

warm temperament, those passages which referred to God's inexorable justice filled him with awe and intense solicitude. Every effort was redoubled; his self-imposed penances became more severe. But it was impossible for a mind so acute, so restless, so eager for the truth, to read long without finding it, and as he reads those thrilling words, "the just shall live by faith," light breaks in upon him, and his soul is filled with a joy such as he had never known before. And with the new light filling his soul, he goes forth to preach; and now the question is, what shall he preach? Shall he still proclaim the old dogma of salvation by works? Misty as was the light to his soul at present he would not do that. A fortnight at Rome settles the question with him as to his future. "I would not," said he on his return, "give a hundred thousand florins for all that I learned in that two weeks." He saw the dissolutions of the church, the debauchery of its priests, the wickedness of its assumed head; his spirit groaned within him to reform the abuses of the church, and to rescue the souls of his brethren from the degrading grasp of priestcraft. With his Bible for his guide and a firm reliance upon his God, he pours forth from a full heart the pure and simple gospel. The people are awakened. From one to another the story spreads, and they flock in thousands to hear the Doctor of Wittenberg. The war had commenced, the gospel was beginning to lay hold upon the hearts of the people. So far Luther had assailed none of the abuses of the Church, and all this time the Pope and his satellites had been concocting schemes by which they might enrich his treasury. The doctrine of indulgence was being preached throughout the length and breadth of the land, and men were taught that by the purchase of these they could be released from their obligations to God, and that the souls of the departed might be brought out of purgatory and translated into the world of light. With such brazen-facedness was this preached that these miserable soul-mongers went so far as to teach the people that "One drop of the blood of Christ was sufficient for the atonement of the world, and that the rest had been given for the church's benefit." Many were the indignant remonstrances made by the people against this awful traffic, but in vain. And now Luther comes to the front, and attacks this soul-destroying traffic by setting forth his theses, in which he boldly asserts that there is no merit in anything save the blood of Christ. Thus is given the first of that series of blows which finally laid the Church of Rome low in the dust, and from which she has never risen, as by the grace of God

she never will. How noble does Luther appear in this trying moment. The clamor of the indulgence sellers demanding his blood rises about him; he heeds them not. The inquisitorial fires rise before him, still he goes forward. The thunders of excommunication bellow in his ears; he laughs them to scorn. His faith rested on no vain theories. "My strength and my consolation," said he, "are in a place where neither men nor devils can reach them; and in this spirit, firm and unchanging as an adamant rock, he stands before the Pope's legate. "Will you retract the doctrines which you have preached." "Prove to me from God's word that they are wrong and I will retract." Threats and promises were alike unavailing. Promises he despised, as being beneath him, and threats he looked upon as idle winds which harmed him not. He rejected all authority but the Scripture; and before this the dogmas of the Church faded like the morning mist before the sun's rays. What was to be done? Already the hearts of the people were leaning towards the Reformer and his doctrines. The Church must assert its dignity. The Pope's authority must be upheld, and so excommunication is determined upon. Luther trembles, but with a faith reaching beyond the petty frowns or smiles of men he goes forward. "What is about to happen," said he, "I know not, nor do I care, assured as I am, that He who sits on the throne of Heaven has from all eternity foreseen the beginning, the progress, and the end of this affair." How vastly superior does Luther appear to other reformers. Erasmus, as soon as he saw that his works were attracting attention, and the storm clouds beginning to gather around his head, withdrew himself, and left the people in the same blackness of darkness as before. And now the bull of excommunication has gone forth. The enemies of Luther rejoice at the thought of the Church again assuming its former prestige, and rising triumphant over its enemies. His friends tremble for his safety. But, not so Luther. Calm and unmoved in his resolution to do right, he looks to the hills from whence cometh his help. Up to the present he has merely been rebutting the blows hurled at him by the papacy. He must now give blow for blow, aiming with such precision that there shall be no warding off. The terrible bull, as he calls it, is in his hands. A fire is built at the east gate of Wittenberg, and, at the head of a large procession, he consigns the bull with other documents and writings to the flames, thus cutting the last tie that bound him to the church. And yet for all this he does not consider himself cast out from the church, for he