JACOB WIMPHELING, AN EARLY STRASSBURG HUMANIST.

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JACOB Wimpeling was born in 1450 at Schlettstadt in Alsace as the son of Nicolaus Wimpeling, the descendant of a long line of yeoman farmers. His father was able to give him a good education and, being of delicate constitution, he was early destined for the Church. His first education was received at the School of Schlettstadt under the well-known pedagogue Ludwig Dringenberg. On the death of his father in 1463, Wimpeling was taken care of by his uncle Ulrich, the parson of Sultz, a liberal-minded man, and by him sent to the University at Freiburg, where he matriculated in October of the following year. Discipline was not strict at Freiburg and Wimpeling seems to have run wild—he was only fourteen—but the University brought him at any rate the intimate and lasting friendship of the great preacher Geiler von Kaisersberg, who was some five or six years his senior. In 1466 he became bachelor of philosophy and in 1469 migrated to Erfurt by reason of the plague, and his youthful wildness was there brought to a sudden end by a conversion of Bunyan-like character, the inscription “Noli peccare, Deus uidet,” which he saw in a church, making on him an impression which was never effaced. On a journey to visit his uncle he fell very ill at Speier and was taken to make a slow recovery at

Heidelberg, where he remained to continue his studies. In 1481 he became rector of the University, and in 1483 took the degree of licentiate in theology, beyond which he never aspired. Soon after he was appointed preacher at the cathedral of Speier, where he remained until 1498, by which time he had already made a reputation both as a zealot for church reform and as an authority on education. His next remove was back to Heidelberg as professor, but his position was unsatisfactory, and he had already decided to turn hermit in the Black Forest on the invitation of his friend Christoph von Utenheim, when in 1502 the latter was elected Bishop of Basel and Wimpfeling was persuaded to settle at Strassburg, where he already had friends, among them Geiler himself, Brant, the famous author of the *Narrenschiff*, Peter Schott, and Thomas Wolf.

At Strassburg Wimpfeling lived a retired life, teaching and writing pamphlets and prefaces, some of which provoked acrimonious discussions. In 1503 he was at Basel, revising the Synodal Statutes of the diocese for his friend Utenheim, and in 1504 returned to Strassburg to receive a post as summissarius in the chapter of S. Thomas; but the intrigues of the notorious Johann Burchard at Rome caused him to be ousted in favour of one Bellendin, against the unanimous desire of the Chapter. In 1504 he accompanied two pupils to Freiburg, and there wrote the *De Integritate*; in this tract he essayed to prove among other things that Augustine had never been a monk and that the Augustinian Order was not founded by its titular patron. This assertion raised against Wimpfeling a violent storm and the Augustinians did not rest until they had procured his citation to Rome before the Pope; terrified at the prospect of the journey, which for an elderly man in indifferent health was a formidable undertaking, he addressed to the Pope an apologia, in elegiac verse, entitled *Querulosa excusatio ad Julium II*; his appearance in Rome was eventually not insisted on. However, in the very next year he became involved in another quarrel, this time with the notorious Jacob Locher, a humanist of the newer and more emancipated school, who had fallen foul of Ulrich Zasius, a venerable but somewhat narrow

minded professor of theology at Ingolstadt. Wimpeling wrote in defence of Zasius, and Locher replied by abuse of such excessive scurrility that Wimpeling never quite recovered from the shock; the quarrel, absurd as its violence seems to us, marks a stage in the gradually increasing hostility between the old and the new humanism of which the *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* is the best known illustration. Between 1507 and 1514, Wimpeling travelled considerably and wrote various treatises on education and monastic abuses; in 1511 and 1512 he was much taken up with work in connection with the literary Sodalitas of Strassburg. In 1515, old and infirm as he was, Wimpeling retired to his native Schlettstadt to live with his sister Magdalena, who had just lost her second husband. At Schlettstadt he formed a few young disciples into a new Sodalitas, and although he was as poor as ever and altogether out of touch with the aspirations of the new age, he was held in universal esteem, and his figure wrapped in the single shabby fur cloak that he always wore, was one of the sights of the town. The first beginnings of Luther and the Reformation had filled him with a momentary hope that his dream of church reform was coming true after all, but he soon found Luther going far beyond what his orthodoxy would allow as lawful and regretfully separated himself from him. The last years of his life, spent amid the conflicts of a revolution of which he disapproved and which spread even into his own Schlettstadt, were lonely and unhappy; many of his young friends, to his great grief, sided with Luther, and his well-meant exhortations addressed to the Reformers remained unanswered—"I am despised" he complained, "I am despised because of my age, I who was once so honoured." He died on 17th November, 1528, in his seventy-ninth year.

Before passing on to an appreciation of Wimpeling's work, a few words of mention may here be given to a curious problem connected with his name. Wimpeling is known, as has been said, to have removed to the University of Erfurt in 1469, but the only name which can be referred to him in the Erfurt matriculation lists is that of one "Jacobus

Coci de Sletztadt," and we are left to wonder whether his surname was really Koch, or why, if it was, the fact should have been left on record, as it were casually, in this one place only. It has been suggested by a scholar who accepts the Koch hypothesis that Wimpeling would most naturally signify a man of Wimpfen, a little town not very far from Heidelberg, and that the subject of this paper may thus have been a relative of the humanist Conrad Koch of Wimpfen, best known by the Latinized form *Conradus Wimpina*. Moreover, other instances of extreme reticence as to their surnames can be found among Wimpeling's contemporaries, such as that of the Basel printer, Jacob von Pforzheim, whose family name Wolf only appears from a single chance mention in a legal document of 1503. Still, in Wimpeling's case the assumption seems rather a large one, and it is safer to assume that Wimpeling never formally matriculated at Erfurt at all.

WIMPHELING AS EDUCATOR.

