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Luther's Mighty 'No.'

No event in the life of Martin Luther is more extraordinary than that of his victory over the powers of the world and of the Church at Worms, in April of the year 1521; and, we may almost say, no event in history is more wonderful, for then one man faced the whole might of the world.

Having been cursed by the Pope himself to the fullest extent of his ability, Luther was summoned by the mighty Emperor, Charles V. — practically sovereign of the world—to appear before the Diet convened

'They will burn you as they did John Huss,' said some, who remembered what was the value of the safe-conduct granted to that martyr. Luther answered: 'Though they should kindle a fire all the way from Worms to Wittenberg, the flames of which reach to heaven, I could walk through it in the name of the Lord.' As he neared the city, his great friend, Spalatin, sent a messenger, begging him not to enter. Luther's reply was: 'Go and tell your master that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the housetops, still I will enter it.' When at length the old towers of

bishops of Christendom. His car could hardly advance for the mass of people, and it was midnight before he could be alone. Then he opened the casement of his window, and, looking up to the still sky, said: 'I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only, makest me dwell in safety,' and took his rest.

In the morning, dressed in his monk's frock, Luther appeared before the grandeur of the Diet. He was dazed for a moment by the array before him — Emperor, electors, sovereigns, dukes and ambassadors, Papal nuncios, archbishops and bishops, not to speak of princes and counts—but he soon regained his calm.

'Martin Luther,' cried Eck, the spokesman of the Diet, as he pointed to a pile of some twenty volumes upon the table, 'do you acknowledge these books to have been written by you? Are you prepared to retract and disavow the opinions you have advanced in them?'

Luther replied: 'Most gracious Emperor, and most gracious princes and lords, the books that have just been named are mine.' And then he asked for time to reply to the second question, as it was one which concerned the salvation of souls, and 'as it was one in which the Word of God—than which nothing is greater in heaven or earth—was interested.'

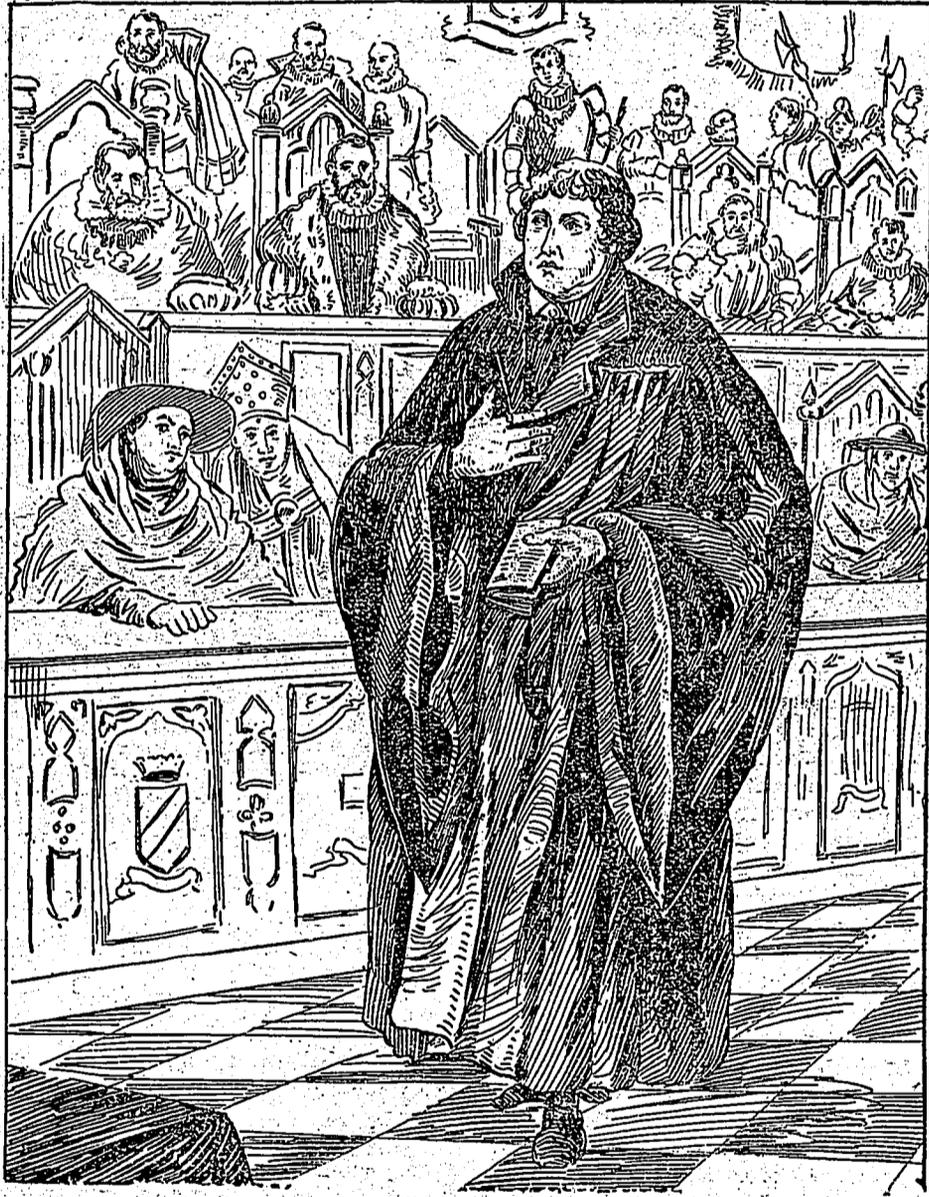
The delay requested was but seemly; and the request was granted.

