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The upper Rhine

the scenery of its banks and the manners of its people

Mayence to the lake of Constance

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Visual Library

of a Dutch canal, and the stream twisting and turning at every point like some thin blue vein pulsing languidly on to the world's great heart—the sea.

The memories, too, linked with the banks of the *Ober* and *Mittel-Rhein* are as different as the stocks and stones themselves.

Below the Rheingau, every mountain peak and summit is as if silvered over with the pale mythic light of some fairy legend, or else blood-stained with the barbaric glory of some "robber-noble's" deeds.

But the rocks no sooner disappear from the river banks, and nature herself begins to assume a less savage aspect, than romance ceases to people the Rhine-shores with water-sprites, and brigand-barons; and the associations, as if to harmonise with the more prosaic character of the scene, get to partake of the solid dignity of civilised history.

The three men who have influenced the world, perhaps more than any other *triumviri*, are JOHN GUTENBERG, BERTHOLD SCHWARZ, and MARTIN LUTHER: the three great originators of the three greatest of human powers—Printing, Gunpowder, and Protestantism; powers coequal in force, and yet how different in kind!—one mental, another physical, and the third spiritual in its energy—the first designed to teach, the second to slay, and the last to save.

The journey along the Upper Rhine, is one long panorama of splendid associations.

At Strasburg we tread on ground made memorable by Gutenberg's first attempts at printing with moveable types.

At Freiburg we gaze, with a quickened pulse, upon scenes which serve to realize to us the Franciscan Friar's emotions on discovering the explosive properties of a mixture of charcoal, sulphur, and saltpetre.

At Worms we walk in the very footsteps of Luther himself, and stand beside the spot where stood the brave Augustine Monk, as he looked round the assembly of princes and prelates that held his life in their hands, and then uttered the heroic words,—

"To THESE PRINCIPLES I AM FIXED. I CANNOT SAY OTHERWISE. GOD HELP ME. AMEN!"

To the Protestant mind there is no place in the wide world so quick with interest as the ancient Rhenish town where the Imperial Diets of Germany were wont to be held—the battlefield of one of the proudest victories ever won by mortal man—the victory of a single unarmed hand raised against all the powers of "Christendom,"—and a victory upon which the liberties of Europe depended more than upon any other "decisive" conquest in history.

What though the city walls of Worms are at present crumbling into rubbish heaps, and the fortress stones rotten as touchwood with decay; what though the dried-up moats environing the ramparts are planted with orchards now rather than cannon, and the old town, since Luther's time, has been "reduced to cinders"—(the thickness of the walls of the Cathedral and the Synagogue preserving them *alone* from the general destruction*); what though the hospital of the Knights

* The Domkirche, or Cathedral, has some few attractions for the architect and archæologist, but little or none for the general traveller. It is a solid and heavy red-stone building, with a round and pointed stone tower (in shape like a huge cut crayon) at each of its four corners. It is built principally in what is called the Byzantine, or rounded-arch style. The interior reminds the unprofessional spectator somewhat of Speier, though it hardly rejoices to the same extent in the gilt-gingerbread order of decoration. It has two cupolæ and two chancels, and an ungainly black-and-red marble pulpit, studded with plaster statuettes. The principal altar is ornamented with heavy marble pillars, and huge gilt statues the size of life; and tawdry with its golden "glories" and brass appointments. The chapels on either side are in the mongrel Renaissance style,

of St. John, where Luther sojourned for fourteen days during his stay in the city, has long since been rased to the ground, and the red-stone foundation-walls, at the farther side of the fine old *Domkirche*, that is seen peeping over the tumble-down ramparts yonder, are all that now-a-days remain of the ancient Bishop's Palace, in whose hall sat the "young emperor, and the six prince-electors of Germany, with the attendant archdukes, dukes and margraves, archbishop, bishops and abbots, ambassadors and deputies, princes, counts, and sovereigns, besides the Papal legates and commissaries," that made up the Great Im-

and gaudy with their metal figures of saints. The walls and pillars of the nave are in places stained with the remains of frescoes, that seem as if the colours and designs had been half-washed out with the damp. The "*Taufkapelle*" here is curious from the old bas-reliefs of Scripture-subjects about the walls. These are all painted a green-grey or olive colour, and many of the figures are the size of life. One tableau is a rude representation of the Saviour in the manger, with a queer-looking knubbly little angel flying down to the stable. Another exhibits a huge genealogical tree, with the roots sprouting out of a figure of Abraham at the bottom of it, and a little David with a harp peeping out from among the branches above, while the Virgin appears perched on the topmost bough of all. These, as well as the others about the walls, are all surrounded with twiggy arabesque borders, and the place is littered with Catholic ceremonial lumber, such as dusty silk banners, and stores of gaudy tall candelabra, and surplus altars that have a faded Mayday-chimney-sweep kind of look, from the dirty old artificial flowers with which they are decorated.