Wimpeling was early persuaded that the prime cause of all the evils of Church and State in his time was ignorance, which had its root in the bad condition of primary education. "The true foundation of our religion," he writes to the Bishop of Sion, "the condition of all honourable life, the honour of every estate, the prosperity of the Common Weal, the knowledge of Holy Scripture and wholesome doctrine—all these depend solely on the direction given to the minds of those of tender age." This is no doubt a truism in itself, but it is a truism that was little honoured in Germany at a time when Donatus and Alexander Gallus were still the chief guides of youth, and when the instruction at the universities, to which of course the students proceeded much earlier than nowadays, was mostly very perfunctory. Wimpeling himself certainly held the meanest opinion of contemporary teaching, more especially of that in the ecclesiastical schools, where indeed no progress was to be expected. Worse even than these were the conventual schools for novices, which left their pupils, in Wimpeling's phrase, "mere asses": the gross

ignorance of the young monks who were presented to the bishop for ordination was a scandal on which he was never tired of enlarging. His own experience showed him that one or two secular schools were to be found in which the standard was somewhat higher ; his first teacher, Ludwig Dringenberg, had been the most successful head master of his day and the grammar school at Schlettstadt had become famous while he was in charge of it, so that at one time it contained no less than six hundred pupils. For this reason Wimpfeling made repeated efforts to bring about the establishment of a secular Gymnasium or "Fechtschule," as he oddly Germanized this word, in Strassburg, but found the City Council very slow to move in the matter. As for the Universities, it is clear that he is again speaking personally when he describes the miserable condition of the poor students : it was nobody's business to look after them, and in order to gain their living they were forced either to beg from door to door or to hire themselves out as grooms, cooks, odd-job men, or in some other menial capacity, besides being exposed to the constant insults and oppressions of their fellow-students, the rich young ruffling noblemen, who rode about the streets bullying plebeian passers-by. Small wonder that most of them went down as ignorant as they had come up, even if they did not go altogether to the bad ; it must have required exceptional talent and force of character to study to any profit under such conditions. Wimpfeling is here no doubt, after his fashion, taking things at their lowest, and there must have been universities, such as Basel and Erfurt, for instance, which were more progressive and better disciplined ; but it should be remembered that the two of which he himself had seen most, Heidelberg and Freiburg, were still quite untouched by the modern spirit and content to jog on in the old rut of scholasticism. At Heidelberg, in particular, the professors were in the habit of pinning up vulgar libels against each other on the academic notice-boards, and did not always draw the line at personal assault, so that the undergraduates may well have been the idle and turbulent crowd which Wimpfeling pictures them. That Wimpfeling lays particular stress on

the necessity of a good education for intending priests goes without saying ; but it is to his credit that he is scarcely less emphatic in demanding it for laymen of all classes as well, and he has no patience with those who presume on their high birth to carry off their ignorance. "What" he asks "does it profit a king or a nobleman to be only conversant with the art of hunting, if art it may be called, of which the greatest blackguard may know as much as he? That art should surely be reckoned a greater glory to a prince which an obscure, ignoble and base man cannot share with him. The true nobleman is he whom his own virtue ennobles." The philosopher-king is Wimpeling's ideal ; and he was even bold enough to say that a king who consents to his subjects remaining in ignorance merits the name of tyrant and is not worthy to rule over his people. He passes on the princes of his native country strictures which most of them no doubt richly deserved : "our princes," he says, "love only the likes of themselves ; as they are themselves barbarians, they love barbarians. In France, Spain and Italy kings are wont to surround themselves with wise and high-spirited counsellors, while ours lend their ear only to flatterers. This comes of their education being imperfect and too early broken off." The particular measures of educational reform demanded by Wimpeling are in the first place the establishment of secular schools, such as that for which he agitated during so many years at Strassburg ; secondly, a purging of the universities and a closer surveillance of the bursæ, or hostels, in which the scholars lived under the authority of a single tutor ; and thirdly, the reservation of one or two prebends in each chapter for men of real scholarship—this, he thinks, would have the double effect of attracting more promising youths to take orders and of giving the preachers an independent position, in which they could speak their minds without fear or favour, to the greater edification of the laity.

Wimpeling never worked out any organised system of education for the young. On this subject as on every other he habitually wrote in a hurry and never gave himself time to go with deliberation to the root of any matter, and his pedagogic views have to be collected from

obiter dicta scattered up and down his writings. As may be supposed, Wimpeling was in no danger of following Locher and the humanists of his school in their somewhat too exclusive insistence on the æsthetic side of education. His principal concern was a sound moral training and he treated knowledge as the most powerful means to the acquisition of virtue ; familiarity with the Latin tongue, on which he laid such stress, was not to be aimed at for its own sake, but rather because it was the key to those treasures of religious and ethical doctrine which are contained in Holy Writ and the Fathers of the Church. Beyond this his methods are purely empirical. Wimpeling's two chief tracts on education, the *Adolescentia* and the *De Integritate*, consist of little more than an enumeration of common youthful failings and of certain definite remedies by which they may be counteracted. There is the true scholastic ring about his lists of these—lust, inconstancy, credulity, quarrelsomeness, untruthfulness, recklessness are the principal faults to which the young are prone, and honest occupation, Bible-reading, prayer, frugality, prudence, and so forth are useful for curing them. A few general maxims, such as might be culled from the Distichs of Dionysius Cato, jotted down at random and in no sort of logical order, complete the tale. As for the masters and pastors, they are given similarly sound advice. They are to remember first of all that it is their business to look after the moral well-being of those committed to their charge. They must themselves inspire respect by their uprightness and confidence by their affability ; they are to be severe, but not peevish ; affectionate, but not weak : they are to be patient, always ready to answer questions and careful to encourage shy children and draw them out. Above all, Wimpeling warns them very sensibly not to hurry their pupils prematurely into the choice of a vocation, especially the sacerdotal or monastic calling, since the young cannot be sure that they have the necessary qualifications and endurance for this way of life.

