



Singing for Bread.

Martin Luther.

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MARTIN LUTHER.

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Florence A. Crowell.

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ONCE upon a time, on the edge of a great forest of Prussian Saxony, was a poor little house where lived a poor man and his wife, who had almost nothing else in this world but a troop of young children.

All day long, summer and

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winter, one might find these children scattered about the wood—not going too far for fear they might get lost—and spending their time in bringing water from the brook, in getting dead wood to burn, in finding nuts and berries to eat, or hunting birds, rabbits, squirrels, and also birds' eggs. Bad children, you say, to hunt such things as these. But do not be too fast.

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These children were very poor; food was scarce, and a bunny or a squirrel and a handful of eggs to add to their small dinner or supper was very important to them.

Sometimes to the door of this cabin would come a tall, strong, sober-looking woman, and she would cry out, "Martin! Martin Luther!" and out of the shadow of the trees would run a square-built,

light-haired, gray-eyed boy, saying, "What do you want, mother?"

This boy was shoeless and hatless; his hands were rough, his face sunburned. He wore leather breeches and a shirt made of coarse, home-made flannel.

To look at him you would hardly think that he was to grow up and become so great and famous that people would

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call him “the man who shook the world.”

But, children, you know greatness does not consist in fine clothes, fine looks, fine houses and plenty of money, but dwells in the honest soul. This boy has for hundreds of years been called “honest Martin Luther.”

While Martin's parents were very poor they were tidy and honest. If they could not

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give their children good fortunes, they could and did form in them good habits.

The father worked in the mines, and the mother, toiling hard at home, often went out with her children to gather wood in the forest.

When Martin saw his mother working so hard and faring so poorly, he would think that when he was a man he would do some great thing and get

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money and give her fine things, like the rich people he sometimes saw.

Martin's parents were hard and sharp in their manners; they did not pet him and call him fond names, but they tried earnestly to make an honest man of him.

If ever Martin forgot himself so far as to tell a lie, or take what did not belong to him, or disobey his parents,

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he would be beaten severely. Of course at the time he would roar and cry and think this very hard, but it was no damage to him; it made him careful not to do wrong things; it fixed good principles in his mind; and he loved his stern parents none the less, for he saw that they were just as upright as they wanted him to be, and that they were daily working hard and giving up

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their own comfort for their children.

So in the rude little home on the borders of the forest, half dressed, half fed, with the snows of winter chilling his feet and the storms whistling about his hatless head, Martin Luther grew and thrived. He was strong and stout, and he gained in these hardships a vigorous constitution that lasted all his life—never gave way

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under hard work and much care, but kept him hearty and cheerful and active to the end of his days.

What we call trials are often great blessings.

Eisleben was the name of Luther's native town.

By being frugal and industrious, Luther's parents began to gain money to make themselves more comfortable. They then moved to the county of

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Mansfield, where his father became an ore-digger, and in after years bought two furnaces for melting the iron ore, and by the time that he died he had laid up a small sum of money. .

The money did not come when Luther was small; those were the days of poverty and hard work.

As the parents saw that Martin was a bright lad, they

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concluded to send him to school; they hoped he would become a wise man, and who could tell but he might be a judge?

Martin's first school was near home. The master was a cruel man, and it was a miserable place. What will you think if I tell you that he was whipped fifteen times in one day? Such things are not heard of now. And then

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Luther was not a bad little boy, only active and a little mischievous.

Luther was next sent to a school in the town of Mansfield. He slept and got his supper at home, but he and all the other schoolboys had to get their breakfast and dinner, if they had any, by begging it from the houses of rich people. Said Luther of this, in after years, "It is God's

way to make great men out of beggars, just as of old he made the world out of nothing.”

Luther's parents were in those early days Roman Catholics.

When they took Luther from the school at Mansfield they sent him to a school kept by some Franciscan monks. Here he studied, but still begged his bread, as indeed you might expect when I tell you

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the monks all made their living by begging.

If you are a very poor child reading this little book, do not be discouraged. God lifts up the poor of this world to be mighty if they put their trust in him.

