

It does not seem to be the will of Providence that the plots of unprincipled men, even against men as bad as themselves, should be more than transiently prosperous. Maximilian, thus again utterly thwarted in one of his most magnificent plans, covered with disgrace, and irritated almost beyond endurance, after attempting in vain to negotiate a truce with the Venetians, was compelled to retreat across the Alps, inveighing bitterly against the perfidious refusal to fulfill a perfidious agreement.

The holy father, Julius II., outwitted all his accomplices. He secured from Venice very valuable accessions of territory, and then, recalling his ecclesiastical denunciations, united with Venice to drive the *barbarians*, as he affectionately called his French and German allies, out of Italy. Maximilian returned to Austria as in a funeral march, ventured to summon another diet, told them how shamefully he had been treated by France, Venice and the pope, and again implored them to do something to help him. Perseverance is surely the most efficient of virtues. Incredible as it may seem, the emperor now obtained some little success. The diet, indignant at the conduct of the pope, and alarmed at so formidable a union as that between the papal States and Venice, voted a succor of six thousand infantry and eighteen hundred horse. This encouraged the emperor, and forgetting his quarrel with Louis XII. of France, in the stronger passion of personal aggrandizement which influenced him, he entered into another alliance with Louis against the pope and Venice, and then made a still stronger and a religious appeal to Germany for aid. A certain class of politicians in all countries and in all ages, have occasionally expressed great solicitude for the reputation of religion.

"The power and government of the pope," the emperor proclaimed, "which ought to be an example to the faithful present, on the contrary, nothing but trouble and disorder. The enormous sums daily extorted from Germany, are perverted to the purposes of luxury or worldly views, instead of

being employed for the service of God, or against the infidels. As Emperor of Germany, as advocate and protector of the Christian Church, it is my duty to examine into such irregularities, and exert all my efforts for the glory of God and the advantage of the empire; and as there is an evident necessity to reëstablish due order and decency, both in the ecclesiastical and temporal state, I have resolved to call a general council, without which nothing permanent can be effected."

It is said that Maximilian was now so confident of success, that he had decided to divide Italy between himself and France. He was to take Venice and the States of the Church, and France was to have the rest. Pope Julius was to be deposed, and to be succeeded by Pope Maximilian. The following letter from Maximilian to his daughter, reveals his ambitious views at the time. It is dated the 18th of September, 1511.

"To-morrow I shall send the Bishop of Guzk to the pope at Rome, to conclude an agreement with him that I may be appointed his coadjutor, and on his death succeed to the papacy, and become a priest, and afterwards a saint, that you may be bound to worship me, of which I shall be very proud. I have written on this subject to the King of Arragon, intreating him to favor my undertaking, and he has promised me his assistance, provided I resign my imperial crown to my grandson Charles, which I am very ready to do. The people and nobles of Rome have offered to support me against the French and Spanish party. They can muster twenty thousand combatants, and have sent me word that they are inclined to favor my scheme of being pope, and will not consent to have either a Frenchman, a Spaniard or a Venetian.

"I have already begun to sound the cardinals, and, for that purpose, two or three hundred thousand ducats would be of great service to me, as their partiality to me is very great. The King of Arragon has ordered his ambassadors to assure me that he will command the Spanish cardinals to favor my

pretensions to the papacy. I intreat you to keep this matter secret for the present, though I am afraid it will soon be known, for it is impossible to carry on a business secretly for which it is necessary to gain over so many persons, and to have so much money. Adieu. Written with the hand of your dear father Maximilian, future pope. The pope's fever has increased, and he can not live long."

It is painful to follow out the windings of intrigue and the labyrinths of guile, where selfishness seemed to actuate every heart, and where all alike seem destitute of any principle of Christian integrity. Bad as the world is now, and selfish as political aspirants are now, humanity has made immense progress since that dark age of superstition, fraud and violence. After many victories and many defeats, after innumerable fluctuations of guile, Maximilian accepted a bribe, and withdrew his forces, and the King of France was summoned home by the invasion of his own territories by the King of Arragon and Henry VIII. of England, who, for a suitable consideration, had been induced to join Venice and the pope. At the end of this long campaign of diplomacy, perfidy and blood, in which misery had rioted through ten thousand cottages, whose inhabitants the warriors regarded no more than the occupants of the ant-hills they trampled beneath their feet, it was found that no one had gained any thing but toil and disappointment.

