

there, sick as I am. I cannot doubt that it is the call of God. He still lives who preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. If He will not save me, my life is of little consequence."

Luther, in feeble health, made his journey to Worms in a farmer's waggon. His progress was like that of a victorious general. The people thronged to see the man who was going to lay his head at the feet of the Emperor. "There are too many bishops and cardinals at Worms," said some. "They will burn you as they did John Huss." "Huss has been burned," replied the intrepid monk, "but not the truth with him. Though they should kindle a fire all the way from Worms to Wittemberg, the flames of which should reach to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord—I would appear before them—I would enter the jaws of this Behemoth, and break his teeth, confessing the Lord Jesus Christ."

As he approached the city one of his friends sent him word, "Do not enter Worms." With a dauntless confidence in God, the heroic monk replied in the memorable words, "Though there were as many devils in Worms as tiles on the housetops, yet will I enter it."\*

Luther's entry into Worms was more like a triumphal procession than like the citation of a heretic before an Imperial tribunal. He was accompanied by an escort of a hundred knights and gentlemen on horseback, and two thousand people on foot, who had come without the walls to conduct him into the town. The roofs and windows along the route were crowded with spectators. As Luther, clad in his monk's frock, stepped from the open waggon in which he rode, he said, in accents of unflinching faith, as he touched the ground, "Deus stabit pro me"—"God will be my defence."

The next day Luther was summoned before the Diet; and having commended his soul to God in prayer, he went undismayed to meet the august conclave. The noblest hearts of Germany stood by him. The brave old soldier, George of Freundsberg, grizzled with many years and scarred with many battles, tapped Luther on the shoulder as he passed, and said, "Poor monk! poor monk! thou art going to make a nobler stand than I or any other captain have ever made in the bloodiest of our fights! But if thy cause is just, and thou art sure of it, go forward in God's name and fear nothing. God will not forsake thee."

THE DIET OF WORMS.

The Saxon monk stood now before the Imperial Diet. Never had man stood before a more august assembly. On his throne sat Charles V., sovereign of a great part of the Old World and the New; around him sat six royal electors, twenty-four grand dukes, eight margraves, thirty bishops and abbots, and a crowd of princes and counts of the empire, papal nuncios, and foreign ambassadors. There, in his monk's frock, stood the man on whom had fallen the curse and interdict of Rome, summoned to defend himself against the papacy, before all that was most exalted and august in Christendom. "Some of the princes," writes D'Aubigné, "when they saw the emotion of this son of the

lowly miner of Mansfeldt in the presence of this assembly of kings, approached him kindly, and one of them said to him, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.' And another added: 'When ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, the Spirit of your Father shall speak in you.'"

Luther had restrained his natural impetuosity, but no fear of consequences shook his soul. "With Christ's help, he said, I shall never retract a tittle of my works." He felt that the crisis of his life was at hand. In the agony of his soul on that night of prayer, as if groping in the darkness for the sustaining hand of God, were wrung forth the following pleading cries, which, overheard by a friend of the Reformer, were left on record as one of the most precious documents of history: "My last hour is come; my condemnation is pronounced. O God, do Thou help me against all the wisdom of this world. O God, hearest Thou me not? O God, art Thou dead? Nay, Thou canst not die. Thou hidest Thyself only. Act, then, O God. Stand by my side. Lord, where stayest thou? I am ready to lay down my life for Thy truth. Though the world should be filled with devils, though my body should be slain, be cut in pieces, be burned to ashes, my soul is Thine. I shall abide with Thee for ever. Amen! O God, help me, Amen." These wrestlings of his soul in the hour of his Gethsemane are the key of the Reformation. Luther laid hold upon the very throne of God, and was enbraved with more than mortal might.

"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture," he declared, in his grand loyalty to truth, "I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience." Then looking round upon that great assembly of the might and majesty of Christendom, he uttered the immortal words: "Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders, Gott helfe mir"—"Here I take my stand; I can do no other; God help me, Amen." "It is," says Carlyle, "the greatest moment in the modern history of men." The heroic scene is commemorated in the grand Luther Monument erected near this place.

"This monk speaks with an intrepid heart and unshaken courage," said the Emperor. Some of Luther's friends began to tremble for his fate, but with unflinching faith he repeated "May God be my helper, for I can retract nothing."

LUTHER CONDEMNED.

The papal party, fearing the effect of Luther's dauntless daring, redoubled their efforts with the Emperor to procure his condemnation. In this they were successful. The next day Charles V. caused sentence to be pronounced against the Reformer. "A single monk," he said, "misled by his own folly, has risen against the faith of Christendom. To stay such impiety I will sacrifice my kingdoms, my treasures, my friends, my body, my blood, my soul, and my life. I am about to dismiss the Augustine Luther, forbidding him to cause the least disorder among the people; I shall then proceed against him and his adherents, as contumacious heretics, by excommunication, by interdict, and by every means calculated to destroy them." Luther was further described as not a man, but Satan himself dressed in a monk's frock, and

all men are admonished, after the expiration of his safe-conduct, not to conceal him, nor to give him food or drink, but to seize him and deliver him into custody.

But the heart of the nation was on the side of Luther. There were, it is said, four hundred knights who would have maintained his safe-conduct, and under their protection he was permitted to depart from Worms. He visited first the village of his sires, and preached in the little church of Eisenach.

