

HAPPY DAYS

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LUTHER AND THE POPE'S INDULGENCES.

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 quacksalver, 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



LUTHER NAILING UP THE THESES.

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

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,

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 shame. 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 licenses 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,