The other principal object of interest in Worms is the ancient Jews' Synagogue, which is situate in the purlieus, as it were, of the town, the streets in the neighbourhood having a narrow lane-like character that reminds one of the close-pent Jews' quarter at Frankfort, and somewhat of our own Holywell Street. Over many of the doorways that we pass may be seen handsome bits of Quentin-Matsys-like ironwork—the metal wrought with all the delicacy of filagree—as well as fine old oak carved lintels and porches to the ricketty old houses.

The entrance to the synagogue is as mean as the approach to a stable; and the outer tabernacle, which is said to have been built some years *before* Christ, is utterly deficient in all architectural ornament, being rude as a large cellar (which indeed it is not unlike), and fitted merely with a little red-stone seat, like a small arm-chair, set in a niche at one end for the rabbi; and with a narrow ledge of stone jutting from the wall and stretching all round the chamber for the congregation.

The inner tabernacle dates *only* from the year of our Lord 1000. It is extremely

perial Diet of the year 1521, and before whom "the well-beloved and pious Doctor Martin Luther, of the Order of Augustines," was cited to appear and "give answer touching the doctrines and the books that he had lately issued;" still, though there is hardly a building and not a street left such as it was in Luther's time, it is sufficient for the mind to know that the ground it is treading was once trodden by the valiant Reformer's foot in order to conjure the memorable old places and scenes back into life—to build up in the imagination the Imperial Council Chamber once more—to people it with its princely and papal host again—to throng the narrow streets anew, and crowd the windows of the tall old houses with the

dark, with the low roof supported by thick and dumpy Egyptian-looking columns. The antique brass candlesticks beside the desk of the high priest are peculiar, and have each nine branches to them, to hold the nine candles for Moses and his children. Here in a closet are kept Bibles and prayer-books, that are said to be 600 years old; these are written in large Hebrew characters on long skins of parchment wound on rollers, and covered with cloths embroidered with Hebrew.

The Hebrew community of Worms is believed to be one of the most ancient in Germany. A tradition asserts that such a community existed at the time of the first destruction of the temple of Jerusalem by the Babylonians—588 years before Christ; and some declare it to be *proven* by historical documents that a body of Israelites was located at Worms before the birth of the Saviour. Worms, indeed, was formerly regarded by the Hebrews as the German Jerusalem; and there was a proverb current through the country saying, "Worms Jews—good Jews." Under the Emperor Ferdinand I., in 1559, and, indeed, from the earliest dates, the Jews of this city were allowed privileges and liberties accorded to no other Israelites in the empire; they were permitted to have a chief of the synagogue, and the Grand Rabbi of Worms took precedence of every other German-Jewish priest. The origin of these special indulgences is said (according to an ancient legend) to be due to the circumstance of the Hebrew community of Worms having, in a letter addressed to the King of Jerusalem, protested against the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The legend, however, unfortunately, omits to explain how it came to pass that the news of the Saviour's condemnation travelled from Jerusalem to Worms in time sufficient for the Jews there to send a letter back to the "Holy Land," begging for a remission of the sentence—especially as the crucifixion is represented by each of the Evangelists as having been carried out on the same day as the judgment was delivered; and there were assuredly no electric telegraphs in those times!

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same dense multitude eager to see the daring Friar Martin go by.

Once on the reverend spot, indeed, and the spirit (such is the force of local association!) lives for a time in the past. We no sooner stand beside the old red walls of the Council Chamber, than the "mind's eye" beholds, as in a dream, the humble covered car (which the town-council had provided to carry the heresiarch to the Diet at Worms) waiting outside the University Gates at Wittenberg, and the little band of Reformers who have begged to accompany Doctor Martin on his perilous journey, stealing forth one after another to mount the steps of the vehicle.

First glides past the figure of Jerome Schurff, "the gentle young professor of jurisprudence,"—then the form of young Peter Suaven, the Danish student who resides with Melancthon, flits by—and after him comes the shade of "the impetuous Amsdorff." And when these have taken their seats the spirit of Luther himself appears to us, emerging from the friendly throng gathered about the college gates; and as he is seen to throw himself into the arms of the tender-hearted Melancthon—him who loved Martin "better than Alcibiades did Socrates"—the memory of his noble parting words rings in the ear,—"If I do not return, dear brother, and my enemies put me to death, continue to teach and stand fast to God's truth."

