

soul of that wise and just, that noble and loving man, as he nears the close of this address—the most precious because the last. "With malice toward none, with charity for all, let us bind up the nation's wounds, and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

What was the unifying principle of such a life? Let his own words speak: "Here before high Heaven, and in the presence of the whole world, I swear eternal fealty to the just cause, as I deem it, of the land of my life, my liberty and my love." But did he foresee the dangers he would encounter? Listen: "Broken by the slave power I, too, may be; bow to it I never will." But did he know the assassin would seek his life? Listen: "I never shall live out the years of my term: when the rebellion is crushed, my work is done."

The nation mourns. The procession stretches from Washington to Springfield. The flag that so lately floated triumphantly o'er the victorious field, droops at half mast. No sound of the hammer is heard, nor noise of wheel in the street. Strong men clasp each other's hands, and pass on in sorrow and silence.

He is gone. A quarter of a century has passed. Yet neither time nor space intervenes between us and that loving face. May no historian's hand ever smooth the furrows from that noble brow.

MARTIN LUTHER.

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In the city of Worms there stands a lofty monument. The greatest artists and sculptors of the present day have been employed in its construction. In the midst of allegorical representations and statues of great men rises the colossal figure of the hero in whose honor this grand monument was erected—the one who is truly called "the greatest man of modern history."

What did he do to deserve such a monument and such a title? Was he some military commander, whose keen foresight and merciless disregard of human life made him victor on many a bloody battlefield? No, he was a man of peace. Was he some mighty ruler who by his statesmanship had gained new possessions, and had brought nations under subjection to foster his pride and ambition? No, he cared neither for wealth nor power. In what, then, did his greatness consist? He knew the truth and feared not to stand by it.

We, of the Nineteenth century, can scarcely imagine the state of political and religious affairs in Europe four hundred years ago. The controlling power everywhere was in the hands of the clergy, as it had been for centuries. But the church, pampered by excessive wealth, had not merely degenerated; its spirituality had so far passed away that naught remained but dry forms and ceremonials. The clergy, from being earnest, pious, and consecrated to their work, had become careless, avaricious and self-indulgent. The common people, looking to those for assistance who should have been their instructors, found only bitter oppressors. He who dared to lift his voice in opposition to such practices was silenced by a swift and cruel death. The people, finding their leaders and instructors careless of their interests, incapable, and cruel, were plunged into the deepest misery. "Unfaithful shepherds make a perishing flock."

Out of this darkness there came forth one who stood alone as a champion and enlightener of the people against the iniquitous priesthood, one who made his influence felt by kings and prelates. The great reformers of the world, those who have endeavored to overturn error and advance truth, have come from among the common people. Few who are endowed with wealth, who are of noble lineage, or hold high offices, desire revolution, even though truth and justice are involved. Martin Luther was of humble birth. A hard training had he for his work, and one which tended to develop firmness of character and fixedness of purpose. His boyhood was passed in adversity and want. Later, while engaged in the study of law, the whole course of his life was changed by a terrible experience; a friend at his side was struck down by a thunderbolt. Startled into a consciousness of the meaning of life and death, he determined to forsake the world. That flash from the clouds brought light and liberty to countless thousands. Entering a monastery, Luther tortured himself for years with

the most severe bodily penance in order to gain that peace of mind which he so desired.

At length, sent to Rome on a mission, he saw too clearly the state of affairs in the church. He had expected to find its public servants self-sacrificing, sincere, and pious; he found them self-indulgent, hypocritical, and debased. His own words best express his feelings. "It is incredible what sins and atrocities are committed at Rome. If there be a hell, Rome is built above it; it is an abyss from whence all sins proceed."

When he returned, he took up his old work. He was not yet prepared to break with the church. His eyes were opened to the terrible state into which the papacy had fallen; his sense of right and justice was violated; yet years must needs pass by before he was ready to make a stand and openly defy the power of Rome.

Tetzel came selling his indulgences by authority of the pope, pardoning sins for gold. Luther could restrain himself no longer. He posted his ninety-five theses on the church door at Wittenberg, boldly protesting against such license. The news that a monk had been so bold as to withstand the church spread like wild fire. The people were prepared for such an action. The revival of learning had roused all minds.

The dignitaries of the church used persuasions and threats, but to no avail. Luther, though he knew the danger in which he stood, was immovable. Then they attempted to corrupt this noble priest with bribes. He cared more for the right than for high position, and preferred justice to wealth.

Luther was excommunicated. He publicly burnt the pope's decree.

A great assembly room at Worms: on a throne is seated the Emperor of Germany and Spain; about him are nobles and dignitaries of the church—a royal assemblage. Before the emperor stands the bold heretic, summoned hither to answer for his teachings, knowing that in his accusers' hands lay the power of life and death. Neither overawed by these potentates nor cowed by a knowledge of their power, he denounced the dogmatism of the church and quietly, but firmly, asserted his adherence to the liberty of the individual conscience, closing with the ever memorable words,—“Here I stand; I cannot retract; God help me!” In these words one may read his character. Luther was of a modest and retiring disposition; yet when he met falsehood and error face to face, he was as firm as granite. For his strict adherence to that which he believed to be the truth, for his devotion to his cause, and his fearlessness in the presence of all danger, Luther is respected and honored by everyone that reveres truth and courage.

Among the reformers, Luther stands pre-eminently first. Looking back at him through all these years, we see his noble form, head and front of the great and sweeping movement that completely revolutionized the course of action and thought throughout the world. By his translation of the Bible he established, in place of a great variety of dialects, one common language for the German nation. His noble and inspiring hymns still thrill and soften the hearts of many a listener. Luther might have been content with the life of a student and teacher but where would be his fame as a reformer? It is on account of his self-sacrifice and consecration to duty that history places him above all men of his time.

As Luther's public life commands our respect and reverence so must his private life win our admiration and praise. We have seen him standing in the midst of dangers, undaunted and fearless; we have seen him tempted with bribes and threatened with punishment, when his noble soul spurned the one and feared not the other; but to know him fully we must see him as he stood by the death bed of his little daughter, his great soul rent with agony, yet filled with confidence and trust that all is well.

If a man's greatness is measured by the effect of his life and teachings upon the history of the world, what a lofty position must Luther occupy! His influence reaches down to us through all the changes which time has wrought. Three centuries have rolled on since Luther lived and labored among men—three centuries of advance in education, religion, and government. How much of this advance we owe to that fearless priest we shall not fully know until that day when all things which now are hidden shall be brought to light. The great Greek philosopher could only cry out, "Give me a place on which to stand, and I will move the world." Luther made his own place and moved the world,