As regards the humanities strictly so called we find Wimpeling still very greatly under the scholastic influence. He held it indubitable that the

main concern of instruction was a sound knowledge of the Latin tongue. Now and again, though very seldom, he raises his voice in favour of German; but he himself did not write German by choice or with ease, and even the *Germania* itself, which is so full of Teutonic sentiment, was originally composed in Latin. Wimpfeling's patriotism was not clear-sighted enough to recognise the coming importance of the native idioms; he is only sensible of the scorn of the Italians for his own countrymen because they are so sadly to seek in Latin, and he reproaches them for their want of application. "What a disgrace," he cries, "for princes, nobles and rich burghers to be ignorant of this tongue, which is the most noble of all. How can anyone hold conversation with a foreign ambassador or a papal legate if he know no Latin? Would the Popes ever have transferred the Empire from the Greeks to the Germans if these had then been as ignorant as they are to-day?" In this passage there is indeed a suggestion that Latin is valuable because of its "nobility," and that there is some good to be derived from the æsthetic pleasure which it gives, but as a rule this aspect is strictly subordinated to utilitarian ends, moral or practical, and it is characteristic not only of Wimpfeling himself but of all the Alsatian humanism which he stood for that they were unable to appreciate the finer issues of a classical education. His somewhat commonplace outlook comes out most clearly in his attitude towards the pagan poets. On the one hand he is not averse to their being read when duly expurgated: no sensible teacher, as he rightly remarks, will attempt to read everything with young pupils, whether in the poets or in the Bible, and if we are to condemn the poets, we must also condemn S. Jerome, S. Augustine, S. Paul, and S. Basil, who knew them and even quote from and recommend them. But he spoils his argument by insisting that the reading of poetry is to be confined to the elementary schools and to be altogether eschewed at the age of discretion. It is a little difficult to understand this point of view: for if Latin poetry is to be regarded purely as a rhetorical exercise, then there seems no reason why grown men should not study it to improve their style—on

Wimpheling's own showing a worthy object—but if the poets are so “meretricious” as to constitute a danger for adults, then it is highly inadvisable to allow them to be read by children at the most impressionable time of life. But Wimpheling will admit of no compromise on this head; Ovid, Juvenal, Catullus, Martial and their like are banned altogether on the score of their “*lasciua et spurcitia*”; Vergil, Lucan, the Odes of Horace and select comedies of Plautus and Terence are fit for school reading, but for nothing else. Young men, and especially intending priests, are to have no dealings with these “*versuum cantiones*,” which “in a grown man show not only a foolish and vain ambition but as it were a histrionic and meretricious levity and effeminacy.” This was Wimpheling's early judgment; after his quarrel with Locher, the fiery champion of “art for art's sake,” his opinions in the matter hardened to such an extent that henceforward poetry was the constant subject of his most violent abuse. Its province is restricted to the versification of theology and sacred history, to the works of Prudentius, Baptista Mantuanus and one or two others. It is banished from the grammar school, except for just a few passages of Vergil and a sprinkling of “*sententiae honestiores*” fit for inclusion in collections of *Elegantiae*. It is denied all title to be considered a science or a liberal art, for it rests upon no scientific principles and it is useless for logical demonstration or syllogistic proof. Wimpheling is amazed that poets should be crowned with laurel and admitted as professors in the universities (this is of course a hit at Locher himself); for of what use are they either to the Church or the State? Who would ever go to a poet for advice as to his health, his conduct, or any of the ordinary affairs of life? Nay, are not the nine Muses themselves demons, daughters of Zeus, that chief of demons? And does not Providence show us its poor opinion of the poets by permitting so many of them to come to a bad end? Homer died of mortification at not being able to solve a riddle proposed to him by simple fishermen, Sophocles of sudden joy at one of his victories, Aeschylus had his skull broken by a tortoise, Euripides was torn to

pieces by dogs, Anacreon was choked by a grape, Terence was drowned at sea, and Lucan was poisoned. After this it is not surprising to find Wimpfeling in 1513 hailing with enthusiasm a Bull of Leo X forbidding consecrated priests to study philosophy or poetry for longer than five years after completing their course of dialectic and grammar, except concurrently with the study of law or theology. Wimpfeling could only regret that the Bull did not interdict poetry altogether, but such as it was he hastened to have it circulated in print.

And yet it would be unfair to Wimpfeling to insist too much on such intellectual shortcomings; he really had the cause of purer and better Latin and of more practical instruction in it very much at heart. His strictures on the old school of teachers were more than justified; he pours scorn on those who in five or six years' instruction never advanced their pupils beyond the dismal mill of Donatus or Garlandia, who made their unfortunate victims learn Latin hymns and canticles by heart without attempting to explain their meaning, who were quite content with word for word translations such as "*der Lehrer wird kommen—magister erit uenire,*" "*trinke Alles aus—bibe totum ex,*" and so forth. In this manner, he says, the pupils never got as far as reading any Latin author at all, and without such reading it is impossible to get any practical knowledge of the language, just as it would be useless to read a treatise on horsemanship if one never had a chance of mounting a horse. By all means let them settle down as quickly as possible to read Cicero, Quintilian, Cæsar, Sallust, Tacitus; what better models of eloquence and narrative could be found? Let instruction in the elements be as simple and practical as may be, first *accidence*, then a few rules as to translation, then as to syntax, then stylistic exercises. There are plenty of good modern grammars, by Perottus, Sulpicius, Mancinellus, and others, one of which the teacher is to choose and base his instruction upon. He is to be at pains to make his explanations as succinct and clear as he can, and he must neglect neither orthography nor handwriting nor above all pronunciation. His pupils are to learn as much sound Latin as possible

by heart, and the more advanced boys should write compositions on historical or moral subjects, also letters, such as one may find in the Ready Writers of the day. Even the younger children should be taught some elements of history, geography and classical antiquities ; in particular, Wimpeling suggests the very sensible course of reading the *De situ et moribus Germaniae* of Aeneas Sylvius with them, in order to give them an idea of their native land. All these directions are quite admirable, and it is only surprising that Wimpeling himself contributed nothing more to the subject than a single handbook, the *Elegantiae maiores*, which begin with a number of hints on style (hiatus, elision, and so forth) and go on to a collection of elegant phrases, arranged under subject-headings and alphabetically, and constituting mainly a mere transcript from the very popular treatise of Laurentius Valla, *De elegantia linguae latinae*. Though not very original, the little book was no doubt useful enough and proved its utility by going through a considerable number of editions from about 1500 onwards. A word of mention is also due to Wimpeling's efforts at hymnological reform ; the German priests, he remarked, had become so barbarous in their Latin that they knew of none save leonine verse, and the original metres of the hymns and chants had become entirely obscured ; this he attempted to remedy in a short treatise *De hymnorum et sequentiarum auctoribus*, which also included a few metrical notes, and later on in his *Castigationes locorum in canticis . . . deprauatorum*, a modest beginning of textual criticism in this field for which he deserves some credit.

