

# **JOHN HUSS AND THE HUSSITE WARS**

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## Chapter 1

# **Birth, Education, and First Labours of Huss**

IN spring-time does the husbandman begin to prepare for the harvest. He turns field after field with the plough, and when all have been got ready for the processes that are to follow, he returns on his steps, scattering as he goes the precious seed on the open furrows. His next care is to see to the needful operations of weeding and cleaning. All the while the sun this hour, and the shower the next, are promoting the germination and growth of the plant. The husbandman returns a third time, and lo! over all his fields there now waves the yellow ripened grain. It is harvest.

So was it with the Heavenly Husbandman when He began His preparations for the harvest of Christendom. For while to the ages that came after it the Reformation was the spring-time, it yet, to the ages that went before it, stood related as the

harvest.

We have witnessed the great Husbandman ploughing one of His fields, England namely, as early as the fourteenth century. The war that broke out in that age with France, the political conflicts into which the nation was plunged with the Papacy, the rise of the universities with the mental fermentation that followed, broke up the ground. The soil turned, the Husbandman sent forth a skillful and laborious servant to cast into the furrows of the ploughed land the seed of the translated Bible. So far had the work advanced. At this stage it stopped, or appeared to do so. Alas! we exclaim, that all this labor should be thrown away! But it is not so. The laborer is withdrawn, but the seed is not: it lies in the soil; and while it is silently germinating, and working its way hour by hour towards the harvest, the Husbandman goes elsewhere and proceeds to plough and sow another of His fields. Let us cast our eyes over wide Christendom. What do we see? Lo! yonder in the far-off East is the same preparatory process begun which we have already traced in England. Verily,

the Husbandman is wisely busy. In Bohemia the plough is at work, and already the sowers have come forth and have begun to scatter the seed.

In transferring ourselves to Bohemia we do not change our subject, although we change our country. It is the same great drama under another sky. Surely the winter is past, and the great spring time has come, when, in lands lying so widely apart, we see the flowers beginning to appear, and the fountains to gush forth.

We read in the Book of the Persecutions of the Bohemian Church: "In the year A.D. 1400, Jerome of Prague returned from England, bringing with him the writings of Wicliffe." "A Taborite chronicler of the fifteenth century, Nicholas von Pelhrimow, testifies that the books of the evangelical doctor, Master John Wicliffe, opened the eyes of the blessed Master John Huss, as several reliable men know from his own lips, whilst he read and re-read them together with his followers."

Such is the link that binds together Bohemia and England. Already Protestantism attests its true catholicity. Oceans do not stop its progress. The boundaries of States do not limit its triumphs. On every soil is it destined to flourish, and men of every tongue will it enroll among its disciples. The spiritually dead who are in their graves are beginning to hear the voice of Wicliffe – yea, rather of Christ speaking through Wicliffe – and to come forth.

The first drama of Protestantism was acted and over in Bohemia before it had begun in Germany. So prolific in tragic incident and heroic character was this second drama, that it is deserving of more attention than it has yet received. It did not last long, but during its career it shed a resplendent luster upon the little Bohemia. It transformed its people into a nation of heroes. It made their wisdom in council the admiration of Europe, and their prowess on the field the terror of all the neighboring States. It gave, moreover, a presage of the elevation to which human character should attain, and the splendor that would gather round

history, what time Protestantism should begin to display its regenerating influence on a wider area than that to which until now it had been restricted.

It is probable that Christianity first entered Bohemia in the wake of the armies of Charlemagne. But the Western missionaries, ignorant of the Slavonic tongue, could effect little beyond a nominal conversion of the Bohemian people. Accordingly we find the King of Moravia, a country whose religious condition was precisely similar to that of Bohemia, sending to the Greek emperor, about the year 863, and saying: "Our land is baptized, but we have no teachers to instruct us, and translate for us the Holy Scriptures. Send us teachers who may explain to us the Bible." Methodius and Cyrillus were sent; the Bible was translated, and Divine worship established in the Slavonic language.

The ritual in both Moravia and Bohemia was that of the Eastern Church, from which the missionaries had come. Methodius made the Gospel be preached in Bohemia. There followed a

great harvest of converts; families of the highest rank crowded to baptism, and churches and schools arose everywhere.

Though practicing the Eastern ritual, the Bohemian Church remained under the jurisdiction of Rome; for the great schism between the Eastern and the Western Churches had not yet been consummated. The Greek liturgy, as we may imagine, was displeasing to the Pope, and he began to plot its overthrow. Gradually the Latin rite was introduced, and the Greek rite in the same proportion displaced. At length, in 1079, Gregory VII.

(Hildebrand) issued a bull forbidding the Oriental ritual to be longer observed, or public worship celebrated in the tongue of the country. The reasons assigned by the Pontiff for the use of a tongue which the people did not understand, in their addresses to the Almighty, are such as would not, readily occur to ordinary men. He tells his "dear son," the King of Bohemia, that after long study of the Word of God, he had come to see that

it was pleasing to the Omnipotent that His worship should be celebrated in an unknown language, and that many evils and heresies had arisen from not observing this rule.

This missive closed in effect every church, and every Bible, and left the Bohemians, so far as any public instruction was concerned, in total night. The Christianity of the nation would have sunk under the blow, but for another occurrence of an opposite tendency which happened soon afterwards. It was now that the Waldenses and Albigenses, fleeing from the sword of persecution in Italy and France, arrived in Bohemia. Thaunus informs us that Peter Waldo himself was among the number of these evangelical exiles.

Reynerius, speaking of the middle of the thirteenth century, says: "There is hardly any country in which this sect is not to be found." If the letter of Gregory was like a hot wind to wither the Bohemian Church, the Waldensian refugees were a secret dew to revive it. They spread themselves in small colonies over all the Slavonic countries,



Poland included; they made their headquarters at Prague. They were zealous evangelizers, not daring to preach in public, but teaching in private houses, and keeping alive the truth during the two centuries which were yet to run before Huss should appear.

It was not easy enforcing the commands of the Pope in Bohemia, lying as it did remote from Rome. In many places worship continued to be celebrated in the tongue of the people, and the Sacrament to be dispensed in both kinds. The powerful nobles were in many cases the protectors of the Waldenses and native Christians; and for these benefits they received a tenfold recompense in the good order and prosperity which reigned on the lands that were occupied by professors of the evangelical doctrines. All through the fourteenth century, these Waldensian exiles continued to sow the seed of a pure Christianity in the soil of Bohemia.

All great changes prognosticate themselves. The revolutions that happen in the political sphere never fail to make their advent felt. Is it wonderful

that in every country of Christendom there were men who foretold the approach of a great moral and spiritual revolution? In Bohemia were three men who were the pioneers of Huss; and who, in terms more or less plain, foretold the advent of a greater champion than themselves. The first of these was John Milicius, or Miltz, Archdeacon and Canon of the Archiepiscopal Cathedral of the Hradschin, Prague. He was a man of rare learning, of holy life, and an eloquent preacher. When he appeared in the pulpit of the cathedral church, where he always used the tongue of the people, the vast edifice was thronged with a most attentive audience. He inveighed against the abuses of the clergy rather than against the false doctrines of the Church, and he exhorted the people to Communion in both kinds. He went to Rome, in the hope of finding there, in a course of fasting and tears, greater rest for his soul. But, alas! the scandals of Prague, against which he had thundered in the pulpit of Hradschin, were forgotten in the greater enormities of the Pontifical city. Shocked at what he saw in Rome, he wrote over the door of one of the cardinals, "Antichrist is now come, and sitteth

in the Church," and departed. The Pope, Gregory XI., sent after him a bull, addressed to the Archbishop of Prague, commanding him to seize and imprison the bold priest who had affronted the Pope in his own capital, and at the very threshold of the Vatican.

No sooner had Milicius returned home than the archbishop proceeded to execute the Papal mandate. But murmurs began to be heard among the citizens, and fearing a popular outbreak the archbishop opened the prison doors, and Milicius, after a short incarceration, was set at liberty. He survived his eightieth year, and died in peace, A.D. 1374.

His colleague, Conrad Stiekna – a man of similar character and great eloquence, and whose church in Prague was so crowded, he was obliged to go outside and preach in the open square – died before him. He was succeeded by Matthew Janovius, who not only thundered in the pulpit of the cathedral against the abuses of the Church, but traveled through Bohemia, preaching everywhere

against the iniquities of the times. This drew the eyes of Rome upon him. At the instigation of the Pope, persecution was commenced against the confessors in Bohemia. They durst not openly celebrate the Communion in both kinds, and those who desired to partake of the "cup," could enjoy the privilege only in private dwellings, or in the yet greater concealment of woods and caves. It fared hard with them when their places of retreat were discovered by the armed bands which were sent upon their track. Those who could not manage to escape were put to the sword, or thrown into rivers. At length the stake was decreed (1376) against all who dissented from the established rites. These persecutions were continued till the times of Huss. Janovius, who "taught that salvation was only to be found by faith in the crucified Savior," when dying (1394) consoled his friends with the assurance that better times were in store. "The rage of the enemies of the truth," said he, "now prevails against us, but it will not be for ever; there shall arise one from among the common people, without sword or authority, and against him they shall not be able to prevail."

