

complains of having been punished fifteen times in a single morning. So poor was he, that, when pinched with hunger, he used to sing from door to door the sweet German carols of the time for food. One day the kind-hearted Ursula Cotta, the wife of the burgomaster of Ilfeld took pity on the lad and adopted him into her household during his schooldays at Eisenach.

LUTHER A STUDENT.

At the university of Erfurt, Luther was a very diligent and successful student. The most important event of his college life was his discovery in the library of the university of an old Latin Bible—a book which he had never seen in its entirety before. "In that Bible," says D'Aubigné, "the Reformation lay hid."

Two other events also occurred which affected the whole of his after-life. A serious illness brought him almost to death's door, and his friend and fellow-student, Alexis, was smitten dead by his side by a stroke of lightning. The solemn warning spoke to the heart of Luther like the voice that spoke to Saul on the way to Damascus. He resolved to give up his hopes of worldly advancement, and to devote himself to the service of God alone. He had been trained for the practice of law, but he entered forthwith an Augustinian monastery. His scholar's gown gave place to a monk's coarse serge dress. The accomplished young doctor of philosophy performed the menial tasks of porter of the monastery, swept the church, cleaned out the cells, and with his wallet by his side begged bread for the mendicant brotherhood from door to door. He also studied with zeal the scholastic theology, and especially the Word of God. He sought to mortify his body for the health of his soul. A little bread and a small herring were often his daily food, and sometimes he fasted for four days at a time. The youthful monk was, at least, terribly in earnest in his self-imposed penance. At the end of two years he was ordained priest. As he received authority "to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead," his intense conviction of the real presence of Christ upon the altar almost overwhelmed his soul.

Luther was now summoned, in the 25th year of his age, to the chair of philosophy and theology in the university of Wittenberg. He devoted himself with zeal to the study and exposition of the Word of God.

LUTHER AT ROME.

Two or three years later he was sent as the agent of his Order to negotiate certain business with the Vicar-General at Rome. As he drew near the seven-hilled city—the mother-city of the Catholic faith, the seat of God's Viceregents upon earth—he fell upon his knees, exclaiming, "Holy Rome, I salute thee." He went the round of the churches. He visited the sacred places. He said mass at the holiest altars. He did everything that could be done to procure the religious benefits which the sacred places of Rome were supposed to impart.

The scarce disguised paganism of the papal court filled the soul of the Saxon monk with horror. He tells of wicked priests who, when celebrating the solemnities of the mass, were wont to use, instead of the sacred formula, the mocking words, "Panis es, et panis

manebis"—"Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain." "No one," he says again, "can imagine what sins and infamies are committed in Rome. If there is a hell, Rome is built over it." It was a dreadful disenchantment to his soul. He came to the Eternal City as to the holy of holies on earth. He found it the place where Satan's seat was. One day, while toiling on his knees up the steps of Pilate's stairs—the very steps, according to tradition, trodden by our Lord on the last night of His mortal life; "than which," says an inscription at the top, "there is no holier spot on earth"—there flashed once more through his soul the emancipating words: "The just shall live by faith." He rose from his knees. His soul revolted from the mummeries of Rome. The Reformation was begun.

SALE OF INDULGENCES.

Luther returned to his university, his heart full of grief and indignation at the corruptions of religion which he had witnessed. The measure of papal iniquity was filled up by her shameless traffic in pardons for sins past, present, and to come. Were there not historic evidences of this wickedness, it would be deemed incredible. To gain money for the erection of the mighty Church of St. Peter's, Pope Leo X. sent forth indulgence-mongers across the Alps to extort alike from prince and peasant, by the sale of licenses to sin, the gold required for his vainglorious purpose. One of the most shameless of these indulgence-sellers, the Dominican monk, John Tetzel, found his way to the quiet towns and cities of central Germany. In the pomp and state of an archbishop he traversed the country. Setting up his great red cross and pulpit in the market-places, he offered his wares with the effrontery of a mountebank and quack-salver, to which he added the most frightful blasphemies. "This cross," he would say, pointing to his standard, "has as much efficacy as the very cross of Christ. There is no sin so great that an indulgence cannot remit; only let the sinner pay well, and all will be forgiven him." Even the release of souls in purgatory could be purchased by money. And he sought to wring the souls of his hearers by appeals to their human affections:

"Priest! noble! merchant! wife! youth! maiden! do you not hear your parents and friends who are dead cry from the bottomless abyss, 'We are suffering horrible torments; a trifling alms will save us; you can give it; and you will not?'"

As the people shuddered at these words, the brazen impostor went on: "At the very instant that the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory and flies to heaven." There was a graded price for the pardon of every sin, past or future, from the most venial to the most heinous—even those of nameless shames.

LUTHER AND TETZEL.