On the 21st of February, 1513, Pope Julius II. died, and the cardinals, rejecting all the overtures of the emperor, elected John of Medici pope, who assumed the name of Leo X. The new pontiff was but thirty-six years of age, a man of brilliant talents, and devoted to the pursuit of letters. Inspired by boundless ambition, he wished to signalize his reign by the magnificence of his court and the grandeur of his achievements.

Thus far nothing but disaster seemed to attend the enterprises of Maximilian; but now the tide suddenly turned and

rolled in upon him billows of prosperity. It will be remembered that Maximilian married, for his first wife, Mary, the daughter of the Duke of Burgundy. Their son Philip married Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, whose marriage, uniting the kingdoms of Castile and Arragon, created the splendid kingdom of Spain. Philip died young, leaving a son, Charles, and Joanna, an insane wife, to watch his grave through weary years of woe. Upon the death of Ferdinand, in January, 1516, Charles, the grandson of Maximilian, became undisputed heir to the whole monarchy of Spain; then, perhaps, the grandest power in Europe, including Naples, Sicily and Navarre. This magnificent inheritance, coming so directly into the family, and into the line of succession, invested Maximilian and the house of Austria with new dignity.

It was now an object of intense solicitude with Maximilian, to secure the reversion of the crowns of Hungary and Bohemia, which were both upon the brow of Ladislaus, to his own family. With this object in view, and to render assurance doubly sure, he succeeded in negotiating a marriage between two children of Ladislaus, a son and a daughter, and two of his own grand-children. This was a far pleasanter mode of acquiring territory and family aggrandizement than by the sword. In celebration of the betrothals, Ladislaus and his brother Sigismond, King of Poland, visited Vienna, where Ladislaus was so delighted with the magnificent hospitality of his reception, that he even urged upon the emperor, who was then a widower, fifty-eight years of age, that he should marry another of his daughters, though she had but attained her thirteenth year. The emperor declined the honor, jocularly remarking—

"There is no method more pleasant to kill an old man, than to marry him to a young bride."

The German empire was then divided into ten districts, or circles, as they were then called, each of which was responsible for the maintenance of peace among its own members

These districts were, Austria, Burgundy, the Upper Rhine, the Lower Rhine, Franconia, Bavaria, Suabia, Westphalia, Upper Saxony and Lower Saxony. The affairs of each district were to be regulated by a court of a few nobles, called a diet. The emperor devoted especial attention to the improvement of his own estate of Austria, which he subdivided into two districts, and these into still smaller districts. Over all, for the settlement of all important points of dispute, he established a tribunal called the Aulic Council, which subsequently exerted a powerful influence over the affairs of Austria.

One more final effort Maximilian made to rouse Germany to combine to drive the Turks out of Europe. Though the benighted masses looked up with much reverence to the pontiff, the princes and the nobles regarded him only as a *power*, wielding, in addition to the military arm, the potent energies of superstition. A diet was convened. The pope's legate appeared, and sustained the eloquent appeal of the emperor with the paternal commands of the holy father. But the press was now becoming a power in Europe, diffusing intelligence and giving freedom to thought and expression. The diet, after listening patiently to the arguments of the emperor and the requests of the pontiff, dryly replied—

“We think that Christianity has more to fear from the pope than from the Turks. Much as we may dread the ravages of the infidel, they can hardly drain Christendom more effectually than it is now drained by the exactions of the Church.”