Politically, too, the country of Bohemia was preparing for the great part it was about to act. Charles I., better known in Western Europe as Charles IV., Emperor of Germany, and author of the Golden Bull, had some time before ascended the throne. He was an enlightened and patriotic ruler. The friend of Petrarch and the protector of Janovius, he had caught so much of the spirit of the great poet and of the Bohemian pastor, as to desire a reform of the ecclesiastical estate, especially in the enormous wealth and overgrown power of the clergy. In this, however, he could effect nothing; on the contrary, Rome had the art to gain his concurrence in her persecuting measures. But he had greater success in his efforts for the political and material amelioration of his country. He repressed the turbulence of the nobles; he cleared the highways of the robbers who infested them; and now the husbandman being able to sow and reap in peace, and the merchant to pass from town to town in safety, the country began to enjoy great prosperity. Nor did the labors of the sovereign stop

here. He extended the municipal libraries of the towns, and in 1347 he founded a university in Prague, on the model of those of Bologna and Paris; filling its chairs with eminent scholars, and endowing it with ample funds. He specially patronized those authors who wrote in the Bohemian tongue, judging that there was no more effectual way of invigorating the national intellect, than by cultivating the national language and literature. Thus, while in other countries the Reformation helped to purify and ennoble the national language, by making it the vehicle of the sublimest truths, in Bohemia this process was reversed, and the development of the Bohemian tongue prepared the way for the entrance of Protestantism. Although the reign of Charles IV. was an era of peace, and his efforts were mainly directed towards the intellectual and material prosperity of Bohemia, he took care, nevertheless, that the martial spirit of his subjects should not decline; and thus when the tempest burst in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and the anathemas of Rome were seconded by the armies of Germany, the Bohemian people were not

unprepared for the tremendous struggle which they were called to wage for their political and religious liberties.

Before detailing that struggle, we must briefly sketch the career of the man who so powerfully contributed to create in the breasts of his countrymen that dauntless spirit which bore them up till victory crowned their arms. John Huss was born on the 6th of July, 1373, in the market town of Hussinetz, on the edge of the Bohemian forest near the source of the Moldau river, and the Bavarian boundary. He took his name from the place of his birth. His parents were poor, but respectable. His father died when he was young. His mother, when his education was finished at the provincial school, took him to Prague, to enter him at the university of that city. She carried a present to the rector, but happening to lose it by the way, and grieved by the misfortune, she knelt down beside her son, and implored upon him the blessing of the Almighty. The prayers of the mother were heard, though the answer came in a way that would have pierced her heart like a sword, had she lived to witness the

issue.

The university career of the young student, whose excellent talents sharpened and expanded day by day, was one of great brilliance. His face was pale and thin; his consuming passion was a desire for knowledge; blameless in life, sweet and affable in address, he won upon all who came in contact with him. He was made Bachelor of Arts in 1393, Bachelor of Theology in 1394, Master of Arts in 1396; Doctor of Theology he never was, any more than Melanchthon. Two years after becoming Master of Arts, he began to hold lectures in the university. Having finished his university course, he entered the Church, where he rose rapidly into distinction. By-and-by his fame reached the court of Wenceslaus, who had succeeded his father, Charles IV., on the throne of Bohemia. His queen, Sophia of Bavaria, selected Huss as her confessor.

He was at this time a firm believer in the Papacy. The philosophical writings of Wicliffe he already knew, and had ardently studied; but his



theological treatises he had not seen. He was filled with unlimited devotion for the grace and benefits of the Roman Church; for he tells us that he went at the time of the Prague Jubilee, 1393, to confession in the Church of St. Peter, gave the last four groschen that he possessed to the confessor, and took part in the processions in order to share also in the absolution – an efflux of superabundant devotion of which he afterwards repented, as he himself acknowledged from the pulpit.

The true career of John Huss dates from about A.D. 1402, when he was appointed preacher to the Chapel of Bethlehem. This temple had been founded in the year 1392 by a certain citizen of Prague, Mulhamio by name, who laid great stress upon the preaching of the Word of God in the mother-tongue of the people. On the death or the resignation of its first pastor, Stephen of Colonia, Huss was elected his successor. His sermons formed an epoch in Prague. The moral condition of that capital was then deplorable. According to Comenius, all classes wallowed in the most abominable vices. The king, the nobles, the

prelates, the clergy, the citizens, indulged without restraint in avarice, pride, drunkenness, lewdness, and every profligacy. In the midst of this sunken community stood up Huss, like an incarnate conscience. Now it was against the prelates, now against the nobles, and now against the ordinary clergy that he launched his bolts. These sermons seem to have benefited the preacher as well as the hearers, for it was in the course of their preparation and delivery that Huss became inwardly awakened. A great clamor arose. But the queen and the archbishop protected Huss, and he continued preaching with indefatigable zeal in his Chapel of Bethlehem, founding all he said on the Scriptures, and appealing so often to them, that it may be truly affirmed of him that he restored the Word of God to the knowledge of his countrymen.

The minister of Bethlehem Chapel was then bound to preach on all church days early and after dinner (in Advent and fast times only in the morning), to the common people in their own language. Obligated to study the Word of God, and left free from the performance of liturgical acts and

pastoral duties, Huss grew rapidly in the knowledge of Scripture, and became deeply imbued with its spirit. While around him was a daily-increasing devout community, he himself grew in the life of faith. By this time he had become acquainted with the theological works of Wicliffe, which he earnestly studied, and learned to admire the piety of their author, and to be not wholly opposed to the scheme of reform which he had promulgated. Already Huss had commenced a movement, the true character of which he did not perceive, and the issue of which he little foresaw. He placed the Bible above the authority of Pope or Council, and thus he had entered, without knowing it, the road of Protestantism. But as yet he had no wish to break with the Church of Rome, nor did he dissent from a single dogma of her creed, the one point of divergence to which we have just referred excepted; but he had taken a step which, if he did not retrace it, would lead him in due time far enough from her communion.

The echoes of a voice which had spoken in England, but was now silent there, had already

reached the distant country of Bohemia. We have narrated above the arrival of a young student in Prague, with copies of the works of the great English heresiarch. Other causes favored the introduction of Wicliffe's books. One of these was the marriage of Richard II. of England, with Anne, sister of the King of Bohemia, and the consequent intercourse between the two countries. On the death of that princess, the ladies of her court, on their return to their native land, brought with them the writings of the great Reformer, whose disciple their mistress had been. The university had made Prague a center of light, and the resort of men of intelligence. Thus, despite the corruption of the higher classes, the soil was not unprepared for the reception and growth of the opinions of the Rector of Lutterworth, which now found entrance within the walls of the Bohemian capital.

## Chapter 2

# Huss Begins his Warfare Against Rome

AN incident which is said to have occurred at this time (1404) contributed to enlarge the views of Huss, and to give strength to the movement he had originated in Bohemia. There came to Prague two theologians from England, James and Conrad of Canterbury. Graduates of Oxford, and disciples of the Gospel, they had crossed the sea to spread on the banks of the Moldau the knowledge they had learned on those of the Isis. Their plan was to hold public disputations, and selecting the Pope's primacy, they threw down the gage of battle to its maintainers. The country was hardly ripe for such a warfare, and the affair coming to the ears of the authorities, they promptly put a stop to the discussions. Arrested in their work, the two visitors did not fail to consider by what other way they could carry out their mission. They bethought them that they had studied art as well as theology, and

might now press the pencil into their service. Having obtained their host's leave, they proceeded to give a specimen of their skill in a drawing in the corridor of the house in which they resided. On the one wall they portrayed the humble entrance of Christ into Jerusalem, "meek, and riding upon an ass." On the other they displayed the more than royal magnificence of a Pontifical cavalcade. There was seen the Pope, adorned with triple crown, attired in robes bespangled with gold, and all lustrous with precious stones. He rode proudly on a richly caparisoned horse, with trumpeters proclaiming his approach, and a brilliant crowd of cardinals and bishops following in his rear. In an age when printing was unknown, and preaching nearly as much so, this was a sermon, and a truly eloquent and graphic one. Many came to gaze, and to mark the contrast presented between the lowly estate of the Church's Founder, and the overgrown haughtiness and pride of His pretended vicar. The city of Prague was moved, and the excitement became at last so great, that the English strangers deemed it prudent to withdraw. But the thoughts they had awakened remained to ferment in the

minds of the citizens.

