

PLEASANT HOURS

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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-sellers 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 quack-silver, 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 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 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 impudences. "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 whose festival 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, 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, 1517, was the epoch of the Reformation. The sounds of the hammer that nailed this bold protest to the church door echoed throughout Europe, and shook the papal throne. Thus was hurled down the gauntlet of defiance to the spiritual tyranny of Rome. The theses created a prodigious sensation.



LUTHER NAILING UP THE THESES.

AN ANSWERED PRAYER.

It was a handsomely furnished sitting-room in a home on R— Street. Between the portieres a glimpse of the breakfast table from which the family had just risen could be seen, a carefully appointed table with shining silver, delicately tinted china, and hot-house flowers.

In the room where the Rays were assembled an open coal fire danced. Costly pictures and rare bits of bric-a-brac gave an air of taste and refinement to the apartment, an air which the appearance of the family carried out. They were kneeling at family worship.

so much of her brother, although a devoted sister, as of another who was often at her side. Again she heard the low, caressing voice, again the blood leaped quickly through her veins as she met the gaze of the frank brown eyes. Even in her sheltered life she had heard of the temptations that come to young men, and Helen bowed her golden head lower and echoed, "Save the boys."

The other occupant of the room was Tom, the only son. Listening to his father's fervent words, and catching the gleam of his mother's tears, he recalled how, a week ago, he had seen his friend, Frank Sutton, carried unconscious from the room at a club supper. Tom wondered, both then and now, how Frank could so far forget to be a gentleman. As for himself, why, his head had ached the next day, that was all. But remembering his mother's tears, Tom repeated mechanically, thinking meantime of Frank, "Save the boys."

When prayers were over, they rose to go their separate ways until lunch time.

How did each one go about answering, with God's help, the prayer just offered?

Mr. Ray hurried down town through the invigorating winter air. First, there was a meeting with political friends. At its close this husband and father handed the chairman of the committee three crisp ten-dollar bills, and said: "Use this to control the saloon element in the Third Ward. A little judicious treating there, and we are sure of carrying the day."

Then he bowed out his visitors, and, donning cap and overcoat, set out to attend a meeting of the stockholders of a brewing company. He presided over the meeting, and succeeded in carrying a motion which provided for the increase of the working capacity of the company. Wine was served. As our friend leaned back in his luxurious chair and sipped the sparkling amber beverage, he said to himself, "A good morning's work done."

Meanwhile, the mother, after kissing her husband and children, went downstairs to confer with the cook.

"We shall have guests for dinner, Sarah," she said. "I am particularly anxious about the pudding, I will come down and make the brandy sauce myself. Where is Thomas?"

"In the pantry, ma'am." "Please send him to me. I want to be sure he understands about the wine for to-night."

Helen, after donning a pretty street suit, took a downtown car. She had embroidery silk and ribbon to match, and she must have new gloves for evening. As she walked briskly along she encountered a tall, fine-looking young man. The rose-red on Helen's cheek deepened as he turned to accompany her down the street.

"I shall see you at Miss Noble's tomorrow evening?" she asked, expectantly.

"I—I think not. It is a card party, and you know I never play."

Helen shook her golden head. "I won't say a word about playing, but I shall be disappointed, for,"—she stopped abruptly as she realized how much she was saying.

Few love to hear the sins they love to do.