It was at Augsburg in July, 1518, that the diet ventured thus boldly to speak. This was one year after Luther had nailed upon the church door in Wittemberg, his ninety-five propositions, which had roused all Germany to scrutinize the abominable corruptions of the papal church. This bold language of the diet, influenced by the still bolder language of the intrepid monk, alarmed Leo X., and on the 7th of August he issued his summons commanding Luther to repair to Rome

to answer for heresy. Maximilian, who had been foiled in his own attempt to attain the chair of St. Peter, who had seen so much of the infamous career of Julius and Alexander, as to lose all his reverence for the sacred character of the popes, and who regarded Leo X. merely as a successful rival who had thwarted his own plans, espoused, with cautious development, but with true interest, the cause of the reformer. And now came the great war of the Reformation, agitating Germany in every quarter, and rousing the lethargic intellect of the nations as nothing else could rouse it. Maximilian, with characteristic fickleness, or rather, with characteristic pliancy before every breeze of self-interest, was now on the one side, now on the other, and now, nobody knew where, until his career was terminated by sudden and fatal sickness.

The emperor was at Innspruck, all overwhelmed with his cares and his plans of ambition, when he was seized with a slight fever. Hoping to be benefited by a change of air, he set out to travel by slow stages to one of his castles among the mountains of Upper Austria. The disease, however, rapidly increased, and it was soon evident that death was approaching. The peculiarities of his character were never more strikingly developed than in these last solemn hours. Being told by his physicians that he had not long to live and that he must now prepare for the final judgment, he calmly replied, “I have long ago made that preparation. Had I not done so, it would be too late now.”

For four years he had been conscious of declining health, and had always carried with him, wherever he traveled, an oaken coffin, with his shroud and other requisites for his funeral. With very minute directions he settled all his worldly affairs, and gave the most particular instructions respecting his funeral. Changing his linen, he strictly enjoined that his shirt should not be removed after his death, for his fastidious modesty was shocked by the idea of the exposure of his body, even after the soul had taken its flight.

He ordered his hair, after his death, to be cut off, all his teeth to be extracted, pounded to powder and publicly burned in the chapel of his palace. For one day his remains were to be exposed to the public, as a lesson of mortality. They were then to be placed in a sack filled with quicklime. The sack was to be enveloped in folds of silk and satin, and then placed in the oaken coffin which had been so long awaiting his remains. The coffin was then to be deposited under the altar of the chapel of his palace at Neustadt, in such a position that the officiating priest should ever trample over his head and heart. The king expressed the hope that this humiliation of his body would, in some degree, be accepted by the Deity in atonement for the sins of his soul. How universal the instinct that sin needs an atonement!

Having finished these directions the emperor observed that some of his attendants were in tears. "Do you weep," said he, "because you see a mortal die? Such tears become women rather than men." The emperor was now dying. As the ecclesiastics repeated the prayers of the Church, the emperor gave the responses until his voice failed, and then continued to give tokens of recognition and of faith, by making the sign of the cross. At three o'clock in the morning of the 11th of January, 1519, the Emperor Maximilian breathed his last. He was then in the sixtieth year of his age.

Maximilian is justly considered one of the most renowned of the descendants of Rhodolph of Hapsburg. It is saying but little for his moral integrity, to affirm that he was one of the best of the rulers of his age. According to his ideas of religion, he was a religious man. According to his ideas of honesty and of honor, he was both an honest and an honorable man. According to his idea of what is called *moral conduct*, he was irreproachable, being addicted to no *ungenteel* vices, or any sins which would be condemned by his associates. His ambition was not to secure for himself ease or luxury, but to extend his imperial power, and to aggrandize his family.

For these objects he passed his life, ever tossed upon the billows of toil and trouble. In industry and perseverance, he has rarely been surpassed.

Notwithstanding the innumerable interruptions and cares attendant upon his station, he still found time, one can hardly imagine when, to become a proficient in all the learning of the day. He wrote and spoke four languages readily, Latin, French, German and Italian. Few men have possessed more persuasive powers of eloquence. All the arts and sciences he warmly patronized, and men of letters of every class found in him a protector. But history must truthfully declare that there was no perfidy of which he would not be guilty, and no meanness to which he would not stoop, if he could only extend his hereditary domains and add to his family renown.