As for Wimpeling's own Latinity, it must be confessed that he was but an indifferent stylist. His prose diction is still essentially "monkish" rather than humanistic, and the elegance of a Valla or a Pomponius, to mention no lesser Italian scholars, was altogether beyond the reach of himself and his worthy Alsatian friends. His metrical efforts nowhere rise above a stumbling mediocrity, with hardly a trace of poetic inspiration, though it is only fair to say that Wimpeling was himself under no illusions about his capacities as a versifier. His most serious shortcomings,

however, were not of manner but of matter. He himself confesses that he wrote always in a hurry and this undue haste betrays itself in the haphazard and scrappy effect of almost all his writings. The arguments are seldom properly thought out and followed up, but one point after another is shortly touched upon and immediately withdrawn, so that the work gives the impression of being no more than a collection of occasional jottings. Further, Wimpeling's two or three favourite topics—educational reform, church reform, and the restoration of the Imperial authority—are continually thrusting themselves into the discussion, and when he once gets fairly going on them he has all the difficulty in the world in bringing himself back to the subject in hand. On the other hand, Wimpeling is almost entirely free from the unmeaning Ciceronian verbiage of the lesser Italian literati, which renders the mass of their productions so tedious to the modern reader. He had no gift for saying nothing elegantly, but simple-mindedly set down his ideas just as they occurred to him, and if their artlessness sometimes provokes a smile, yet it is just the transparent candour of their author which still invests his old-fashioned figure with a certain attraction.

WIMPHELING AND THE CHURCH.

If such significance as Wimpeling retains in the eyes of the modern student is chiefly due to his educational labours, to his contemporaries he was even better known as a zealot for ecclesiastical reform. The vehemence of his criticisms has caused him to be regarded by some as a forerunner of the Protestant Reformers, but in point of fact he remained from first to last a faithful son of the Roman Church, and to whatever lengths he might be carried in his condemnation of current abuses, he never weakened for a moment in his conviction that true reform must come from within. Wimpeling was little of a theologian. His nature inclined him to practical piety rather than subtlety of argument. His reverence for the ceremonies of the Church was deep and sincere, but he had no sympathy with the multiplication of saints and the hunt for "new miracles," regarding them as mere superstition, calculated to lead

simple souls astray. An impulse of special devotion, the only trace in Wimpeling of mystic tendencies, attached him to the cult of the Virgin, and he was readily drawn into the controversy between the Maculists and the champions of the Immaculate Conception, naturally on the side of the latter; at the request of the Bishop of Speier he composed, about 1491, an *Officium de compassione b. Mariæ virginis* for the official use of the diocese, and about 1504 a similar *Officium ex euangelis et probatis doctorum . . . sententiis absque apocriphis collectum de sancto Joseph* for the use of Strassburg, also at the Bishop's request. Wimpeling's ecclesiastical outlook, in fact, was exactly the same as that of the famous preacher Geiler von Kaisersberg, who had been first his teacher at Freiburg, and then his close personal friend, and who influenced him more profoundly than any single man; Geiler's point of view, again, was substantially that of Jean Gerson, the Paris Chancellor. Wimpeling added very little of his own to what he received from Geiler, so that, when once his two sources are recognised, all his theology may be traced to them with the greatest ease. His sound common sense sided with the newer and more profitable theology against the older scholasticism, with its barren discussions of *quaestiones curiosae*, and recommended the study of Holy Writ and the Fathers rather than that of Aquinas and Duns and their commentators; only on one occasion did he stand up in defence of these latter, and that was when his resentment at the attacks of Locher on himself and the older school had for the moment roused in him a spirit of contradiction which was really at variance with his more considered judgment.

Nothing moved Wimpeling more profoundly than the abuses current in the Church of his time, and it is to this indignation that we owe many of the most striking passages in his writings. It is well to remember in this connection that the period during which he lived is acknowledged on all hands to be one in which the religious impulse ran extremely low. The great revival of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had spent itself, mediævalism was dying and the new order of things not yet born; the

Establishment was almost exclusively absorbed in material concerns, and even to an unprejudiced observer its most remarkable feature is the facilities which it afforded for prebend-hunting on a gigantic scale. There is much reason to believe that Wimpeling painted the ecclesiastics of his day no blacker than they actually were ; and if he often conveys the impression that he thought them all without exception to be desperately wicked, his opinions were shared by many earnest men of his generation. The shower of opprobrious epithets is as a rule too copious to permit of comment ; but there are one or two counts in the indictment which recur more regularly than the rest, and it may be worth while to say a few words as to these.

In his early youth, as has already been remarked, hot blood had betrayed Wimpeling into excesses, which, though amply redeemed by his later life, never ceased to burden his conscience, and his recollection of these is evidently at the root of his reiterated strictures on the loose living of the clergy. Young men, unless they are quite sure that they have sufficient strength of mind to resist the strong temptation of the flesh, are earnestly exhorted not to enter the Church : nothing brings greater discredit upon priests and gives greater scandal to the laity than the open indulgence in this vice. The *open* indulgence—Wimpeling lays stress on this, because he is willing to make some concession to the frailty of human nature ; “hidden vice” he says in so many words “concerns me not”—if a man cannot but sin, let him at any rate keep the sin as close as possible, doing heartfelt and rigorous penance for it in private. It is in this sense that we must understand his publication in 1507 of an *Aduisamentum de concubinariis non absoluendis*, extracted from a report on the subject compiled by several divines and lawyers of Cologne University : only those who flaunted their misconduct were to be denied absolution, the rest should be no worse off than other penitents.