Then a hundred hands start forth clasped in prayer, and the air seems to resound with a solemn hymn from the crowd of weeping Gospel friends, as the figure of the great Reformer ascends the car and gives the herald the signal to advance.

"The Bishops and Cardinals at Worms will burn you and reduce your body to ashes as they did John Huss," we imagine we can hear the people cry, while the vision of the train moves slowly along the road, with the spectral form of Gaspard

Sturm riding at the head, clad in his herald's robe of office, and carrying the Imperial eagle in his hand.

"Though they should kindle a fire all the way from Wittenberg to Worms, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord," the fancy hears the courageous monk reply, as it conjures up his image standing up in the vehicle, with his hands raised high above his head.

On moves the dreamy cavalcade; and as the imagination follows the reverend little band through the several towns and villages by the way, it sees visions of peasants and citizens suddenly streaming forth and crowding about the car of the brave monk, as if he had been some great general returning from victory, rather than "a presumptuous heretic" on his way, probably, to the stake.

Now they are at Naumburg, in the valley of the Saale, and as the image of the Reformers' car glides before the eyes, the phantom figure of a stern and zealous priest seems to start from out the crowd, holding in his hand a picture of Savonarola the Italian martyr, who was burnt at Florence by order of Pope Alexander VI., and this he thrusts before Friar Martin's eyes in portentous silence.

Then the words of Luther seem to float upon the breeze, —"Satan would prevent by such terrors the confession of the truth in the assembly of princes;" and immediately afterwards the exhortation of the priest murmurs solemnly in the brain,—"Stand firm in the truth thou hast proclaimed, and God will as firmly stand by thee."

The next minute the scene changes to the entry into Weimar.

"Look there!" we fancy we can hear the herald cry; and instantly, as the car floats through the air-drawn picture of the town, there starts up a vision of Imperial messengers,

posting at the corners of the streets the Emperor's edict commanding the works of Martin Luther to be seized.

"Well, Doctor, will you proceed?" is suddenly whispered in our ear, as if the herald himself were at our elbow, and had spoken the words; and no sooner has the memory died away than Luther's valiant answer echoes through the memory: "Aye! though interdicted in every city I would go on."

Again the vision melts, and the instant afterwards the mind pictures the humble Gospel group advancing slowly towards the town of Erfurth; and then, in the distance, we see a dim cloud of horsemen moving towards the car. On the troop sweep, like a wraith of morning mist before the wind, and presently we seem to recognise among the imaginary throng the features of Crotus, the Rector of the Erfurth University, and Eobanus Hesse, the friend of Melancthon, and "prince of poets" (as Luther used to call him), and Euricius Cordus, and John Draco, together with a number of senators, and burghers, and members of the College—all come forth to do honour to the man who had dared to declare war against the Pope. At the head of the troop is seen a form that we know instinctively to be that of the young enthusiast Justus Jonas,—he who when a law-student had crossed forests infested with robbers, and cities devastated by the plague, to visit Erasmus at Brussels, and who, now that he has turned theologian, has come forth to beg that he may share with his beloved Luther the dangers of the journey to Worms.

Then, as the car appears to draw nearer the town, fresh crowds of horsemen and pedestrians seem to start into sight at every turn, so that by the time the city gates are reached the highways are seen to be packed with one black mass of spectators, as if it were some great potentate entering the

place, rather than the poor monk who had formerly begged his bread in its streets.

Suddenly the picture dissolves into a sadder scene; for the mind wanders to the sick chamber of Friar Martin at Eisenach, and, as if gazing into some magic mirror, it immediately beholds the wan figure of the Augustine monk stretched on his couch, with his dear companions Amsdorff, Jonas, Schurff, and Suaven, grouped in affectionate anxiety about his pillow, and the kind-hearted John Oswald, the mayor of the town, coming towards them with a cup of cordial to revive their wearied friend.

Evanescent as thought itself, the image fades—like mist in the sunshine—with the least shift of the mind; and then another phase in the journey to Worms appears painted like a mirage in the air. The little caravan has halted for a while, almost within sight of the place of their destination; between the trees the four misty spires of the cathedral of Worms are seen dimly looming in the distance; the sward on either side the roadway is dappled like a fawn's back with the sun-spots falling between the openings of the forest canopy; the horse wanders with the empty car, nibbling the fresh grass as it strays among the stems; the devoted Jerome, Peter, Justus, and Amsdorff, have sought the seclusion of the neighbouring coppice to offer up a prayer, and there, dusked by the shadow of the leafy covert, their bared heads and kneeling forms can just be seen; while, stretched on the velvet turf, beneath a broad-spreading elm, lies the form of Friar Martin himself, spent with fatigue from long travelling as well as anxiety for the doom awaiting him, and seeking by a brief slumber to brace up all his powers for the coming fight.