The following morning, early, Luther was upon his knees. Trembling before God—brave before men; absolute nothingness in God's presence—power in the presence of God's enemies. Luther was prostrate in his spiritual conflict. Was God with him? Did God hear him? Had God forsaken him? Such were his longing questions to God. He cried, 'Stand at my side for the sake of thy well-beloved Jesus Christ, who is my defence, my shield and my strong tower.' Then, after a period of pleading, the darkness lifted, and Luther said, 'My soul belongs to thee! I shall abide for ever with thee! Amen! O God! help me. . . . Amen!'

The agony of that early morning is proof that Luther's courage was from God; it was no mere iron human will which bent the Diet to attention—it was the strength which God gave his servant which bowed the mighty to listen to his words.

Calm in his soul, and filled with confidence and courage, Luther on the ever memorable April 18, 1521, appeared once more before the Diet. He respectfully saluted the Emperor, the lords and the princes. He then declared that even his enemies had said of parts of his writings that they were conformable to scripture; therefore these he could not retract. Also such parts of his books as attacked the errors of doctrine or evils in the life of the Papacy he could not withdraw, lest if he did so, evils still worse by means of such withdrawal should be promulgated. As to such parts of his writings as those in which he had treated individuals with little ceremony, he would retract the manner of his utterances. But, he added, let him but be convinced from the Word of God that he was in error, and he would be the first to cast his books into the flames.

Having thus answered the questions of



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at the city of Worms, there to give account of himself, and necessarily to retract his doctrines. He had a safe-conduct, which really was of no value with the Pope's party; but Luther knew that it was God's will that he should attend the Diet, and thus expressed himself to his friends: 'I am called; it is ordered and decreed that I appear in that city. I will neither recant nor flee. I will go to Worms in spite of all the gates of hell and the prince of the power of the air.' As he passed through Germany to the city, the inhabitants of towns and villages turned out to welcome the monk who dared to face the greatest powers on earth for the sake of the Truth of God.

the city arose before his eyes, he sat up in his car and sang the hymn of his own composing—

'A tower of strength is God our Lord—
A sure defence and trusty guard;
His help as yet in every need,
From danger hath our spirit freed:

Our ancient foe in rage,
May all his spite display:
May war against us wage,
And arm him for the fray,
He that can keep all earth at bay.'

At mid-day the city was reached, and crowds rushed out of the houses to behold the humble monk who braved the Emperor, the Pope's nuncios, the princes and the