like the pyramid of Rhodope, constructed by an Egyptian courtesan from the profits of prostitution. Of this house of God it may with more justice be asserted than of the Cathedral of Cologne, that it was built by the devil. This triumph of spiritualism, that compelled sensualism to rear for it its fairest temple; that derived from innumerable concessions granted to the flesh, the means of glorifying the spirit—this triumph was a thing incomprehensible in the German North. For there, more easily than under the glowing sky of Italy, it was possible to practise a Christianity that makes the least possible concessions to sensuality. We Northerners are of colder blood, and we needed not so many indulgences for carnal sins as were sent by Leo in his fatherly concern for us. Our climate facilitates the practice of Christian virtues; and on the 31st October, 1516, as Luther nailed his theses against indulgences to the door of the Augustin Church, the moat that surrounded Wittenberg was perhaps already frozen over, and one could have skated on it, which is a very cold sort of pleasure, and consequently no sin.

I have been making use repeatedly of the words *spiritualism* and *sensualism*. I shall explain them later on when I come to speak of German philosophy. It suffices here to remark that I do not employ these expressions to designate philosophical systems, but merely to distinguish two social systems of which one, spiritualism, is based on the principle that it is necessary to annul all

the claims of sense in order to accord exclusive authority to the spirit; that it is necessary to mortify, to stigmatise, to crush the flesh that we may the better glorify the soul: whilst the other system, sensualism, revindicates the rights of the flesh, which neither ought to be nor can be abrogated.³

The beginnings of the Reformation revealed at once the whole extent of its range. No Frenchman has ever yet comprehended the significance of this great event. The most erroneous ideas prevail in France regarding the Reformation; and I must add that these views will perhaps prevent Frenchmen ever arriving at a just appreciation of German life.⁴ The French understood only the negative side of the Reformation; they beheld in it merely a war against Catholicism, and often imagined that the combat that took place on the opposite side of the Rhine was waged with the same motives as a similar combat here in France. But the motives were totally different. The conflict with Catholicism in Germany was nothing else than a war begun by spiritualism when it perceived that it possessed merely the title of authority and ruled only *de jure*, whilst sensualism by means of a long established system of fraud was exercising actual sovereignty and was governing *de facto*. The retailers of indulgences were expelled, the fair concubines of the priests were replaced by cold legitimate spouses, the alluring images of the Madonna were dashed to pieces and a Puritanism utterly hostile to all pleasures of the senses took possession of the land. The conflict with Catholicism in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, on the contrary, a war begun by sensualism, when, though *de facto* sovereign, it beheld every act of its authority derided as illegitimate, and reviled in the most cruel manner by a spiritualism that existed only *de jure*. But whereas in Germany the battle was waged with chaste earnestness, in France it was fought with wanton jests,

and whilst yonder men engaged in theological discussions, here they composed merry satires. Usually the object of these satires was to show the contradiction into which man falls when he seeks to be wholly spiritual: hence delicious stories of pious men succumbing involuntarily to sensual appetites, or striving to save the appearance of sanctity by taking refuge in hypocrisy. The Queen of Navarre had already portrayed in her novels such perplexities. Her customary theme is the relation of monks to women, and her aim is not merely to convulse with laughter but to shake the foundations of monasticism. Molière's "Tartuffe" is indisputably the most malicious production of this merry polemic; for this comedy is directed not merely against the Jesuitism of its age but against Catholicism itself, nay, against the idea of Christianity, against spiritualism. Tartuffe's paraded dread of the naked bosom of Dorine, his language to Elmire:—

"Le ciel défend, de vrai, certains contentements,
Mais on trouve avec lui des accommodements :"—

all these things tend to bring into ridicule not only ordinary hypocrisy, but also the universal falsehood that necessarily arises from the impossibility of carrying out the Christian idea, along with the whole system of concessions that spiritualism is forced to make to sensualism. Truly, the Jansenists had far greater cause than the Jesuits for feeling aggrieved at the performance of the comedy of "Tartuffe," and Molière may well be as insupportable to Protestant Methodists of our day as he was to the Catholic devotees of his own time. It is this that makes Molière so grand; for, like Aristophanes and Cervantes, he ridicules not merely the eccentricities of his contemporaries, but the eternal absurdities and the primal weaknesses of humanity. Voltaire, whose attacks were always upon things temporary and unessential, stands in this respect far below Molière.