As drowning men are said to see in their death-struggles

the various scenes of their early lives flash one after another through their brain, so the mind fancies that Martin Luther, believing himself to be on his way to the stake, must, in his short rest under the tree that now bears his name at Pfiffligheim, have lived over again the several events of his childhood.

Now he dreams that he is the poor woodcutter's child, once more following his mother through the Mansfeldt forests, and gathering up his little fagot as she binds the broken boughs together.

Then he is with his father, tending the rude smelting furnaces recently set up in the mines, and watching, while all around is crimson with the fires and grimy with the smoke, the dazzling stream of liquid glowing metal shoot from the loosened tap of clay—white as though it were a rope of snow.

Next he is the poor scholar at the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. It is the festival of Christ's nativity, and he, in company with children poorer than himself, is wandering from house to house through the neighbouring villages, singing "in four parts" the usual carols on the infant Jesus, born at Bethlehem, in the hopes of obtaining a little food to satisfy his wants.

A moment afterwards he is at Eisenbach, and again chanting with his schoolfellows from door to door, to obtain a morsel of bread. Suddenly a woman appears on the threshold of one of the houses: it is Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, and daughter of the burgomaster of Ilefeld. She has been touched by the sweetness of Martin's voice, and recognises his figure as one she has often noted among the assemblies of the faithful. She has just seen him, too, driven with frowns and harsh words from the doors of her neighbours, and now that she beholds him standing so sadly before her own

shê beckons him to enter, and gives him food to appease his hunger, and the next day takes him to live altogether under her roof.

In another minute the dreamer is at the College at Erfurth, studying for the law. He is in the University library, opening the books one after another to learn their writers' names. One volume in particular attracts his attention: the thick coating of dust upon the edge of it tells that it has never been opened for many years. He reads the title; it is a Bible —a forbidden book in those times. His heart beats as he turns over the leaves of the inspired volume. The first page which rivets his attention is the story of Hannah and the young Samuel, and his soul can hardly contain its joy as he reads that "God raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes."

Again the scene shifts, and Martin is returning from a visit to his father's house at Mansfeldt, in order to resume his studies at the College of Erfurth. Within a short distance of the town he is overtaken by a violent thunderstorm. The heavens seem to tremble and split with the peals—the sky is in a blaze with the broad sheets of flame—the earth at his feet is blue with the lightning, and the bolt falls in a burning ball close beside him. The boy fancies his hour has come: he casts himself on his knees, and makes a vow, that if the Lord deliver him from his danger he will abandon the world for ever, and devote himself entirely to God.*

Still another memory rises to the mind of the slumbering

* It is wonderful to note how much there is of "fortuitous circumstance" in the early events of Luther's life. Had Ursula not been charmed by the sweetness of young Martin's voice, and so have been induced to take pity on him, and grant him the shelter of her roof, the poor scholar must have returned to Mansfeldt, and have been brought up, most probably, to his father's trade. Again, had Martin not taken the Bible down "by chance" among the other books that

monk. A few of his brother-students are with him at supper in the University. They sing together once more, as he shares with them the joys of the world for the last time. At last he tells them that he is about to give himself up to God for ever; nor will he listen to their remonstrances against the vow which he has made; and immediately they have left him, he takes with him his Virgil and Plautus, and retires alone, in the darkness of night, to the monastery of the hermits of St. Augustine. The gate opens, and quickly shuts again upon parents, companions, and the world without.

And now the dreamer suddenly starts to his feet, roused by the tramp of approaching horsemen. A messenger from Spalatin, the chaplain of the friendly Elector of Saxony, is at the head of the troop. We fancy we can hear him whisper as he advances to Luther, "Spalatin entreats you not to enter Worms," and instantly the sublime reply is heard again: "Go tell your master, that even if there were as many devils in Worms as tiles on the house-tops still would I enter it."

At length the procession, that we have followed in fancy from town to town on its way from Wittenberg to the Diet, passes through the streets of the very city in which we ourselves are standing. It needs then but little fancy to realise the history of the eventful 16th of April, 1521.