The second evil against which Wimpeling constantly protests was one prevalent in all quarters, the evil of simony. The clergy, he says roundly, will do nothing except for a consideration : if Jesus Christ were

to return, preaching poverty and condemning avarice, doubt not that he would be crucified once more. Pluralism especially, so far from being anywhere condemned, has become the rule. The *curtisani* at Rome take everything they can lay their hands on: men who have neglected theology in order to study canon law and whose one object in taking orders has been to enrich themselves, flock to the Papal Court and intrigue and bribe until they have accumulated as many fat benefices as possible; if they can get no bishopric or canonry, a chaplaincy or an ordinary parish will serve their turn. They never even trouble to leave Rome but simply pocket the revenues of their charge, the work being done by a *locum tenens* as worthless as themselves: "a man," cries Wimpfeling, "who has never learnt anything but the first elements of Latin, who has spent his academic years in begging from door to door, who has afterwards maybe distinguished himself as a cook or groom or juggler or as a go-between on the shameful errands of some noble or prelate—such a man is chosen to feed the sheep of the Lord." So strongly does Wimpfeling feel in this matter that for once he even sinks his usual jealousy of secular interference in Church affairs: if the Pope and the Bishops take no steps against pluralism, he says, then the civil authority ought to pass a law prohibiting any cleric from possessing two benefices in the same city. And he even endeavoured, though apparently without result, to induce the City Council of Strassburg to make a move in this direction.

Wimpfeling's best known contribution to this subject is contained in the little comedy entitled *Stilpho*, publicly recited by him at some academic festival at Heidelberg in 1480, but not printed until 1494. Such performances were usual enough at this date in the Italian universities, but the *Stilpho* is of interest as being the first of its kind produced by a German humanist. Although quite elementary in construction it is by no means ill written and contains some neat touches of characterisation and humour. It opens with a monologue of Stilpho, a young clerk who has just returned from Rome with letters of reversion of half-a-dozen

deaneries and advowsons in his pocket and well satisfied with the results of his journey ; to him enters his old acquaintance Vincentius, a poor but diligent student of theology and law, who is on his way to ask his parents for more money wherewith to buy books. Stilpho is very scornful of such thankless and unprofitable aspirations, Vincentius in turn is full of indignation at Stilpho's gross materialism, to which he gives expression in a couple of short but unusually spirited harangues. The two friends then pay a visit to Lampertus, an elderly country parson, who is entirely of Stilpho's way of thinking and extols his own comfortable quietism as the best philosophy of life. By and by Stilpho presents himself before Bishop Assuerus to put in his claim to one of his cures, and the Bishop hands him over to his chaplain Petrucius for the usual short examination. Needless to say, he quickly reveals his abysmal ignorance of even the rudiments of Latin, and the Bishop, after reading Petrucius's report, informs Stilpho that he will have no such man in his diocese, fitter as he is for a cure of swine than of souls. In great dejection Stilpho goes to the Praetor or Burgomaster of his native village and begs for the position of sexton. Unfortunately the post has just been filled up, and the only vacancy at the moment is that of swineherd : there are many aspirants to it, but the Burgomaster is very willing to let Stilpho have it, as he is a travelled man who has seen the great world. Stilpho is fain to close with the offer, and consoles himself with the reflection that country life has always had charms for philosophers and poets. In conclusion, Wimpeling speaking in his own person points the moral and concludes with the sentence : *Otium sine litteris mors est et hominis viui sepultura*. From the whole tone of the play it is evident that a personal application is intended. Vincentius is perhaps modelled on Johann von Dalberg, Chancellor and Bishop of Speier, of whom Wimpeling thought very highly, while Stilpho himself no doubt represents Johann Burchard, the Papal master of the ceremonies and author of the well-known *Diarium*, one of the most notorious and successful pluralists of his day ; he had purchased his post in the Pope's household

for 400 ducats, and was besides protonotary apostolic, dean of S. Thomas at Strassburg, provost at Haslach, Grandval and Bamberg and finally Bishop of Orta as well ; he resided of course at Rome but journeyed into Germany every now and then to receive the moneys due to him, and it was owing to his influence, as has already been remarked, that Wimpeling was disappointed of his modest summissaria at S. Thomas. The deanery of Haslach is one of those coveted by Stilpho in the play "*Utinam pastor Offenburgensis mortem appetat ! O si decanus Haselacensis animam fundat !*" he exclaims, and the allusion to Burchard is unmistakable.

Besides his indignation with the *curtisani*, Wimpeling is usually very severe on the monks and never fails to oppose to their many shortcomings the virtues of the poor unconsidered parish priests, the "secular" clergy to which he himself belonged. The centuries-old conflict between these two classes of ecclesiastics had raged with particular vehemence at Strassburg, and Wimpeling's extraordinarily outspoken criticisms caused him a great deal of trouble and unpleasantness. It is true that he makes distinctions. He was no enemy of what he calls the honest orders, such as the *Wilhelmites* and the *Franciscans* of the reformed rule, and at several periods of his life himself contemplated withdrawing from the world ; but for the ordinary *Franciscans*, the begging friars, he has not a good word to say. They were constantly, he complains, setting themselves up against the parochial clergy and by greater indulgence in the confessional, by a more popular style in preaching and by undercutting in their charges for burial and other services drew away to themselves a considerable part of the parson's flock. Yet the latter had arduous duties, in times of pestilence for instance, which no friar was obliged to perform, and it would be greatly to the interest of Holy Church if the two parties would cease from their mutual hostility and scorn and be reconciled. This, indeed, was what no less a religious than S. Bonaventura had desired to bring about : he had written a letter to the *Franciscans* reminding them of their duties towards the bishops and

the parish priests, and Wimpeling in 1507 published an edition of it, so as to convict the friars out of the mouth of one of their own authorities. For the rest, Wimpeling reiterates the familiar mediæval indictment which we know so well from Chaucer, its chief counts being ignorance, loose living, fraud on simple folk and above all avarice. All their false relics, their indulgences, their rosaries, their pulpit tricks have only one object, which is to get as much money out of the faithful as they can. "When they visit the sick, it is to squeeze out of them a legacy for their convent. Which of these men, when he is offered a sum of money for his house, will refuse it and say: We have enough and are satisfied, God has given us all we want; give your money to the poor, the sick, the widows and orphans, or to a hospital, or hand it over to the magistrates for a charity? No monk is ever known to answer in these terms." The conditions of monastic life, both male and female, come in for very severe criticism, some of the details of which would be incredible were they not amply corroborated from other sources. Wimpeling's most original contribution to this only too familiar controversy is contained in a little tract to which he never ventured to set his name, the *Epistola de miseria curatorum seu plebanorum*.¹ This tract is in the form of an open letter to one Johannes, a young priest about to commence his ministry, warning him of the multifarious trials and crosses which will fall to his lot as a country parson and which are typified as the handiwork of nine different sorts of devils. "Primus diabolus est ipse collator" begins the enumeration, the "collator" being the patron who has presented Johannes to the living and who will still persist in considering it his own property. The eight other devils follow in due order—to wit, the verger, the house-keeper, the church bailiff, the rustic parishioner, the "officialis," the bishop, the chaplain, and the "predicator" or preaching friar, each with his own peculiar skill in making the life of the unfortunate priest a burden to him. "How wretched it is" exclaims the author in conclusion "that