If you are a rich child, pray never despise the poor. Remember that a little beggar-boy once became the monk who shook the world, and

what has been once may be again.

The world and the Church need a good shaking just now to wake them up to the work of the Lord, and where is the Luther strong in Jesus to do it? He may be some boy reading this book. God knows.

But Luther had been growing all the while he had been studying, and now his father said he must go to a higher

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school. His father meant to make a lawyer of him. He sent him now to a Latin school at Eisenach, a town which Luther always loved above all others.

Luther's father gave him some clothes, but no money. He slept in the school, but he had no food except what he could get by begging.

I will tell you his way of begging. He had a very clear,

sweet, strong voice, and he knew many German hymns. With other students who could sing, he would go up and down the streets and stop before the houses to sing, and the people would come out and give him food, or money to buy bread.

So often did they get nothing at all for singing that they were generally hungry; and so much was Luther without food

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that he felt weak and faint, and could not half study; and he nearly made up his mind to go home to Mansfield and work in the mines. But God had other work for Luther than mining, and he raised up a friend to help the boy.

One night in winter he went out to sing. He was very hungry, but no one opened a door to give him food. At last he stopped before a rich man's

house. The man's name was Cotta, and his wife sat alone by her fire. She had no children, and felt quite lonely. When she heard the singing, she opened the door and called Luther in, and gave him a good supper.

She talked with him some time and liked him. When her husband came home she told him of the noble-looking boy who sung so beautifully,

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who gave such pious and respectful replies to her questions, but who was so poor, and had in Eisenach no home and no friends.

Frau Cotta said she would like to have him come and live with them and be like a son.

At first her husband laughed at her, but as she went on to say how much more of the comforts of this life God had

given them than they needed, and how easily they could share with Luther, Herr Cotta said, "Take your way, woman, take your way, just as you always do!"

Then Herr Cotta laughed, and his wife laughed too.

Every day she looked for Luther. As soon as she heard singing she ran to the window. At last she saw him before another house; he was too

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much ashamed to come to her for help again.

Then Frau Cotta ran out and brought him in, and told him he should live with them and be her son; and she showed him a tidy little room, and had him sit down and eat at her table. So after that Luther had a home and friends and all the comforts that he needed.

Luther lived with the Cotta

family until he was eighteen years old. Then he left them to go to a higher school at Erfurt.

At Erfurt, Luther was not quite so poor, for he earned some money by teaching, Frau Cotta gave him some, and his father sent him a little. God, you see, supplied all his need. So will he supply all who trust in him.

Luther had meant, in obe-

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dience to his father, to devote himself to the law, but several events now turned his mind to the Church.

He had a dear young friend. This friend was suddenly taken away by death, and this awakened many sad thoughts in the mind of Luther.

Next, Martin Luther was very ill, and every one thought he would die. His friends and his teachers grieved much, for

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they felt he was going to be a great man, and they did not want to lose him.

As he lay on his sick bed, a voice kept sounding in his heart, "Prepare to meet thy God!"

"How can I prepare while I am living for this world? If I get well I will be a preacher and not a lawyer," said Luther to himself.

However, when he got well



Luther before the Emperor.

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his young friends said, "Be a lawyer! Never be a monk. Be a lawyer, and you will be a great man." So also said his father, and Luther lived on as he had lived before his illness.

People often when they are sick make resolutions and promises which they forget as soon as they are better. Luther did not forget, but he did not keep his promises.

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God did not let Luther alone; he was calling him to a great work, and he called and called again.

The next event that turned Luther to the thought of being a priest instead of a lawyer was a great storm. He was going one day from Erfurt to another town some little distance away.

He was walking, and a great thunder-storm came up.

The sky was black, the wind bowed the trees, the loud thunder pealed beyond the hills, the red lightning flashed along the clouds, and Luther was terribly afraid. He felt that the world, its riches and its fame were nothing in comparison to being prepared to die.

A sharp peal of thunder came and a bolt of lightning shot into the ground just be-

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fore him. Luther thought he would surely be struck dead by the storm. He fell on his knees; he prayed God to spare his life, and vowed that he would leave his study of law and become a monk.

