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A TRIP THROUGH THE LUTHER COUNTRY VIII. LATER LABORS AT WITTENBERG

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WITTENBERG has been well called the Cradle of the Reformation. It was there the great movement was born. It was there it was nursed and defended by Luther and his coadjutors. Luther spent the greater part of his life in Wittenberg. His greatest colleague, Melancthon, also lived and labored there. The house in which Melancthon lived still stands and, like the Luther rooms on the same street, is a place of interest to tourists. Statues of both men stand in the market square in front of the old town hall and only a stone's throw from the "Town Church," where Luther preached so often.

Our last article dealt with Luther's labors during the first year after his return from the Wartburg. The labors of the Reformer were continued with unabated zeal and along the same lines for some time. New difficulties and new opposition had to be continually met. The Zwickau heresy was only one of the hindrances to the work Luther was trying to do. The opposition of the Roman See now assumed new forms. Decrees of Councils and papal bulls were powerless and harmless to check the onward march of the Reformation, or daunt the fearless leader of the movement. Pope Hadrian VI., who had succeeded Leo X., now tried new methods of defeating Luther. Hadrian honestly avowed that there were abuses in the Church that needed correcting and he set about the work of correcting some of them. His own life was strict and he demanded a stricter life of the clergy.

Thus began what is known as the Counter-Reformation. This reform movement within the Church put a check upon the Lutheran movement by turning back to Rome many who were beginning to sympathize with the work of Luther. The

new Pope saw the need of reform, but he had no intention of allowing Luther to reform the church. Indeed, he began to use the utmost severity in trying to stamp out what he called the Lutheran heresy. He tried first personal attacks upon Luther, accusing him of being a drunkard and a debauchee. To this Luther replied, in a letter to Spalatin, by calling the Pope an ass. Thus both sides descended to vulgarity; but it was a day of rough speech.

Hadrian next tried to arouse the fears of the German nobles by telling them

his work and saved him from the fate of Huss and Jerome of Prague. On the other hand the papers took advantage of this political protection to set prince against prince and in time succeeded in plunging Germany into civil strifes that prevented the spread of the movement over the larger area it would otherwise have covered.

But the opposition of the Papacy was not so great a hindrance to Luther's work as the fanaticism of his own followers. The Zwickau heresy was hard to kill. Two men, Carlstadt and Münzer began secretly and then openly to revive these errors. They carried their teaching so far that they aroused the peasants of Germany to a widespread revolt against constituted authority.

"The peasants' war was partly the result of grievances against the Princes who governed them oppressively, and partly the result of the fanatical religious views they had learned from their leaders. Poverty and hard times caused the peasants' discontent. Many atrocities were committed before the revolt was suppressed. Luther, throughout this painful period, used his influence to suppress the revolt; nevertheless he came

In for a full measure of abuse as the instigator of the whole thing. When the revolt began he saw that it would do the cause he had at heart infinite harm and he exclaimed, "All my enemies, near as they have reached me, have not hit me as hard as I have been hit by our own people." In the martyrdom of a number of ministers who had begun to preach his doctrine in various parts of Germany, he saw only a good omen, a presage of final victory; but in these ill-considered movements, such as the peasants' revolt, he saw only disaster for the cause he was laboring for.



WITTENBERG TOWN HALL AND CHURCH, WITH STATUES OF LUTHER AND MELANCTHON.

that the man they were defending would end by repudiating their authority as he had that of the papal throne and anarchy in both Church and State would follow. But all Hadrian got for his pains was a renewal of the demand of the German nobles for a redress of their grievances against the papacy.

We must not forget that the Reformation in Germany, as in England, was partly political and partly religious. This was both a help and a hindrance to it. By protecting Luther from the penalties of the Church of Rome the German Princes made possible the continuance of