(1) Knepper and other authorities have little hesitation in assigning this tract to Wimpeling, and the internal evidence both of matter and manner certainly lend the very strongest support to the attribution.

so many vexations should fall to the lot of one whose office approaches in sanctity most closely to that of the Master himself"—a striking sentiment, which none but Wimpfeling himself would be likely to put so directly. The extreme outspokenness of the little tract made it very popular and it was constantly reprinted; a title-cut showing the priest surrounded by his diaboli is a conspicuous feature of many of these editions.

But however great Wimpfeling's indignation at clerical shortcomings, he is yet quite uncompromising on the subject of clerical privileges, which must not on any consideration be diminished or impaired. Indeed, it is just because of its ill effect on public opinion that Wimpfeling takes such offence at the evil conversation of ecclesiastics. He is afraid that the scandal of these unholy livers may provoke the laity to lay violent hands on the prerogatives of the Church. The anarchic state of the Empire under the fainéant Frederick III had afforded the petty despots of Germany infinite opportunities of pillaging churchmen to their hearts' content and even under Maximilian things were not much better. Wimpfeling makes a solemn appeal to the Emperor, or failing him to Pope Alexander, to put things right: the princes, he says, have neglected their duties, they have let crimes against the clergy go unpunished, they have loaded them with taxes and taken away their tithes. They say that the clergy are too rich and that it would be better to reduce them to their original state of apostolic poverty. But what the clergy possess, they are justly and rightfully entitled to have and no man may take it from them. As for their shortcomings, though they are undeniable, they must be left to the justice of God and not to that of man. In all respects Wimpfeling, like his model Geiler, remained unflinchingly faithful to the Church, and he gave but short shrift to heretics, Hussites, Jews, Turks and misbelievers of every description. The Jews in particular he heartily detested, and was a warm advocate of the ingenious plan devised by his friend Zasius, which was to consist in removing Jewish children from their families and baptising them whether their parents

liked it or not, so that in course of time the whole sect would be automatically "suppressed."

WIMPHÉLING AS HISTORIAN AND PATRIOT.

It would be impossible to sketch Wimpfeling's career without some reference to his historical writings, which are in part at any rate connected with his educational work, and in which he was also to some extent a pioneer. Moreover, they show him in a new character, namely in that of a patriot and an ardent supporter of Germany as opposed to France. Considering how narrowly local were the interests of the innumerable states and principalities which made up the mediæval Empire and how little they were conscious of belonging to a national whole, it is undeniably to Wimpfeling's credit that he was able to take a wider view of the situation and impress this upon the whole school of Alsatian humanism. To Wimpfeling the Empire was indeed a Holy Empire and the Emperor God's instrument, whom it was impious to disobey; when in 1501 the men of Basel transferred their allegiance to the Swiss Confederation, Wimpfeling proposed to dispatch preachers to their city to bring home to them the grievousness of their sin. No doubt the peculiar position of Alsace, then as now the frontier of two great Powers, gave a greater actuality to Wimpfeling's reflections on this subject; although Strassburg was still at that time a free city of the Empire and German in its language and traditions, there was considerable ground for the apprehension that it might at any moment fall a victim to the energy and ambitions of France, and in point of fact it was added to the French kingdom little more than 100 years after Wimpfeling's death: the lethargy and impotence of Frederick III and the uncertain diplomacy of his successor Maximilian might well cause Wimpfeling misgivings. There are two treatises in particular, and those amongst the longest of Wimpfeling's not usually very bulky works, in which his sentiments on this point found expression, and a short analysis of these will not be amiss. The first, entitled simply *Germania*, was written in 1501 when Wimpfeling had lately settled down at Strassburg, and was intended by him as a sort of memorial or

exhortation to the City Council to be true to the Empire and not to allow themselves to be misled by the partisans of France, the "semigalli" as he calls them, in their midst, whom he considered little better than traitors. It had apparently been one of the favourite notions of these men that the left bank of the Rhine, together with Strassburg, had once belonged to France, and this notion Wimpfeling proceeds to demolish by some peculiar arguments which are drawn, as he maintains, "from the best authorities, whom no one can gainsay." First of all there is the fact that from Julius Cæsar to Maximilian not a single emperor has been of the Gallic nationality: by "Gallus" Wimpfeling designates indifferently the Gauls and the French. It is true, indeed, that Cæsar speaks of the tract on the left bank of the Rhine as part of Gaul, but this is only because in his time boundaries were marked only by rivers, and he therefore ignored the Vosges, which lie between France proper and Germany. Next come the "four probable conjectures": the first is that there is a common saying among Alsatians "you will never do this, even were you as wise as Pipin (or Pipis)"; now the name Pipin would not be used in Alsace unless Pipin had been a German—therefore he cannot have been a Frenchman. The two next concern Charles the Great, who often sojourned in the countries on the right bank of the Rhine and built towns, castles and monasteries in them, a thing which no Frenchman would have done. Finally, the Suabians, the Bavarians and the Eastern Franks, whom even Julius and Augustus could not conquer, would never have submitted to be ruled over by Frenchmen. Passing over Wimpfeling's seven authentic witnesses and clear proofs from the historians, which carry little more weight than the probable conjectures, we find him lastly refuting those who had adduced the fleur-de-lis found on the coins of Strassburg as a proof of French origin by the objection that France has three fleur-de-lis as her symbol but Strassburg only one; besides, the arms of Strassburg are quite different from those of France, in which connection is cited the testimony of an old veteran, who had told Wimpfeling that the red band which crosses it was added to

commemorate a battle in which blood flowed like a stream. This section of the book, comprising only six pages, ends with a gibe at the Capets, who derive their origin from "a common butcher and slaughterer," and a further exhortation to Strassburg to be true to the Imperial cause.