Among those who came to gaze at this antithesis of Christ and Antichrist was John Huss; and the effect of it upon him was to lead him to study more carefully than ever the writings of Wicliffe. He was far from able at first to concur in the conclusions of the English Reformer. Like a strong light thrown suddenly upon a weak eye, the bold views of Wicliffe, and the sweeping measure of reform which he advocated, alarmed and shocked Huss. The Bohemian preacher had appealed to the Bible, but he had not bowed before it with the absolute and unreserved submission of the English pastor. To overturn the hierarchy, and replace it with the simple ministry of the Word; to sweep away all the teachings of tradition, and put in their room the doctrines of the New Testament, was a revolution for which, though marked alike by its simplicity and its sublimity, Huss was not prepared. It may be doubted whether, even when he came to stand at the stake, Huss's views had attained the breadth and clearness of those of Wicliffe.

Lying miracles helped to open the eyes of Huss still farther, and to aid his movement. In the church at Wilsnack, near the lower Elbe, there was a pretended relic of the blood of Christ. Many wonderful cures were reported to have been done by the holy blood. People flocked thither, not only out of the neighboring countries, but also from those at a greater distance – Poland, Hungary, and even Scandinavia. In Bohemia itself there were not wanting numerous pilgrims who went to Wilsnack to visit the wonderful relic. Many doubts were expressed about the efficacy of the blood. The Archbishop of Prague appointed a commission of three masters, among whom was Huss, to investigate the affair, and to inquire into the truth of the miracles said to have been wrought. The examination of the persons on whom the alleged miracles had been performed, proved that they were simply impostures. One boy was said to have had a sore foot cured by the blood of Wilsnack, but the foot on examination was found, instead of being cured, to be worse than before. Two blind women were said to have recovered their sight by



the virtue of the blood; but, on being questioned, they confessed that they had had sore eyes, but had never been blind; and so as regarded other alleged cures. As the result of the investigation, the archbishop issued a mandate in the summer of 1405, in which all preachers were enjoined, at least once a month, to publish to their congregations the episcopal prohibition of pilgrimages to the blood of Wilsnack, under pain of excommunication.

Huss was able soon after (1409) to render another service to his nation, which, by extending his fame and deepening his influence among the Bohemian people, paved the way for his great work. Crowds of foreign youth flocked to the University of Prague, and their numbers enabled them to monopolize its emoluments and honors, to the partial exclusion of the Bohemian students. By the original constitution of the university the Bohemians possessed three votes, and the other nations united only one. In process of time this was reversed; the Germans usurped three of the four votes, and the remaining one alone was left to the native youth. Huss protested against this abuse, and

had influence to obtain its correction. An edict was passed, giving three votes to the Bohemians, and only one to the Germans. No sooner was this decree published, than the German professors and students – to the number, say some, of 40,000; but according to Aeneas Sylvius, a contemporary, of 5,000 – left Prague, having previously bound themselves to this step by oath, under pain of having the two first fingers of their right hand cut off. Among these students were not a few on whom had shone, through Huss, the first rays of Divine knowledge, and who were instrumental in spreading the light over Germany. Elevated to the rectorship of the university, Huss was now, by his greater popularity and higher position, abler than ever to propagate his doctrines.

What was going on at Prague could not long remain unknown at Rome. On being informed of the proceedings in the Bohemian capital, the Pope, Alexander V., fulminated a bull, in which he commanded the Archbishop of Prague, Sbinco, with the help of the secular authorities, to proceed against all who preached in private chapels, and

who read the writings or taught the opinions of Wicliffe. There followed a great auto da fe, not of persons but of books. Upwards of 200 volumes, beautifully written, elegantly bound, and ornamented with precious stones – the works of John Wicliffe – were, by the order of Sbinko, piled upon the street of Prague, and, amid the tolling bells, publicly burned. Their beauty and costliness showed that their owners were men of high position; and their number, collected in one city alone, attests how widely circulated were the writings of the English Reformer on the continent of Europe.

This act but the more inflamed the zeal of Huss. In his sermons he now attacked indulgences as well as the abuses of the hierarchy. A second mandate arrived from Rome. The Pope summoned him to answer for his doctrine in person. To obey the summons would have been to walk into his grave. The king, the queen, the university, and many of the magnates of Bohemia sent a joint embassy requesting the Pope to dispense with Huss's appearance in person, and to hear him by his

legal counsel. The Pope refused to listen to this supplication. He went on with the case, condemned John Huss in absence, and laid the city of Prague under interdict.

The Bohemian capital was thrown into perplexity and alarm. On every side tokens met the eye to which the imagination imparted a fearful significance. Prague looked like a city stricken with sudden and terrible calamity. The closed church-doors – the extinguished altar-lights – the corpses waiting burial by the way-side – the images which sanctified and guarded the streets, covered with sackcloth, or laid prostrate on the ground, as if in supplication for a land on which the impieties of its children had brought down a terrible curse – gave emphatic and solemn warning that every hour the citizens harbored within their walls the man who had dared to disobey the Pope's summons, they but increased the heinousness of their guilt, and added to the vengeance of their doom. "Let us cast out the rebel," was the cry of many, "before we perish."

Tumult was beginning to disturb the peace, and slaughter to dye the streets of Prague. What was Huss to do? Should he flee before the storm, and leave a city where he had many friends and not a few disciples? What had his Master said? "The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." This seemed to forbid his departure. His mind was torn with doubts. But had not the same Master commanded, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another"? His presence could but entail calamity upon his friends; so, quitting Prague, he retired to his native village of Hussinetz.

Here Huss enjoyed the protection of the territorial lord, who was his friend. His first thoughts were of those he had left behind in Prague – the flock to whom he had so lovingly ministered in his Chapel of Bethlehem. "I have retired," he wrote to them, "not to deny the truth, for which I am willing to die, but because impious priests forbid the preaching of it." The sincerity of this avowal was attested by the labors he immediately undertook. Making Christ his pattern, he journeyed

all through the surrounding region, preaching in the towns and villages. He was followed by great crowds, who hung upon his words, admiring his meekness not less than his courage and eloquence. "The Church," said his hearers, "has pronounced this man a heretic and a demon, yet his life is holy, and his doctrine is pure and elevating."

The mind of Huss, at this stage of his career, would seem to have been the scene of a painful conflict. Although the Church was seeking to overwhelm him by her thunderbolts, he had not renounced her authority. The Roman Church was still to him the spouse of Christ, and the Pope was the representative and vicar of God. What Huss was warring against was the abuse of authority, not the principle itself. This brought on a terrible conflict between the convictions of his understanding and the claims of his conscience. If the authority was just and infallible, as he believed it to be, how came it that he felt compelled to disobey it? To obey, he saw, was to sin; but why should obedience to an infallible Church lead to such an issue?. This was the problem he could not

solve; this was the doubt that tortured him hour by hour. The nearest approximation to a solution, which he was able to make, was that it had happened again, as once before in the days of the Savior, that the priests of the Church had become wicked persons, and were using their lawful authority for unlawful ends. This led him to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience; in other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the Church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide of men. This was to adopt the fundamental principle of Protestantism, and to preach a revolution which Huss himself would have recoiled from, had he been able at that hour to see the length to which it would lead him. The axe which he had grasped was destined to lay low the principle of human supremacy in matters of conscience, but the fetters yet on his arm did not permit him to deliver such blows as would be dealt by the champions who were to follow him, and to whom was reserved the honor of extirpating that bitter root which had

yielded its fruits in the corruption of the Church and the slavery of society.

Gradually things quieted in Prague, although it soon became evident that the calm was only on the surface. Intensely had Huss longed to appear again in his Chapel of Bethlehem – the scene of so many triumphs – and his wish was granted. Once more he stands in the old pulpit; once more his loving flock gather round him. With zeal quickened by his banishment, he thunders more courageously than ever against the tyranny of the priesthood in forbidding the free preaching of the Gospel. In proportion as the people grew in knowledge, the more, says Fox, they "complained of the court of Rome and the bishop's consistory, who plucked from the sheep of Christ the wool and milk, and did not feed them either with the Word of God or good examples."

A great revolution was preparing in Bohemia, and it could not be ushered into the world without evoking a tempest. Huss was perhaps the one tranquil man in the nation. A powerful party,



consisting of the doctors of the university and the members of the priesthood, was now formed against him. Chief among these were two priests, Paletz and Causis, who had once been his friends, but had now become his bitterest foes. This party would speedily have silenced him and closed the Chapel of Bethlehem, the center of the movement, had they not feared the people. Every day the popular indignation against the priests waxed stronger. Every day the disciples and defenders of the Reformer waxed bolder, and around him were now powerful as well as numerous friends. The queen was on his side; the lofty character and resplendent virtues of Huss had won her esteem. Many of the nobles declared for him – some of them because they had felt the Divine power of the doctrines which he taught, and others in the hope of sharing in the spoils which they foresaw would by-and-by be gleaned in the wake of the movement. The great body of the citizens were friendly. Captivated by his eloquence, and taught by his pure and elevating doctrine, they had learned to detest the pride, the debaucheries, and the avarice of the priests, and to take part with the man

whom so many powerful and unrighteous confederacies were seeking to crush.