He did not forget his vow this time, but he at once went to Erfurt and entered an Augustinian monastery.

Now you may think that it was a poor exchange from

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being a good lawyer to become a bad priest. But you must remember that while Luther had studied the law his mind had been fully set on this world. Now that he was a monk he spent all his time studying religion and trying to find how to be at peace with God.

When one begins such studies as this he is led to the truth; his way is made clear.

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So God made Luther's way clear.

At first Luther thought he could pay God for past sins, and buy safety by good deeds which he would do, and by sufferings and shames which he would inflict upon himself.

He fasted; he went barefooted; he begged his food; he became a servant, porter, sweeper and wood-carrier for the other monks. He also

repeated hundreds of prayers. The other monks were astonished. They said that brother Martin Luther was far more righteous than all of them—that he was indeed a perfect saint.

But Luther was not a saint; he was a poor miserable sinner, and he knew it; and, burdened by his sin, he sought every day by some new toil and some new infliction upon

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his body to make his peace with God.

Peace with God, dear children, is only made by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, slain for the putting away of our sins and making clean our hearts. As long as Luther trusted to anything else but this dear blood he labored in vain.

One day, in the Erfurt library, Luther found a precious

book—that book was the Bible. He began to read the Bible; he studied it day by day. By degrees he left some of his labors and penances, and studied more and more, finding a new comfort, a promise of help to his soul.

A good man named Lyra had written some commentaries or explanations of Scripture, and thus helped Luther to understand.

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God also sent Luther a pious friend, and monk named Staupitz—a good man who had learned more than other monks. Staupitz taught Luther much about prayer and faith and the merit of Jesus; and showed him, as well as he knew how, that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save sinners—to save us from our sins—and, as the hymn says,

“Come and welcome, sinner, come.”

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And again,

“If you tarry till you’re better,
You will never come at all.”

Luther wrote, in after years,
“God ordered that I should go
into a monastery that, being
taught by experience, I should
take up my pen against the
pope.”

Luther, looking back, could
see how God had led him all
his life.

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As Luther was thought such a great man among the monks, they sent him to the city of Rome to see the pope and to try to get new privileges for the monks at Erfurt.

Luther thought the pope the holiest man on the earth, and Rome the very gate of heaven. He expected when he got there to find only piety and peace, prayer and singing. He felt much surprised and

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more grieved to find Rome a very wicked city—the worst he had ever seen—the priests noisy, drunken and quarrelsome, and the pope a bad man, whom people feared but did not honor.

“If the fountain-head is so foul,” said Luther, “no wonder the streams are bad and bitter. I thought Rome was the gate of heaven—it is more like the gate of hell.”

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There was at Rome a staircase called the *Scala Santa*. It was out of doors, opposite the Church of St. John. This stairway is there yet. The monks tell a very foolish story about it, saying that it was the staircase to Pilate's hall, and that Jesus went up it when he was to be tried before Pilate, and that it was taken from Jerusalem to Rome. They also say that

whoever will go up these stairs on his knees will earn forgiveness for a great many of his sins.

Luther thought that whatever the monks said must be true. He would not tell a lie himself, and he thought no other monk would. He concluded that here was a fine way to get forgiveness for some of the sins that were troubling him, and he began

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to climb up the stairs, saying prayers all the way.

When he was about half way up, he heard a voice in his heart saying, "The just shall live by his faith." This text came to him so plainly that it seemed like a loud voice crying out of heaven.

"Folly! folly!" cried Luther to himself; "it is by faith in Christ comes peace and forgiveness, not by climbing

stairs on one's knees!" and up jumped Luther and went down the stairs much faster than he had come up.

Luther went down Pilate's staircase and out of Rome a new man. He had learned a great truth; he had got wisdom from above. The life that he now led he lived by faith in the Son of God. And this is the life every little child should live.

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Now that God had opened Luther's eyes, he saw the sins and the follies of the Church of Rome. He left his convent, for he now knew that God did not call men to shut themselves up from the world, but to go out in it and do good to others.