The remaining portion of the *Germania* has very little in common with the remarkable arguments just described, but consists of a general exposition of Wimpfeling's opinions on the State, which is of considerable interest, although rather rambling, after his usual fashion. Civil concord, national defence, economy in expenditure, impartial justice—these and many other topics are touched upon and interspersed with moral and educational precepts: the idea of the secular gymnasium, which has already been mentioned, is also set forth in the *Germania*. Wimpfeling warmly urges unity and harmony between the three estates, clergy, nobles and people, on the principle of the well-known line "Tu supplex ora, tu protege, tuque labora"; he is loud in his praise of the free cities and the energy and independence of their burghers, and even goes so far as to assert in set terms that "burghers and people are not chosen by the will of princes but princes for the sake of burghers and people." This was a maxim to which his contemporaries mostly turned a deaf ear, and Wimpfeling's insistence, here and elsewhere, that a prince is the servant of his people and should so order his life as to be of the greatest use to his subjects, must have been very unpalatable to his aristocratic readers. The book ends with an enthusiastic panegyric on Wimpfeling's beloved Strassburg—the greatest city next after Rome, remarkable alike for its streets, houses, mart, libraries, its minster with the great spire, "the most wonderful work on earth," its fortifications, its fruit, wine, corn, cattle and venison. Such a city can always count on God's help, if only its citizens will keep His commandments and educate their children properly. The blessed Virgin, especially, whose image appears on the city's great seal, would then put in a good word for them with her son, "but this mother does not speak for those who despise her son's behests."

The *Germania*, which the author himself regarded with special satisfaction, was received with loud applause in his own circle and earned for him a gratuity of twelve gold florins from the Strassburg City Council. But it was not to pass unchallenged. The monastic orders were much annoyed by Wimpfeling's project of the secular gymnasium, in which they suspected, doubtless not without reason, a dangerous rival to their own well-frequented schools; and it was partly this consideration, and partly personal motives, which induced Thomas Murner, the well-known Franciscan, to publish his *Noua Germania* shortly afterwards as a counterblast to Wimpfeling's work. His knowledge of history did not go much deeper than Wimpfeling's own, but he had a ready wit and found no difficulty in making fun of the mass of absurdity and pedantry of which, as has been seen, the historical part of the *Germania* consists. Wimpfeling's dignity both as a man and an author was deeply hurt; he took immediate action against Murner, and in August, 1502, procured from the magistrates the suppression of his book, of which 600 copies had been printed. His disciples took up the quarrel with enthusiasm and combined to produce a *Defensio Germaniae*, filled with personal abuse and coarse invective against Murner, to which the latter replied in a still coarser strain, after the usual fashion of Renaissance controversialists. A second suppression of the *Noua Germania* in the following year was required before all the dust was finally laid.

The second of Wimpfeling's chief historical works, the *Epitome rerum Germanicarum*, though not printed until 1505, was probably written about the same time as the *Germania*. The idea of it had not originated directly with Wimpfeling himself, but with one of his circle, a certain Sebastian Murr or Murrho, whom Wimpfeling encouraged to put together "a compendium of what the Emperors had done for their country and for the Catholic faith." Murrho himself, a man of some learning, had apparently got no further than collecting a quantity of rough notes when he died in 1494. Wimpfeling put these notes into order and added so largely to them that he was justified in publishing the *Epitome* as his own work. He must consequently be

considered as the first historian of Germany. As a pioneer he is certainly deserving of praise, although of course his achievement must not be judged by modern standards of scientific precision.

The *Epitome* was primarily designed to familiarise Germans with their own history, so that they should not lag behind the French, Italians, Hungarians and others, who had already begun to interest themselves more keenly in their national records. The work as a whole is disfigured by truculent laudations of the Germans as the most warlike and energetic people on earth, coupled with foolish abuse of French perfidy and Swiss brutishness ; but Wimpfeling's patriotism had its nobler side. He is at pains to show that he is equally proud of the peaceful victories of his countrymen, and it is much to his credit that he devotes a large amount of space to the intellectual life of the nation and treats in special sections of German philosophers, mathematicians, theologians, lawyers, poets, architects, sculptors, and painters ; we see him here acting in the same spirit as when he induced Tritheim to separate off the German authors from the remainder of his well-known catalogue of ecclesiastical writers. It is particularly interesting to note that he mentions the beneficent invention of printing as a set-off to the more sinister one of gunpowder. The strictly historical part is dominated by the imperialistic idea ; it is the Emperors with whom Wimpfeling is primarily concerned, and while he has a good word for them all, except the wastrel Wenceslaus, it need hardly be said that he lavishes his most enthusiastic praise on Maximilian, the darling of all the humanists, the inaugurator of a new golden age. Wimpfeling of course finds specially edifying those of his heroes who were also good churchmen and expansively discusses their achievements ; on the other hand, the struggles between certain Emperors and the Papacy cause him the most cruel embarrassment and frequently distress him so much that he cuts them hastily short or even omits them altogether. It is amusing to note in what tortuous language he conveys his disapproval of the anti-Papal policy of one of his great favourites, Frederick II : " had not the Italians," he remarks, " prevented him from taking the field against the

enemies of Christ and had he not so grievously vexed the Popes, he would rightly have been esteemed the greatest of Emperors by the peoples of Asia and would have merited everlasting fame." The *Epitome* was published by Thomas Wolf, whose preface asserted that by this book Wimpfeling would live for ever in the memory of scholars, and it is significant that it continued to be republished in historical collections as late as 1673.