But Huss was alone; he had no fellow-worker; and had doubtless his hours of loneliness and melancholy. One single companion of sympathizing spirit, and of like devotion to the same great cause, would have been to Huss a greater stay and a sweeter solace than all the other friends who stood around him. And it pleased God to give him such: a true yoke-fellow, who brought to the cause he espoused an intellect of great subtlety, and an eloquence of great fervor, combined with a fearless courage, and a lofty devotion. This friend was Jerome of Faulfish, a Bohemian knight, who had returned some time before from Oxford, where he had imbibed the opinions of Wicliffe. As he passed through Paris and Vienna, he challenged the learned men of these universities to dispute with him on matters of faith; but the theses which he maintained with a triumphant logic were held to savor of heresy, and he was thrown into prison. Escaping, however, he came to Bohemia to spread with all the enthusiasm

of his character, and all the brilliancy of his eloquence, the doctrines of the English Reformer.

With the name of Huss that of Jerome is henceforward indissolubly associated. Alike in their great qualities and aims, they were yet in minor points sufficiently diverse for one to be the complement of the other. Huss was the more powerful character, Jerome was the more eloquent orator. Greater in genius, and more popular in gifts, Jerome maintained nevertheless towards Huss the relation of a disciple. It was a beautiful instance of Christian humility. The calm reason of the master was a salutary restraint upon the impetuosity of the disciple. The union of these two men gave a sensible impulse to the cause. While Jerome debated in the schools, and thundered in the popular assemblies, Huss expounded the Scriptures in his chapel, or toiled with his pen at the refutation of some manifesto of the doctors of the university, or some bull of the Vatican. Their affection for each other ripened day by day, and continued unbroken till death came to set its seal upon it, and unite them in the bonds of an eternal friendship.

The drama was no longer confined to the limits of Bohemia. Events were lifting up Huss and Jerome to a stage where they would have to act their part in the presence of all Christendom. Let us cast our eyes around and survey the state of Europe. There were at that time three Popes reigning in Christendom. The Italians had elected Balthazar Cossa, who, as John XXIII., had set up his chair at Bologna. The French had chosen Angelo Corario, who lived at Rimini, under the title of Gregory XII.; and the Spaniards had elected Peter de Lune (Benedict XIII.), who resided in Arragon. Each claimed to be the legitimate successor of Peter, and the true vicegerent of God, and each strove to make good his claim by the bitterness and rage with which he hurled his maledictions against his rival. Christendom was divided, each nation naturally supporting the Pope of its choice. The schism suggested some questions which it was not easy to solve. "If we must obey," said Huss and his followers, "to whom is our obedience to be paid? Balthazar Cossa, called John XXIII., is at Bologna; Angelo Corario, named

Gregory XII., is at Rimini; Peter de Lune, who calls himself Benedict XIII., is in Arragon. If all three are infallible, why does not their testimony agree? and if only one of them is the Most Holy Father, why is it that we cannot distinguish him from the rest?" Nor was much help to be got towards a solution by putting the question to the men themselves. If they asked John XXIII. he told them that Gregory XII. was "a heretic, a demon, the Antichrist;" Gregory XII. obligingly bore the same testimony respecting John XXIII., and both Gregory and John united in sounding, in similar fashion, the praises of Benedict XIII., whom they stigmatized as "an impostor and schismatic," while Benedict paid back with prodigal interest the compliments of his two opponents. It came to this, that if these men were to be believed, instead of three Popes there were three Antichrists in Christendom; and if they were not to be believed, where was the infallibility, and what had become of the apostolic succession?

The chroniclers of the time labor to describe the distractions, calamities, and woes that grew out

of this schism. Europe was plunged into anarchy; every petty State was a theater of war and rapine. The rival Popes sought to crush one another, not with the spiritual bolts only, but with temporal arms also. They went into the market to purchase swords and hire soldiers, and as this could not be done without money, they opened a scandalous traffic in spiritual things to supply themselves with the needful gold. Pardons, dispensations, and places in Paradise they put up to sale, in order to realize the means of equipping their armies for the field. The bishops and inferior clergy, quick to profit by the example set them by the Popes, enriched themselves by simony. At times they made war on their own account, attacking at the head of armed bands the territory of a rival ecclesiastic, or the castle of a temporal baron. A bishop newly elected to Hildesheim, having requested to be shown the library of his predecessors, was led into an arsenal, in which all kinds of arms were piled up. "Those," said his conductors, "are the books which they made use of to defend the Church; imitate their example." How different were the words of St. Ambrose! "My

arms," said he, as the Goths approached his city, "are my tears; with other weapons I dare not fight."

It is distressing to dwell on this deplorable picture. Of the practice of piety nothing remained save a few superstitious rites. Truth, justice, and order banished from among men, force was the arbiter in all things, and nothing was heard but the clash of arms and the sighings of oppressed nations, while above the strife rose the furious voices of the rival Popes frantically hurling anathemas at one another. This was truly a melancholy spectacle; but it was necessary, perhaps, that the evil should grow to this head, if peradventure the eyes of men might be opened, and they might see that it was indeed a "bitter thing" that they had forsaken the "easy yoke" of the Gospel, and submitted to a power that set no limits to its usurpations, and which, clothing itself with the prerogatives of God, was waging a war of extermination against all the rights of man.

## Chapter 3

# Growing Opposition of Huss to Rome

THE frightful picture which society now presented had a very powerful effect on John Huss. He studied the Bible, he read the early Fathers, he compared these with the sad spectacles passing before his eyes, and he saw more clearly every day that "the Church" had departed far from her early model, not in practice only, but in doctrine also. A little while ago we saw him leveling his blows at abuses; now we find him beginning to strike at the root on which all these abuses grew, if haply he might extirpate both root and branch together.

It was at this time that he wrote his treatise On the Church, a work which enables us to trace the progress of his emancipation from the shackles of authority. He establishes in it the principle that the true Church of Christ has not necessarily an exterior constitution, but that communion with its



invisible Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, is alone necessary for it: and that the Catholic Church is the assembly of all the elect.

This tractate was followed by another under the title of The Six Errors. The first error was that of the priests who boasted of making the body of Jesus Christ in the mass, and of being the creator of their Creator. The second was the confession exacted of the members of the Church – "I believe in the Pope and the saints" – in opposition to which, Huss taught that men are to believe in God only. The third error was the priestly pretension to remit the guilt and punishment of sin. The fourth was the implicit obedience exacted by ecclesiastical superiors to all their commands. The fifth was the making no distinction between a valid excommunication and one that was not so. The sixth error was simony. This Huss designated a heresy, and scarcely, he believed, could a priest be found who was not guilty of it.

This list of errors was placarded on the door of the Bethlehem Chapel. The tract in which they

were set forth was circulated far and near, and produced an immense impression throughout the whole of Bohemia. Another matter which now happened helped to deepen the impression which his tract on The Six Errors had made. John XXIII. fulminated a bull against Ladislaus, King of Hungary, excommunicating him, and all his children to the third generation. The offense which had drawn upon Ladislaus this burst of Pontifical wrath was the support he had given to Gregory XII., one of the rivals of John. The Pope commanded all emperors, kings, princes, cardinals, and men of whatever degree, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, to take up arms against Ladislaus, and utterly to exterminate him and his supporters; and he promised to all who should join the crusade, or who should preach it, or collect funds for its support, the pardon of all their sins, and immediate admission into Paradise should they die in the war – in short, the same indulgences which were accorded to those who bore arms for the conquest of the Holy Land. This fulmination wrapped Bohemia in flames; and Huss seized the opportunity of directing the eyes of his countrymen

to the contrast, so perfect and striking, between the vicar of Christ and Christ Himself; between the destroyer and the Savior; between the commands of the bull, which proclaimed war, and the precepts of the Gospel, which preached peace.

A few extracts from his refutation of the Papal bull will enable us to measure the progress Huss was making in evangelical sentiments, and the light which through his means was breaking upon Bohemia. "If the disciples of Jesus Christ," said he, "were not allowed to defend Him who is Chief of the Church, against those who wanted to seize on Him, much more will it not be permissible to a bishop to engage in war for a temporal domination and earthly riches." "As the secular body," he continues, "to whom the temporal sword alone is suitable, cannot undertake to handle the spiritual one, in like manner the ecclesiastics ought to be content with the spiritual sword, and not make use of the temporal." This was flatly to contradict a solemn judgment of the Papal chair which asserted the Church's right to both swords.