LUTHER AT WARTBURG

As he was travelling next day, accompanied by two friends, through the Thuringian Forest, five horsemen, masked and armed, sprang upon them, and before he was aware, Luther found himself a prisoner in the hands of those unknown men. Through devious forest ways, adopted to avoid detection or pursuit, he was conveyed up a mountain slope, and by midnight reached the lofty and isolated fortress of the Wartburg—a place of refuge provided for him by his friend, the "Wise" Elector of Saxony. He was furnished with a knight's dress and a sword, and directed to let his hair and beard grow, so that even the inmates of the castle might not discover who he was. Indeed, he tells us, he hardly recognized himself. Here in his mountain eyrie, like John at Patmos, he remained in hiding till the outburst of the storm of persecution was overpast.

At first his friends thought that Luther was slain. But soon, as evidence of his vigorous life and active labours, a multitude of writings, tracts, pamphlets, and books, were sent forth from his mysterious hiding place, and were everywhere hailed with enthusiasm. The bold blows of the imprisoned monk shook the very thrones of the papacy. Within a year he published 183 distinct treatises. He worked hard, too, at his translation of the Scriptures into the German tongue, and, secure in his mountain fortress, he sang his song of triumph—"Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott"—

"A safe stronghold our God is still—  
A trusty shield and weapon."

But he was not without his hours of darkness and visitations of Satan. His long confinement proved irksome, and wore upon his spirits and his health. One day as in bodily depression he was working at his desk, at his translation of the Bible, to his disordered vision appeared an apparition of Satan, in a hideous form, forbidding him to go on with his sacred task. Seizing his ink-horn, the intrepid monk hurled it at the head of the arch-enemy of man, who instantly disappeared. On the walls of the old castle of Wartburg may be seen the ink stains to the present day.

LUTHER LEAVES WARTBURG.

Luther could no longer endure the restraint of Wartburg, and after ten months' concealment he left its sheltering walls. He went boldly to Wittemberg, though warned of the hostility of Duke George. "I would go," he wrote, in his vigorous way, "though it for nine whole days rained Duke Georges, and each one nine times more furious than he." Your true Reformer must be no coward. Like John the Baptist, like Luther, Knox or Wesley, he must boldly face death or danger, counting not his life dear unto him for the testimony of Jesus.

At Wittemberg, Luther was received,

by town and gown, with enthusiasm, and preached with boldness and success alike against the corruptions of Rome.

Among the many opponents of Luther, none was more virulent and violent than the royal polemic, Henry VIII., King of England. He ordered the writings of the Reformer to be burned at St. Paul's Cross; and denounced him as a wolf of hell, a poisonous viper, a limb of the devil.

Luther handled his royal antagonist without gloves. He was an equal master of invective, and he used it without stint. He refuted Henry Eighth's book in detail, and concluded with bold defiance. "It is a small matter," he said, "that I should revile a king of earth, since he fears not to blaspheme the King of heaven. Before the Gospel which I preach must come down popes, priests, monks, princes, devils. Let these swine advance and burn me if they dare. Though my ashes were thrown into a thousand seas, they will arise, pursue and swallow this abominable herd. Living I will be the enemy of the papacy, burnt, I shall be its destruction."

We defend not Luther's railing tongue, but it must be said in apology that it was the age of strong words and hard blows. The venerable Bishop Fisher inveighs against Luther as "an old fox, a mad dog, a ravening wolf, a cruel bear," and Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England, uses yet more violent language. But the coarseness of this railing was partly veiled beneath the stately Latin tongue in which it was clothed.

SPREAD OF THE REFORMATION.

By tongue and pen the new doctrines were everywhere proclaimed. Despite the burning of Protestant books, they rapidly multiplied. In 1522-23, in Wittemberg alone, were published 850 pamphlets and books, of which 317 were by Luther himself, and many of them were translated into English, French, Italian and Spanish. The churches could not contain the multitude who thronged to hear the gospel. At Zwickau, from the balcony of the Rathhaus, or town-hall, Luther preached to 25,000 persons in the market-place. The Reformed doctrines spread rapidly, especially in Germany and the Low Countries, and soon, at Antwerp, a whole convent of monks were followers of Luther. They were imprisoned and condemned to death. Some escaped, but two—Esch and Voes, the protomartyrs of the Reformation—were burned at the stake at Brussels, July 1, 1523. As the flames arose around them, Esch said, "I seem to lie upon a bed of roses." Then both repeated the Creed and sang the *Te Deum*, and joined the noble army of martyrs in the skies. Luther commemorated their death in a beautiful hymn, and soon in almost every hamlet in the Netherlands and Germany were sung the triumphs of the martyrs' faith—

"No! no! their ashes shall not lie.  
But, borne to every land,  
Where'er their sainted dust shall fall  
Uprings a holy band."

LUTHER'S MARRIAGE AND HOME LIFE.

Luther had long asserted the right of a priest to marry; but for himself, he averred, he had no thought of it, for he every day expected the punishment and death of a heretic. But at length he considered it his duty to bear his testimony in the most emphatic manner against the Romish

\* "The Diet of Worms, Luther's appearance there on the 17th of April, 1521," says Carlyle, "may be considered as the greatest scene in modern European history."