

train. All the preparation had been begun, all the events were made ready, by that invisible agency which works in nature, which controls our individual will, and subordinates human passion to the divine glory. And when Tetzel appeared upon the scene with his infamous doctrine and unblushing effrontery, it was only as the spark which kindled the blaze, or only as the tocsin sound which called into action the weapons waiting to fight the battle of the Lord. The traffic in Indulgences was a revolting burlesque on Christianity and the Church. If there be one truth more clearly revealed in Holy Scripture than another, it is this: that God alone can forgive sin. It is the essential prerogative of the Deity, which He has not,—and which reverently be it spoken—He cannot delegate to any human authority whatsoever. The duly ordained and appointed ministers of Christ may pronounce forgiveness of sins, in His name and by His authority, upon the compliance of the sinner with the recognized conditions of salvation,—or in the words of the Book of Common Prayer, "To all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him." But that any man—no matter what his personal gifts or official position—should assume to himself the power to remit, in his own name, and at his own discretion, the penalty of sin; and to guarantee the eternal salvation of the soul, on the payment of a few paltry coins into the coffers of the Church,—is an act of presumption and blasphemy unwarranted by Scripture, and repugnant to right reason. Yet such was the prerogative assumed by the Holy Pontiff; and by him delegated to those whom he chose to appoint as his ministers or agents.

There was now a special need for the sale of Indulgences. Money was wanted. Leo X. had succeeded Julius II. in the pontifical chair, and had found the kingdom impoverished by the wars of his predecessor. The magnificent church of St. Peter at Rome had been begun, but funds were lacking for its completion. In addition to this, Albert, Archbishop of Montz, was indebted to the Pope to the extent of some \$45,000, which he had not the means to pay. . . . In this emergency, the Pope proclaimed a general indulgence. It was let out on the true forming principle to the Archbishop; and since a third person was required for its success, John Tetzel was chosen as the mission preacher, or, more strictly speaking, as the itinerating vender, in the unholy traffic. By this plan the funds of both the Pope and the Archbishop might be replenished, if not the devotion of the people, and the purity of the Church increased.

There was here a singular combination of character. The greatest possible difference existed between the three men who thus became prominent in the preliminary steps of the Reformation. Leo X. was in many respects all that could be desired. The pontifical throne had seldom been so worthily filled. A son of the celebrated Lorenzo de Medici, he combined in a remarkable degree many of the virtues and vices of that illustrious family. With refined tastes and an accomplished mind, he united a virtuous disposition and a benignant rule. He gave encouragement to literature and art, and was not averse to ecclesiastical reform. But his love of money and his delight in war, his thirst for pleasure and his extravagance of living, warped the better principles of his nature, and rendered him indifferent to the higher duties of his office; and like his predecessors, while usurping the prerogatives of the Deity, he sought by threatening to inspire the fear and evoke the obedience,