Having condemned crusades, the carnage of which was doubly iniquitous when done by priestly hands, Huss next attacks indulgences. They are an affront to the grace of the Gospel. "God alone possesses the power to forgive sins in an absolute manner." "The absolution of Jesus Christ," he says, "ought to precede that of the priest; or, in other words, the priest who absolves and condemns ought to be certain that the case in question is one which Jesus Christ Himself has already absolved or condemned." This implies that the power of the keys is limited and conditional, in other words that the priest does not pardon, but only declares the pardon of God to the penitent. "If," he says again, "the Pope uses his power according to God's commands, he cannot be resisted without resisting God Himself; but if he abuses his power by enjoining what is contrary to the Divine law, then it is a duty to resist him as should be done to the pale horse of the Apocalypse, to the dragon, to the beast, and to the Leviathan."

Waxing bolder as his views enlarged, he proceeded to stigmatize many of the ceremonies of

the Roman Church as lacking foundation, and as being foolish and superstitious. He denied the merit of abstinences; he ridiculed the credulity of believing legends, and the groveling superstition of venerating relics, bowing before images, and worshipping the dead. "They are profuse," said he, referring to the latter class of devotees, "towards the saints in glory, who want nothing; they array bones of the latter with silk and gold and silver, and lodge them magnificently; but they refuse clothing and hospitality to the poor members of Jesus Christ who are amongst us, at whose expense they feed to repletion, and drink till they are intoxicated." Friars he no more loved than Wicliffe did, if we may judge from a treatise which he wrote at this time, entitled *The Abomination of Monks*, and which he followed by another, wherein he was scarcely more complimentary to the Pope and his court, styling them the members of Antichrist.

Plainer and bolder every day became the speech of Huss; fiercer grew his invectives and denunciations. The scandals which multiplied around him had, doubtless, roused his indignation,

and the persecutions which he endured may have heated his temper. He saw John XXIII., than whom a more infamous man never wore the tiara, professing to open and shut the gates of Paradise, and scattering simoniacal pardons over Europe that he might kindle the flames of war, and extinguish a rival in torrents of Christian blood. It was not easy to witness all this and be calm. In fact, the Pope's bull of crusade had divided Bohemia, and brought matters in that country to extremity. The king and the priesthood were opposed to Ladislaus of Hungary, and consequently supported John XXIII., defending as best they could his indulgences and simonies. On the other hand, many of the magnates of Bohemia, and the great body of the people, sided with Ladislaus, condemned the crusade which the Pope was preaching against him, together with all the infamous means by which he was furthering it, and held the clergy guilty of the blood which seemed about to flow in torrents. The people kept no measure in their talk about the priests. The latter trembled for their lives. The archbishop interfered, but not to throw oil on the waters. He placed Prague under interdict, and threatened to continue

the sentence so long as John Huss should remain in the city. The archbishop persuaded himself that if Huss should retire the movement would go down, and the war of factions subside into peace. He but deceived himself. It was not now in the power of any man, even of Huss, to control or to stop that movement. Two ages were struggling together, the old and the new. The Reformer, however, fearing that his presence in Prague might embarrass his friends, again withdrew to his native village of Hussinetz.

During his exile he wrote several letters to his friends in Prague. The letters discover a mind full of that calm courage which springs from trust in God; and in them occur for the first time those prophetic words which Huss repeated afterwards at more than one important epoch in his career, the prediction taking each time a more exact and definite form. "If the goose" (his name in the Bohemian language signifies goose), "which is but a timid bird, and cannot fly very high, has been able to burst its bonds, there will come afterwards an eagle, which will soar high into the air and draw

to it all the other birds." So he wrote, adding, "It is in the nature of truth, that the more we obscure it the brighter will it become."

Huss had closed one career, and was bidden rest awhile before opening his second and sublimer one. Sweet it was to leave the strife and clamor of Prague for the quiet of his birth-place. Here he could calm his mind in the perusal of the inspired page, and fortify his soul by communion with God. For himself he had no fears; he dwelt beneath the shadow of the Almighty. By the teaching of the Word and the Spirit he had been wonderfully emancipated from the darkness of error. His native country of Bohemia had, too, by his instrumentality been rescued partially from the same darkness. Its reformation could not be completed, nor indeed carried much farther, till the rest of Christendom had come to be more nearly on a level with it in point of spiritual enlightenment. So now the Reformer is withdrawn. Never again was his voice to be heard in his favorite Chapel of Bethlehem. Never more were his living words to stir the hearts of his countrymen. There remains but one act more



for Huss to do – the greatest and most enduring of all. As the preacher of Bethlehem Chapel he had largely contributed to emancipate Bohemia, as the martyr of Constance he was largely to contribute to emancipate Christendom.

## Chapter 4

# Preparations for the Council of Constance

WE have now before us a wider theater than Bohemia. It is the year 1413. Sigismund – a name destined to go down to posterity along with that of Huss, though not with like fame – had a little before mounted the throne of the Empire. Wherever he cast his eyes the new emperor saw only spectacles that distressed him. Christendom was afflicted with a grievous schism. There were three Popes, whose personal profligacies and official crimes were the scandal of that Christianity of which each claimed to be the chief teacher, and the scourge of that Church of which each claimed to be the supreme pastor. The most sacred things were put up to sale, and were the subject of simoniacal bargaining. The bonds of charity were disrupted, and nation was going to war with nation; everywhere strife raged and blood was flowing. The Poles and the knights of the Teutonic order

were waging a war which raged only with the greater fury inasmuch as religion was its pretext. Bohemia seemed on the point of being rent in pieces by intestine commotions; Germany was convulsed; Italy had as many tyrants as princes; France was distracted by its factions, and Spain was embroiled by the machinations of Benedict XIII., whose pretensions that country had espoused. To complete the confusion the Mussulman hordes, encouraged by these dissensions, were gathering on the frontier of Europe and threatening to break in and repress all disorders, in a common subjugation of Christendom to the yoke of the Prophet. To the evils of schism, of war, and Turkish invasion, was now added the worse evil – as Sigismund doubtless accounted it – of heresy. A sincere devotee, he was moved even to tears by this spectacle of Christendom disgraced and torn asunder by its Popes, and undermined and corrupted by its heretics. The emperor gave his mind anxiously to the question how these evils were to be cured. The expedient he hit upon was not an original one certainly – it had come to be a stereotyped remedy

– but it possessed a certain plausibility that fascinated men, and so Sigismund resolved to make trial of it: it was a General Council.

This plan had been tried at Pisa, and it had failed. This did not promise much for a second attempt; but the failure had been set down to the fact that then the miter and the Empire were at war with each other, whereas now the Pope and the emperor were prepared to act in concert. In these more advantageous circumstances Sigismund resolved to convene the whole Church, all its patriarchs, cardinals, bishops, and princes, and to summon before this august body the three rival Popes, and the leaders of the new opinions, not doubting that a General Council would have authority enough, more especially when seconded by the imperial power, to compel the Popes to adjust their rival claims, and put the heretics to silence. These were the two objects which the emperor had in eye – to heal the schism and to extirpate heresy.

Sigismund now opened negotiations with John

XXIII. To the Pope the idea of a Council was beyond measure alarming. Nor can one wonder at this, if his conscience was loaded with but half the crimes of which Popish historians have accused him. But he dared not refuse the emperor. John's crusade against Ladislaus had not prospered. The King of Hungary was in Rome with his army, and the Pope had been compelled to flee to Bologna; and terrible as a Council was to Pope John, he resolved to face it, rather than offend the emperor, whose assistance he needed against the man whose ire he had wantonly provoked by his bull of crusade, and from whose victorious arms he was now fain to seek a deliverer. Pope John was accused of opening his way to the tiara by the murder of his predecessor, Alexander V., and he lived in continual fear of being hurled from his chair by the same dreadful means by which he had mounted to it. It was finally agreed that a General Council should be convoked for November 1st, 1414, and that it should meet in the city of Constance.

The day came and the Council assembled.

From every kingdom and state, and almost from every city in Europe, came delegates to swell that great gathering. All that numbers, and princely rank, and high ecclesiastical dignity, and fame in learning, could do to make an assembly illustrious, contributed to give eclat to the Council of Constance. Thirty cardinals, twenty archbishops, one hundred and fifty bishops, and as many prelates, a multitude of abbots and doctors, and eighteen hundred priests came together in obedience to the joint summons of the emperor and the Pope. Among the members of sovereign rank were the Electors of Palatine, of Mainz, and of Saxony; the Dukes of Austria, of Bavaria, and of Silesia. There were margraves, counts, and barons without number. But there were three men who took precedence of all others in that brilliant assemblage, though each on a different ground. These three men were the Emperor Sigismund, Pope John XXIII., and – last and greatest of all – John Huss.