A still better thing, and one of the most painstaking pieces of work that Wimpfeling ever did, was his History of the Diocese of Strassburg, undertaken at the instance of Geiler. For this he studied a large number of ancient records and chronicles, some of which are now no longer available, and the history is consequently still of value, particularly for the later period, which is much more fully dealt with than the earlier. Wimpfeling appraised and criticised his sources with considerable judgment and was commendably impartial in pointing out "the imperfections and weaknesses" of certain bishops, so that altogether his History is, in the words of Charles Schmidt, "a testimony to what he could do when he did not dissipate his energies on a great number of subjects which were doubtless of interest in themselves, but which he usually treated too hastily and with no thought beyond the necessity of the moment." Besides all this, Wimpfeling edited a number of historical tracts, among them the *De zelo principum Germanicorum* of Ludolph von Bebenburg, and Maximilian thought so highly of his erudition that in 1510 he commissioned him to draw up an official minute on the pragmatic sanction of the King of France and other allied matters, with the intention of using it as a basis for putting pressure on the Curia in favour of Church reforms. Wimpfeling was at considerable pains to acquit himself to his master's satisfaction, but the document which he handed in was apparently never made use of, to his great chagrin.

WIMPHELING AND THE HISTORY OF PRINTING.

It remains to give some account of Wimpfeling's connection with bibliography, and first of all there are a few words to be said as to his references to the beginnings of printing. It is possible, though not perhaps

very probable, that most valuable evidence with regard to the invention of the art has been lost to us by the disappearance of a tract *De arte impressoria* which appears to have been written by Wimpeling about 1502. A copy of this tract from a manuscript in the Vatican Library was communicated to Janssen, the author of the *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, for use in his history, but both this copy and the original have since eluded all attempts at recovery. It appears from Janssen's account that only the earlier sections dealt with printing at all, and that the whole was entitled *De arte impressoria* on the strength of this beginning: such extracts as Janssen quotes from it are all of a quite general nature. Wimpeling appears to have been the first to assert that printing was invented at Strassburg; the reference as quoted by Dr. Hessels is to the *Germania* written in 1501, where it is stated that "Strassburg excelled through the origin of the art of printing, though it was perfected at Mainz." In the *Epitoma rerum Germanicarum* of 1502 the statement reappears in the form that Johann Gutenberg of Strassburg invented printing at Strassburg in 1440 but perfected it at Mainz. A few years later in 1508 the Catalogue of Strassburg Bishops remarks that "under Bishop Robertus the art was invented, though incomplete, by a certain Strassburger, who went to Mainz, joined others in investigating that art, and under the guidance of Joan Genszfleisch, who was blind from old age, completed and finished it in the house Gutenberg." Possibly we have here the germ of the statement, apparently first made by Daniel Specklin about 1580, that Mentelin was the first inventor of printing. It is noticeable that Wimpeling's allusions to this subject become successively more elaborate, the first of all, an epigram written in 1499, making no mention of Strassburg and simply saying that Ansicarus, as Genszfleisch is quaintly Latinized, first printed signs with brass at Mainz. The epigram is appended to a short tract of miscellanea in honour of Marsilius ab Inghen, the first rector of Heidelberg University, and is preceded by the quotation of an inscription in memory of "Ioannes genszfleisch artis impressoriae repertor" set up by Adam Gelthuss, one of Gutenberg's relatives.

In the chapter of the *Germania* already referred to Wimpeling has some interesting things to say of a number of other early printers. We are told of Mentelin that "he took up the printing craft while Gutenberg was still at work, and by printing many volumes at Strassburg in a short time became very rich. He was succeeded by Adolph Rusch, and Rusch soon after by Martin Flach; these were also themselves Strassburgers." Flach is mentioned as a relative of Matthias Schürer, a printer at Schlettstadt and a personal friend both of Wimpeling and of Thomas Wolf, to whom the *Germania* is dedicated. Of Strassburgers who exercised the art abroad, Wimpeling specifies Sixtus Rusinger, "who was in 1471 the first at Naples to show how books might be printed. For this reason he was a great favourite of King Ferdinand, who himself several times offered him bishoprics and the highest dignities: but Rusinger preferred his native city to all these and returned to dwell among us, where he is still alive at this day [*i.e.*, 1501], venerable both for his priestly dignity and for his great age." The date 1471 as the beginning of Riessinger's work at Naples is perfectly correct, and the pleasant personal details concerning him are nowhere else recorded. Wimpeling then proceeds to Ulrich Han (Gallus), the Roman printer, who was, he says, a German and not as some have thought a Frenchman, and ends his list with Johann Prus, at that time still printing at Strassburg, winding up with the remark: "the authors of so great an achievement must not be cheated of their due praise, especially in order that posterity may know whom it is to thank for this divine and immortal gift."

As for the bibliography of Wimpeling's own productions, that has been worked upon already by several scholars, notably as an appendix to his admirable *Histoire littéraire de l'Alsace* by Charles Schmidt, who has left little for those who come after him to do. Schmidt enumerates 47 works by Wimpeling himself, ranged according to their years of publication from 1486 to 1520: Knepper in his detailed biography of Wimpeling has pretty much the same list, but in a different order, that of composition; to these he has added six larger and three smaller MS.

collections, consisting mainly of letters from and to Wimpfeling, in various libraries. Riegger in his *Amoenitates litterariae Friburgenses*, published in 1785, gives an analysis, with copious quotations, of a large number of Wimpfeling's writings. A further list of 51 tracts of which Wimpfeling was the editor or collaborator may be found in Schmidt. Most of Wimpfeling's works, as might be expected, were printed either at Strassburg or at Basel, where Johann Amerbach was one of Wimpfeling's personal friends; a few appeared at Schlettstadt and Hagenau, and one, curiously enough, as far away as Lübeck. Most of these editions are rather rare, and this is in any case not the place to attempt any detailed examination of them.

Neither Wimpfeling himself nor any of the school of Alsatian humanists whose leader he was were men of great originality, but they acted according to their lights and they pursued their ideals in religion, ethics and literature with a constancy and single-mindedness which we cannot but admire. They were zealous for the betterment of education and they cherished a not ignoble patriotism in an age when the civic sense of the mass of their countrymen was almost dead. Wimpfeling himself, as has been seen, had serious imperfections—he was often narrow-minded and intolerant, self-important and too easily offended, and his irritability was apt temporarily to impair or even eclipse his regard for truth. But in spite of these shortcomings, the blameless simplicity of his private life, his candour and outspokenness on behalf of what he thought right, above all the transparent, indeed childlike ingenuousness of his nature, both in its strength and its weakness—these qualities suffice to retain for him in this later age some measure of his contemporaries' affectionate admiration and esteem.