The honest soul of Luther was roused to indignation by these impieties. "If God permit, I will make a hole in Tetzel's drum," he said. He denied the efficacy of the Pope's indulgences, declaring, "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." But still the delusion spread. The traffic in licences to sin thrived apace. The brave Reformer took his resolve. He would protest in the name of God against

the flagrant iniquity. At noon on the day before the Feast of All Saints, when whoso visited the Wittenberg church was promised a plenary pardon, he walked boldly up and nailed upon the door a paper containing the famous ninety-five theses against the doctrine of indulgences. The first of these, which gives the keynote of the whole, reads thus: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says 'Repent,' He means that the whole life of believers upon earth should be a constant and perpetual repentance." This 31st of October, 1517, was the epoch of the Reformation. The sounds of the hammer that nailed this bold protest to the church door echoed throughout Europe, and shook the papal throne. Thus was hurled down the gauntlet of defiance to the spiritual tyranny of Rome. The theses created a prodigious sensation.

Tetzel, of course, attacked them with virulence, caused them to be publicly burned, and declared their author worthy of the same fate. Luther cogently defended them.

"I will not," he wrote, "become a heretic by denying the truth; sooner will I die, be burnt, be banished, be anathematized. If I am put to death, Christ lives; Christ, my Lord, blessed for evermore. Amen!" He was summoned to Rome to meet the charges of heresy alleged against his teaching, but the place of the conference with the papal legate was changed to Augsburg, in Germany. "When all men forsake you," asked the legate, "where will you take refuge?" "Under heaven"—"sub celo," said Luther, looking upward with the eye of faith. "If I had four hundred heads," he said again in his striking manner, "I would rather lose them all than retract the testimony I have borne to the holy Christian faith. They may have my body if it be God's will, but my soul they shall not have." After ten days spent in profitless disputation, Luther appealed "from the Pope ill-informed to the Pope better-informed," and then to a General Council. By the advice of his friends, who feared lest he should be betrayed into the power of his enemies, he left Augsburg by night. By the connivance of the town authorities he escaped through the postern gate in the wall, and rode over forty miles the next day. His horse, we read, was a hard trotter; and Luther, unaccustomed to riding and worn-out with his journey, was glad to throw himself down on a truss of straw.

The breach was widening between the Saxon monk and the Church of Rome. Yet it was a violent wrench that tore Luther from the companionship of his old friends. But loyalty to the convictions of his conscience demanded the sacrifice of any earthly tie. A storm of fanaticism was kindling against the bold Reformer. His doctrines were condemned by the universities of Cologne and Louvain. The priests of Meissen even taught publicly that he who should call Luther would be without sin. Such teaching produced its natural result. One day a stranger who held a pistol concealed beneath his cloak demanded of him, "Why do you go thus alone?" "I am in God's hands," said the heroic soul; "what can man do unto me?" and the would-be assassin, brought into conscious conflict with the Almighty, turned pale and fled trembling away.

Before his final breach with Rome,

Luther wrote a letter of respectful remonstrance to the Pope, invoking him to set about the work of reformation in his corrupt court and in the Church. But this remonstrance only hastened his condemnation. What the Pope wanted was not arguments, but submission. The last weapon of papal tyranny was now employed. A bull of excommunication was launched against the Reformer. With solemn cursings the Saxon monk was cut off from Christendom. But his intrepid spirit quailed not. "What will happen," he wrote, "I know not, and I care not to know. Wherever the blow shall reach me I fear not. The leaf of a tree falls not to the ground without the will of our Father. How much less we ourselves. It is a little matter to die for the Word, since the Word, which was made flesh, first died for us!"

LUTHER BURNS THE POPE'S BULL.

"The son of the Medici," writes D'Aubigné, "and the son of the miner of Mansfeldt have gone down into the lists; and in this desperate struggle, which shakes the world, one does not strike a blow which the other does not return. The monk of Wittenberg will do all the sovereign pontiff dares do. He gives judgment for judgment. He raises pile for pile. The Pope had burned his books. He would burn the Pope's bull." On the 10th of December, therefore, 1520, amid a great concourse of doctors and students of Wittenberg, Luther cast upon the blazing pyre the papal bull, saying as he did so, "As thou hast vexed the Holy One of Israel, so may everlasting fire vex and consume thee." The breach with Rome was complete. He had declared war unto death. He had broken down the bridge behind him. Retreat was henceforth impossible. "Hitherto I have been only playing with the Pope," he said. "I began this work in God's name; it will be ended without me and by His might. . . . The papacy is no longer what it was yesterday. Let it excommunicate me. Let it slay me. It shall not check that which is advancing. I burned the bull at first with trembling, but now I rejoice more at it than at any other action of my life."

The Pope waged a crusade against Luther and his doctrines. His books were ordered everywhere to be burned. The young Emperor, Charles V., gave his consent to their destruction in his hereditary States. "Do you imagine," said the friends of the Reformer, "that Luther's doctrines are found only in those books which you are throwing into the fire? They are written, where you cannot reach them, in the hearts of the people. If you will employ force, it must be that of countless swords unsheathed to massacre a whole nation." The German fatherland, with its ancient instincts of truth and liberty, responded almost as one man to the invocation of the miner's son. New students flocked to Wittenberg every day, and six hundred youths, the flower of the nation, sat at the Reformer's feet. The churches were not large enough for the crowds who hung upon his words.

LUTHER AT WORMS.

Luther was summoned to appear before a Diet of the Empire at Worms. He was ill at the time, but rejoiced in the opportunity to bear witness to the truth. "If I cannot go to Worms in health," he said, "I will be carried