Luther went about preaching. Like Huss, he taught the Bible truth and called men to repent; and, as it was

in the days of old, “the common people heard him gladly”—and, indeed, many of the wise and rich and great received the new doctrines and began to live by faith.

But the pope and followers of Rome did not allow him to live and preach in peace. He was cast out of the Church and his books were burnt by them. He was called to speak for himself at a great meeting

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of kings and nobles and bishops, at the town of Worms. His friends begged him not to go, as his life would be in danger. But he answered, "I would go though there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses." And go he did.

One could fill a whole book telling of Luther's great work—his preaching, his writing his travels, and the way in

which the priests tried to kill him as they had killed John Huss.

At one time, when a Romish council had fully determined to take his life, he was strangely saved in this manner: His prince and friend, named Frederic the Wise, had a castle called Wartburg in the forest of Thuringia. Frederic sent some soldiers, who rushed upon Luther while he was making a

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journey, and carried him off with them.

Everybody thought that robbers had seized Luther, and Luther thought so too. However, he soon found that his friend the prince had just carried him off to keep him in safety.

Luther was kept in the castle for ten months. He had a happy life there; he wrote books and tracts, and saw qui-

etly his best friends. He also went out sometimes to hunt in the forest. The people about knew that somebody was living in the castle, and they called this unknown stranger "Knight George."

The prince wanted Luther to stay at the Wartburg much longer than ten months. He said Luther was in danger of losing his life; but Luther said he must be willing to risk

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his life in the cause of Christ, and that there was work for him to do, preaching.

Thus, as I told you, after ten months he went back to preaching through Germany. His friends were very joyful at his return, and the priests very sorry to find that he had not been robbed and killed, but that instead he had been having a happy time at the Wartburg.

One day a soldier met Luther, and tapping him on the shoulder, said, “Monk, monk, thou art in more danger than ever I was in battle. They look to take thy life, but, if thou art right, fear not—God will sustain thee.”

Don't you think Luther must have given that good soldier's hand a hearty shake? I do.

I told you in the very first of this story that Luther was

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called "the monk that shook the world." His work was in the Church as a Reformer, and so did he stir the hearts of men, attack evil and draw men toward truth that all the world felt the work. While he lived, he was the terror of the Romish Church and the delight of all true servants of God. Even since he has been dead he is Rome's chief enemy, and to him we owe it that

the Germans are called a Protestant and not a Roman Catholic people.

The Church has never had a Reformer who did so great a work as Luther. He leads the noble host.

The name of Luther is the pride of all German Protestants. They love to recall his bluff, honest ways, his jolly laugh, his strong voice, often raised in singing hymns, and

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oftener still in preaching to crowds of German people; they love to remember his hearty good health and strong frame, his fearless heart and his plain-speaking tongue, and call him the best type of a true German man.

Luther had a wife, whom he called Katy, and he had some little children. Luther loved all children, and was fond of teaching them; and he was a

very kind father to the boys and girls God gave him for his own. People said Luther was “a lion abroad and a lamb at home.” He had a strong nature, which sometimes was loud and fierce and rough, but under it all, as says a quaint old writer, “the best, the honestest and the most generous heart ever man had.”

A letter from Luther to his little son Johnny is very pret-

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ty; it is all about heaven. He wanted Johnny to love to think of God and of heaven, and to be a good boy and learn his lessons well; and he wrote him this letter to help him do this.

Your mother can find it in any large "Life of Luther," and read it to you.

Said Luther, when he began to grow old, "God, it seems, made me to fight hard with

the devil for the Church, but now, after the fight, I am weary and I want to go home." By home he meant heaven.

Luther went to his native town of Eisleben. He had with him his three sons, and went to settle a quarrel. Like John Bunyan, his last work was peacemaking.

At Eisleben he preached and saw his friends, but was suddenly taken worse, and

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after one day's illness he died as calmly as a child goes to sleep, saying,

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, thou faithful God.”

A great writer says of this mighty Reformer—this Luther, once a miner's barefooted son —“I call this Luther a truly great man—one of our most lovable and precious men, a

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right spiritual hero, a true son of nature, for whom these centuries and many more may yet be thankful.”