The two anti-Popes had been summoned to the Council. They appeared, not in person, but by

delegates, some of whom were of the cardinalate. This raised a weighty question in the Council, whether these cardinal delegates should be received in their red hats. To permit the ambassadors to appear in the insignia of their rank might, it was argued, be construed into a tacit admission by the Council of the claims of their masters, both of whom had been deposed by the Council of Pisa; but, for the sake of peace, it was agreed to receive the deputies in the usual costume of the cardinalate. In that assembly were the illustrious scholar, Poggio; the celebrated Thierry de Niem, secretary to several Popes, "and whom," it has been remarked, "Providence placed near the source of so many iniquities for the purpose of unveiling and stigmatizing them;" -Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, greater as the elegant historian than as the wearer of the triple crown; Manuel Chrysoloras, the restorer to the world of some of the writings of Demosthenes and of Cicero; the almost heretic, John Charlier Gerson; the brilliant disputant, Peter D'Ailly, Cardinal of Cambray, surnamed "the Eagle of France," and a host of others.

In the train of the Council came a vast concourse of pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. Men from beyond the Alps and the Pyrenees mingled here with the natives of the Hungarian and Bohemian plains. Room could not be found in Constance for this great multitude, and booths and wooden erections rose outside the walls. Theatrical representations and religious processions proceeded together. Here was seen a party of revelers and masqueraders busy with their cups and their pastimes, there knots of cowed and hooded devotees devoutly telling their beads. The orison of the monk and the stave of the bacchanal rose blended in one. So great an increase of the population of the little town – amounting, it is supposed, to 100,000 souls – rendered necessary a corresponding enlargement of its commissariat. All the highways leading to Constance were crowded with vehicles, conveying thither all kinds of provisions and delicacies: the wines of France, the breadstuffs of Lombardy, the honey and butter of Switzerland; the venison of the Alps and the fish of their lakes, the cheese of Holland, and the



confections of Paris and London.

The emperor and the Pope, in the matter of the Council, thought only of circumventing one another. Sigismund professed to regard John XXIII. as the valid possessor of the tiara; nevertheless he had formed the secret purpose of compelling him to renounce it. And the Pope on his part pretended to be quite cordial in the calling of the Council, but his firm intention was to dissolve it as soon as it had assembled if, after feeling its pulse, he should find it to be unfriendly to himself. He set out from Bologna, on the 1st of October, with store of jewels and money. Some he would corrupt by presents, others he hoped to dazzle by the splendor of his court. All agree in saying that he took this journey very much against the grain, and that his heart misgave him a thousand times on the road. He took care, however, as he went onward to leave the way open behind for his safe retreat. As he passed through the Tyrol he made a secret treaty with Frederick, Duke of Austria, to the effect that one of his strong castles should be at his disposal if he found it necessary to leave

Constance. He made friends, likewise, with John, Count of Nassau, Elector of Mainz.

When he had arrived within a league of Constance he prudently conciliated the Abbot of St. Ulric, by bestowing the miter upon him. This was a special prerogative of the Popes of which the bishops thought they had cause to complain. Not a stage did John advance without taking precautions for his safety – all the more that several incidents befell him by the way which his fears interpreted into auguries of evil. When he had passed through the town of Trent his jester said to him, "The Pope who passes through Trent is undone." In descending the mountains of the Tyrol, at that point of the road where the city of Constance, with the lake and plain, comes into view, his carriage was overturned. The Pontiff was thrown out and rolled on the highway; he was not hurt the least, but the fall brought the color into his face. His attendants crowded round him, anxiously inquiring if he had come by harm: "By the devil," said he, "I am down; I had better have stayed at Bologna;" and casting a suspicious glance at the city beneath him,

"I see how it is," he said, "that is the pit where the foxes are snared."

John XXIII. entered Constance on horseback, the 28th of October, attended by nine cardinals, several archbishops, bishops, and other prelates, and a numerous retinue of courtiers. He was received at the gates with all possible magnificence. "The body of the clergy," says Lenfant, "went to meet him in solemn procession, bearing the relics of saints. All the orders of the city assembled also to do him honor, and he was conducted to the episcopal palace by an incredible multitude of people. Four of the chief magistrates rode by his side, supporting a canopy of cloth of gold, and the Count Radolph de Montfort and the Count Berthold des Ursins held the bridle of his horse. The Sacrament was carried before him upon a white pad, with a little bell about its neck; after the Sacrament a great yellow and red hat was carried, with an angel of gold at the button of the ribbon. All the cardinals followed in cloaks and red hats.

Reichenthal, who has described this ceremony, says there was a great dispute among the Pope's officers as to who should have his horse, but Henry of Ulm put an end to it by saying that the horse belonged to him, as he was burgomaster of the town, and so he caused him to be put into his stables. The city made the presents to the Pope that are usual on these occasions; it gave a silver-gilt cup weighing five marks, four small casks of Italian wine, four great vessels of wine of Alsace, eight great vessels of the country wine, and forty measures of oats, all which presents were given with great ceremony. Henry of Ulm carried the cup on horseback, accompanied by six councilors, who were also on horseback. When the Pope saw them before his palace, he sent an auditor to know what was coming. Being informed that it was presents from the city to the Pope, the auditor introduced them, and presented the cup to the Pope in the name of the city. The Pope, on his part, ordered a robe of black silk to be presented to the consul."

While the Pope was approaching Constance on the one side, John Huss was traveling towards it on

the other. He did not conceal from himself the danger he ran in appearing before such a tribunal. His judges were parties in the cause. What hope could Huss entertain that they would try him dispassionately by the Scriptures to which he had appealed? Where would they be if they allowed such an authority to speak? But he must appear; Sigismund had written to King Wenceslaus to send him thither; and, conscious of his innocence and the justice of his cause, thither he went. In prospect of the dangers before him, he obtained, before setting out, a safe-conduct from his own sovereign; also a certificate of his orthodoxy from Nicholas, Bishop of Nazareth, Inquisitor of the Faith in Bohemia; and a document drawn up by a notary, and duly signed by witnesses, setting forth that he had offered to purge himself of heresy before a provincial Synod of Prague, but had been refused audience. He afterwards caused writings to be affixed to the doors of all the churches and all the palaces of Prague, notifying his departure, and inviting all persons to come to Constance who were prepared to testify either to his innocence or his guilt. To the door of the royal palace even did

he affix such notification, addressed "to the King, to the Queen, and to the whole Court." He made papers of this sort be put up at every place on his road to Constance. In the imperial city of Nuremberg he gave public notice that he was going to the Council to give an account of his faith, and invited all who had anything to lay to his charge to meet him there. He started, not from Prague, but from Carlowitz. Before setting out he took farewell of his friends as of those he never again should see. He expected to find more enemies at the Council than Jesus Christ had at Jerusalem; but he was resolved to endure the last degree of punishment rather than betray the Gospel by any cowardice. The presentiments with which he began his journey attended him all the way. He felt it to be a pilgrimage to the stake.

At every village and town on his route he was met with fresh tokens of the power that attached to his name, and the interest his cause had awakened. The inhabitants turned out to welcome him. Several of the country cures were especially friendly; it was their battle which he was fighting

as well as his own, and heartily did they wish him success. At Nuremberg, and other towns through which he passed, the magistrates formed a guard of honor, and escorted him through streets thronged with spectators eager to catch a glimpse of the man who had begun a movement which was stirring Christendom. His journey was a triumphal procession in a sort. He was enlisting, at every step, new adherents, and gaining accessions of moral force to his cause. He arrived in Constance on the 3rd of November, and took up his abode at the house of a poor widow, whom he likened to her of Sarepta.

The emperor did not reach Constance until Christmas Eve. His arrival added a new attraction to the melodramatic performance proceeding at the little town. The Pope signalized the event by singing a Pontifical mass, the emperor assisting, attired in dalmiatic in his character as deacon, and reading the Gospel – "There came an edict from Caesar Augustus that all the world," etc. The ceremony was ended by John XXIII. presenting a sword to Sigismund, with an exhortation to the

man into whose hand he put it to make vigorous use of it against the enemies of the Church. The Pope, doubtless, had John Huss mainly in his eye. Little did he dream that it was upon himself that its first stroke was destined to descend.

The Emperor Sigismund, whose presence gave a new splendor to the fetes and a new dignity to the Council, was forty-seven years of age. He was noble in person, tall in stature, graceful in manners, and insinuating in address. He had a long beard, and flaxen hair, which fell in a profusion of curls upon his shoulders. His narrow understanding had been improved by study, and he was accomplished beyond his age. He spoke with facility several languages, and was a patron of men of letters. Having one day conferred nobility upon a scholar, who was desirous of being ranked among nobles rather than among doctors, Sigismund laughed at him, and said that "he could make a thousand gentlemen in a day, but that he could not make a scholar in a thousand years." The reverses of his maturer years had sobered the impetuous and fiery spirit of his youth. He committed the error common



to almost all the princes of his age, in believing that in order to reign it was necessary to dissemble, and that craft was an indispensable part of policy. He was a sincere devotee; but just in proportion as he believed in the Church, was he scandalized and grieved at the vices of the clergy. It cost him infinite pains to get this Council convoked, but all had been willingly undertaken in the hope that assembled Christendom would be able to heal the schism, and put an end to the scandals growing out of it.