All are expecting Luther. The news of his coming has outstripped the travellers themselves. Young nobles, knights and gentlemen, in the train of princes, to the number of a hundred, unable to restrain their impatience, ride out to meet him and surround him as an escort as he enters the barbican. A

he was idly glancing at in the library at Erfurth, he might never have seen or been touched by the sacred volume. And further, had it not been for the "accident" of the thunder-storm occurring on Martin's return from his father's to Erfurth, he might never have made the vow to enter the Augustine monastery. And, if neither of these accidental events had happened, how different a story might history have had to tell!

dense crowd waits for him at the city gates. Before the car is seen the Imperial herald riding in full costume; then comes Luther, with his friends Schurff, Suaven, and Amsdorff, seated beside him, under the awning of the humble vehicle, and Jonas follows on horseback, whilst the cavaliers throng on either side of the car. It is mid-day as they pass the gates, and though every one is at table, the watchman on the tower of the Domkirche no sooner sounds his horn than all rush forth into the streets with the cry of "Luther is come!"

Two thousand persons bear him company through the narrow thoroughfares, and every moment the crowd increases. Suddenly a court fool, dressed in a suit of deep black, and bearing a large funeral cross, forces his way through the multitude, and advances towards Luther, singing a satirical requiem for the repose of his soul. The shouts of the throng, however, soon drown the ominous "De Profundis" of the jester.

And now comes the last and grandest scene of all; a scene that, for human dignity, is without a parallel in civilised history. The hereditary Marshal of the Empire summons the monk of Wittenberg to the Diet. The herald, Gaspard Sturm, walks first; after him comes Ulrich of Pappenheim, the Marshal, and the Reformer follows. The crowd that fills the streets is greater than ever. The tops of the houses and the pavements of the streets, above and below, are all covered with peasants and citizens. It is almost impossible to advance, and the herald orders Luther to be led through the gardens and passages of private residences, so as to avoid the pressure of the multitude which heaves to and fro like a sea in a storm.

"Make way! make way!" the herald cries; but no one moves, and though the Imperial soldiers clear a passage by main force, the people rush forward directly afterwards to enter the Hall with the monk, and are kept back only by the halberds of the troops.

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In the interior of the hall, every corner is as crowded as without. In the ante-chambers and recesses of the windows, more than 5000 spectators — Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and others, are closely pressed together. As Luther advances with difficulty to the door of the council-chamber, an old general (George of Freundsberg) taps him on the shoulder and says kindly, as he shakes his head—a head blanched in many battles: "Poor monk! thou art going to make a nobler stand to-day than I or any other captain ever made in the bloodiest of our fights."

At length the doors of the hall are forced back, and Luther stands in the presence of the most august and memorable assembly recorded in history. The guards make way for him, and he advances to the throne of the Emperor. All eyes are fixed on him. The sight of so illustrious a conclave appears for an instant to dazzle and intimidate the son of the lowly miner of Mansfeldt. His evident emotion touches some of the princes present, and one of them whispers in his ear: "When ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, the Spirit of your Father shall speak in you."

A deep silence follows, broken at last by John ab Eck, the Chancellor of the Archbishop of Trèves, who rises and says in a loud voice: "Martin Luther, you are required to answer two questions. First, do you acknowledge these books to have been written by you? and secondly, are you prepared to retract such books and their opinions; or do you persist in the opinions you have advanced in them?"

Having been allowed time to consider his reply, the monk at length concludes his defence by saying, in a tone of mildness and moderation, though marked with Christian firmness: "As soon as I am convinced by the writings of the Prophets and Apostles I will retract every error, and be the first to lay hold of my books and throw them into the fire."

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The Chancellor of Trèves cries aloud: "You have not answered the question put to you: you are required to give a clear and precise answer. Will you or will you not retract?"

Luther responds without hesitation: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning, I cannot and I will not retract; for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience."

Then, looking round on the assembly which holds his life in its hands, he adds: "To this point I am fixed. I cannot say otherwise. May God help me. Amen."

The assembly is overpowered with the dignity of the simple monk arraigned before the mighty ones of the nations, but appearing in his quiet courage greater and mightier than any. Many of the princes find it difficult to conceal their admiration. The Spaniards and Italians alone attempt to ridicule a greatness of soul which they cannot comprehend.

"If you do not retract," says the Chancellor, "the Emperor and the States will consult what course to pursue against an incorrigible heretic."

The intrepid monk replies: "May God be my helper, for I can retract nothing."

Thus ends the memorable Diet at Worms: *the monk retracts nothing.* And thus begins the glorious Reformation.

And even though the city now contains not a stone nor a board that can boast of having been pressed by Martin Luther's foot, or trodden by any of the multitude of friends that thronged about the great Reformer, still the spot remains sacred to every friend of religious liberty—as the Runnymede of Protestantism.

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