The name of Sigismund has come down to posterity with an eternal blot upon it. How such darkness came to encompass a name which, but for one fatal act, might have been fair, if not illustrious, we shall presently show. Meanwhile let us rapidly sketch the opening proceedings of the Council, which were but preparatory to the great tragedy in which it was destined to culminate.

## Chapter 5

# Deposition of the Rival Popes

THE first act of the Council, after settling how the votes were to be taken – namely, by nations and not by persons – was to enroll the name of St. Bridget among the saints. This good lady, whose piety had been abundantly proved by her pilgrimages and the many miracles ascribed to her, was of the blood-royal of Sweden, and the foundress of the order of St. Savior, so called because Christ himself, she affirmed, had dictated the rules to her. She was canonized first of all by Boniface IX. (1391); but this was during the schism, and the validity of the act might be held doubtful. To place St. Bridget's title beyond question, she was, at the request of the Swedes, canonized a second time by John XXIII. But unhappily, John himself being afterwards deposed, Bridget's saintship became again dubious; and so she was canonized a third time by Martin V. (1419), to prevent her being overtaken by a similar calamity with that of her patron, and expelled from

the ranks of the heavenly deities as John was from the list of the Pontifical ones.

While the Pope was assigning to others their place in heaven, his own place on earth had become suddenly insecure. Proceedings were commenced in the Council which were meant to pave the way for John's dethronement. In the fourth and fifth sessions it was solemnly decreed that a General Council is superior to the Pope. "A Synod congregate in the Holy Ghost," so ran the decree, "making a General Council, representing the whole Catholic Church here militant, hath power of Christ immediately, to the which power every person, of what state or dignity soever he be, yea, being the Pope himself, ought to be obedient in all such things as concern the general reformation of the Church, as well in the Head as in the members." The Council in this decree asserted its absolute and supreme authority, and affirmed the subjection of the Pope in matters of faith as well as manners to its judgment.

In the eighth session (May 4th, 1415), John

Wicliffe was summoned from his rest, cited before the Council, and made answerable to it for his mortal writings. Forty-five propositions, previously culled from his publications, were condemned, and this sentence was fittingly followed by a decree consigning their author to the flames. Wicliffe himself being beyond their reach, his bones, pursuant to this sentence, were afterwards dug up and burned. The next labor of the Council was to take the cup from the laity, and to decree that Communion should be only in one kind. This prohibition was issued under the penalty of excommunication.

These matters dispatched, or rather while they were in course of being so, the Council entered upon the weightier affair of Pope John XXIII. Universally odious, the Pope's deposition had been resolved on beforehand by the emperor and the great majority of the members. At a secret sitting a terrible indictment was tabled against him. "It contained," says his secretary, Thierry de Niem, "all the mortal sins, and a multitude of others not fit to be named." "More than forty-three most

grievous and heinous crimes," says Fox, "were objected and proved against him: as that he had hired Marcillus Permensis, a physician, to poison Alexander V., his predecessor. Further, that he was a heretic, a simoniac, a liar, a hypocrite, a murderer, an enchanter, a dice-player, and an adulterer; and finally, what crime was it that he was not infected with?" When the Pontiff heard of these accusations he was overwhelmed with affright, and talked of resigning; but recovering from his panic, he again grasped firmly the tiara which he had been on the point of letting go, and began a struggle for it with the emperor and the Council. Making himself acquainted with everything by his spies, he held midnight meetings with his friends, bribed the cardinals, and labored to sow division among the nations composing the Council. But all was in vain. His opponents held firmly to their purpose. The indictment against John they dared not make public, lest the Pontificate should be everlastingly disgraced, and occasion given for a triumph to the party of Wicliffe and Huss; but the conscience of the miserable man seconded the efforts of his

prosecutors. The Pope promised to abdicate; but repenting immediately of his promise, he quitted the city by stealth and fled to Schaffhausen.

We have seen the pomp with which John XXIII. entered Constance. In striking contrast to the ostentatious display of his arrival, was the mean disguise in which he sought to conceal his departure. The plan of his escape had been arranged beforehand between himself and his good friend and staunch protector, the Duke of Austria. The duke, on a certain day, was to give a tournament. The spectacle was to come off late in the afternoon; and while the whole city should be engrossed with the fete, the lords tilting in the arena and the citizens gazing at the mimic war, and oblivious of all else, the Pope would take leave of Constance and of the Council.

It was the 20th of March, the eve of St. Benedict, the day fixed upon for the duke's entertainment, and now the tournament was proceeding. The city was empty, for the inhabitants had poured out to see the tilting and reward the

victors with their acclamations. The dusk of evening was already beginning to veil the lake, the plain, and the mountains of the Tyrol in the distance, when John XXIII., disguising himself as a groom or postillion, and mounted on a sorry nag, rode through the crowd and passed on to the south. A coarse grey loose coat was flung over his shoulders, and at his saddlebow hung a crossbow; no one suspected that this homely figure, so poorly mounted, was other than some peasant of the mountains, who had been to market with his produce, and was now on his way back. The duke of Austria was at the moment fighting in the lists, when a domestic approached him, and whispered into his ear what had occurred. The duke went on with the tournament as if nothing had happened, and the fugitive held on his way till he had reached Schaffhausen, where, as the town belonged to the duke, the Pope deemed himself in safety. Thither he was soon followed by the duke himself.

When the Pope's flight became known, all was in commotion at Constance. The Council was at an end, so every one thought; the flight of the Pope

would be followed by the departure of the princes and the emperor: the merchants shut their shops and packed up their wares, only too happy if they could escape pillage from the lawless mob into whose hands, as they believed, the town had now been thrown. After the first moments of consternation, however, the excitement calmed down. The emperor mounted his horse and rode round the city, declaring openly that he would protect the Council, and maintain order and quiet; and thus things in Constance returned to their usual channel.

Still the Pope's flight was an untoward event. It threatened to disconcert all the plans of the emperor for healing the schism and restoring peace to Christendom. Sigismund saw the labors of years on the point of being swept away. He hastily assembled the princes and deputies, and with no little indignation declared it to be his purpose to reduce the Duke of Austria by force of arms, and bring back the fugitive. When the Pope learned that a storm was gathering, and would follow him across the Tyrol, he wrote in conciliatory terms to



the emperor, excusing his flight by saying that he had gone to Schaffhausen to enjoy its sweeter air, that of Constance not agreeing with him; moreover, in this quiet retreat, and at liberty, he would be able to show the world how freely he acted in fulfilling his promise of renouncing the Pontificate.

John, however, was in no haste, even in the pure air and full freedom of Schaffhausen, to lay down the tiara. He procrastinated and maneuvered; he went farther away every few days, in quest, as suggested, of still sweeter air, though his enemies hinted that the Pope's ailment was not a vitiated atmosphere, but a bad conscience. His thought was that his flight would be the signal for the Council to break up, and that he would thus checkmate Sigismund, and avoid the humiliation of deposition. But the emperor was not to be balked. He put his troops in motion against the Duke of Austria; and the Council, seconding Sigismund with its spiritual weapons, wrested the infallibility from the Pope, and took that formidable engine into its own hands. "This decision of the Council," said the celebrated Gallican divine, Gerson, in a

sermon which he preached before the assembly, "ought to be engraved in the most eminent places and in all the churches of the world, as a fundamental law to crush the monster of ambition, and to stop the mouths of all flatterers who, by virtue of certain glosses, say, bluntly and without any regard to the eternal law of the Gospel, that the Pope is not subject to a General Council, and cannot be judged by such."

The way being thus prepared, the Council now proceeded to the trial of the Pope. Public criers at the door of the church summoned John XXIII. to appear and answer to the charges to be brought against him. The criers expended their breath in vain; John was on the other side of the Tyrol; and even had he been within ear-shot, he was not disposed to obey their citation. Three-and-twenty commissioners were then nominated for the examination of the witnesses. The indictment contained seventy accusations, but only fifty were read in public Council; the rest were withheld from a regard to the honor of the Pontificate – a superfluous care, one would think, after what had

already been permitted to see the light. Thirty-seven witnesses were examined, and one of the points to which they bore testimony, but which the Council left under a veil, was the poisoning by John of his predecessor, Alexander V. The charges were held to be proven, and in the twelfth session (May 29th, 1415) the Council passed sentence, stripping John XXIII. of the Pontificate, and releasing all Christians from their oath of obedience to him.

When the blow fell, Pope John was as abject as he had before been arrogant. He acknowledged the justice of his sentence, bewailed the day he had mounted to the Popedom, and wrote cringingly to the emperor, if haply his miserable life might be spared – which no one, by the way, thought of taking from him.

The case of the other two Popes was simpler, and more easily disposed of. They had already been condemned by the Council of Pisa, which had put forth an earlier assertion than the Council of Constance of the supremacy of a Council, and its

right to deal with heretical and simoniacal Popes. Angelus Corario, Gregory XII., voluntarily sent in his resignation; and Peter de Lune, Benedict XIII., was deposed; and Otta de Colonna, being unanimously elected by the cardinals, ruled the Church under the title of Martin V.

Before turning to the more tragic page of the history of the Council, we have to remark that it seems almost as if the Fathers at Constance were intent on erecting beforehand a monument to the innocence of John Huss, and to their own guilt in the terrible fate to which they were about to consign him. The crimes for which they condemned Balthazar Cossa, John XXIII., were the same, only more atrocious and fouler, as those of which Huss accused the priesthood, and for which he demanded a reformation. The condemnation of Pope John was, therefore, whether the Council confessed it or not, the vindication of Huss. "When all the members of the Council shall be scattered in the world like storks," said Huss, in a letter which he wrote to a friend at this time, "they will know when winter cometh what they did in summer.

Consider, I pray you, that they have judged their head, the Pope, worthy of death by reason of his horrible crimes. Answer to this, you teachers who preach that the Pope is a god upon earth; that he may sell and waste in what manner he pleaseth the holy things, as the lawyers say; that he is the head of the entire holy Church, and governeth it well; that he is the heart of the Church, and quickeneth it spiritually; that he is the well-spring from whence floweth all virtue and goodness; that he is the sun of the Church, and a very safe refuge to which every Christian ought to fly. Yet, behold now that head, as it were, severed by the sword; this terrestrial god enchained; his sins laid bare; this never-failing source dried up; this divine sun dimmed; this heart plucked out, and branded with reprobation, that no one should seek an asylum in it."

## Chapter 6

# Imprisonment and Examination of Huss

WHEN John Huss set out for the Council, he carried with him, as we have already said, several important documents. But the most important of all Huss's credentials was a safe-conduct from the Emperor Sigismund. Without this, he would hardly have undertaken the journey. We quote it in full, seeing it has become one of the great documents of history. It was addressed "to all ecclesiastical and secular princes, etc., and to all our subjects." "We recommend to you with a full affection, to all in general and to each in particular, the honorable Master John Huss, Bachelor in Divinity, and Master of Arts, the bearer of these presents, journeying from Bohemia to the Council of Constance, whom we have taken under our protection and safeguard, and under that of the Empire, enjoining you to receive him and treat him kindly, furnishing him with all that shall be

necessary to speed and assure his journey, as well by water as by land, without taking anything from him or his at coming in or going out, for any sort of duties whatsoever; and calling on you to allow him to PASS, SOJOURN, STOP, AND RETURN FREELY AND SECURELY, providing him even, if necessary, with good passports, for the honor and respect of the Imperial Majesty. Given at Spiers this 18th day of October of the year 1414, the third of our reign in Hungary, and the fifth of that of the Romans." In the above document, the emperor pledges his honor and the power of the Empire for the safety of Huss. He was to go and return, and no man dare molest him. No promise could be more sacred, no protection apparently more complete. How that pledge was redeemed we shall see by-and-by. Huss's trust, however, was in One more powerful than the kings of earth. "I confide altogether," wrote he to one of his friends, "in the all-powerful God, in my Savior; he will accord me his Holy Spirit to fortify me in his truth, so that I may face with courage temptations, prison, and if necessary a cruel death."

Full liberty was accorded him during the first days of his stay at Constance. He made his arrival be intimated to the Pope the day after by two Bohemian noblemen who accompanied him, adding that he carried a safe-conduct from the emperor. The Pope received them courteously, and expressed his determination to protect Huss. The Pope's own position was too precarious, however, to make his promise of any great value.

Paletz and Causis, who, of all the ecclesiastics of Prague, were the bitterest enemies of Huss, had preceded him to Constance, and were working day and night among the members of the Council to inflame them against him, and secure his condemnation. Their machinations were not without result. On the twenty-sixth day after his arrival Huss was arrested, in flagrant violation of the imperial safe-conduct, and carried before the Pope and the cardinals. After a conversation of some hours, he was told that he must remain a prisoner, and was entrusted to the clerk of the Cathedral of Constance. He remained a week at the house of this official under a strong guard. Thence



he was conducted to the prison of the monastery of the Dominicans on the banks of the Rhine. The sewage of the monastery flowed close to the place where he was confined, and the damp and pestilential air of his prison brought on a raging fever, which had well-nigh terminated his life. His enemies feared that after all he would escape them, and the Pope sent his own physicians to him to take care of his health.

When the tidings of his imprisonment reached Huss's native country, they kindled a flame in Bohemia. Burning words bespoke the indignation that the nation felt at the treachery and cruelty with which their great countryman had been treated. The puissant barons united in a remonstrance to the Emperor Sigismund, reminding him of his safe-conduct, and demanding that he should vindicate his own honor, and redress the injustice done to Huss, by ordering his instant liberation. The first impulse of Sigismund was to open Huss's prison, but the casuists of the Council found means to keep it shut. The emperor was told that he had no right to grant a safe-conduct in the circumstances

without the consent of the Council; that the greater good of the Church must over-rule his promise; that the Council by its supreme authority could release him from his obligation, and that no formality of this sort could be suffered to obstruct the course of justice against a heretic. The promptings of honor and humanity were stifled in the emperor's breast by these reasonings. In the voice of the assembled Church he heard the voice of God, and delivered up John Huss to the will of his enemies.

The Council afterwards put its reasonings into a decree, to the effect that no faith is to be kept with heretics to the prejudice of the Church. Being now completely in their power, the enemies of Huss pushed on the process against him. They examined his writings, they founded a series of criminatory articles upon them, and proceeding to his prison, where they found him still suffering severely from fever, they read them to him. He craved of them the favor of an advocate to assist him in framing his defense, enfeebled as he was in body and mind by the foul air of his prison, and the fever with

which he had been smitten. This request was refused, although the indulgence asked was one commonly accorded to even the greatest criminals. At this stage the proceedings against him were stopped for a little while by an unexpected event, which turned the thoughts of the Council in another direction. It was now that Pope John escaped, as we have already related. In the interval, the keepers of his monastic prison having fled along with their master, the Pope, Huss was removed to the Castle of Gottlieben, on the other side of the Rhine, where he was shut up, heavily loaded with chains.

While the proceedings against Huss stood still, those against the Pope went forward. The flight of John had brought his affairs to a crisis, and the Council, without more delay, deposed him from the Pontificate, as narrated above.

To the delegates whom the Council sent to intimate to him his sentence, he delivered up the Pontifical seal and the fisherman's ring. Along with these insignia they took possession of his person, brought him back to Constance, and threw him into

the prison of Gottlieben, the same stronghold in which Huss was confined. How solemn and instructive! The Reformer and the man who had arrested him are now the inmates of the same prison, yet what a gulf divides the Pontiff from the martyr! The chains of the one are the monuments of his infamy. The bonds of the other are the badges of his virtue. They invest their wearer with a luster which is lacking to the diadem of Sigismund.

The Council was only the more intent on condemning Huss, that it had already condemned Pope John. It instinctively felt that the deposition of the Pontiff was a virtual justification of the Reformer, and that the world would so construe it. It was minded to avenge itself on the man who had compelled it to lay open its sores to the world. It felt, moreover, no little pleasure in the exercise of its newly-acquired prerogative of infallibility: a Pope had fallen beneath its stroke, why should a simple priest defy its authority?

The Council, however, delayed bringing John

Huss to his trial. His two great opponents, Paletz and Causis – whose enmity was whetted, doubtless, by the discomfitures they had sustained from Huss in Prague – feared the effect of his eloquence upon the members, and took care that he should not appear till they had prepared the Council for his condemnation. At last, on the 5th of June, 1415, he was put on his trial. His books were produced, and he was asked if he acknowledged being the writer of them. This he readily did. The articles of crimination were next read. Some of these were fair statements of Huss's opinions; others were exaggerations or perversions, and others again were wholly false, imputing to him opinions which he did not hold, and which he had never taught. Huss naturally wished to reply, pointing out what was false, what was perverted, and what was true in the indictment preferred against him, assigning the grounds and adducing the proofs in support of those sentiments which he really held, and which he had taught. He had not uttered more than a few words when there arose in the hall a clamor so loud as completely to drown his voice. Huss stood motionless; he cast his eyes around on the excited

assembly, surprise and pity rather than anger visible on his face. Waiting till the tumult had subsided, he again attempted to proceed with his defense. He had not gone far till he had occasion to appeal to the Scriptures; the storm was that moment renewed, and with greater violence than before. Some of the Fathers shouted out accusations, others broke into peals of derisive laughter. Again Huss was silent. "He is dumb," said his enemies, who forgot that they had come there as his judges. "I am silent," said Huss, "because I am unable to make myself audible midst so great a noise." "All," said Luther, referring in his characteristic style to this scene, "all worked themselves into rage like wild boars; the bristles of their back stood on end, they bent their brows and gnashed their teeth against John Huss."

The minds of the Fathers were too perturbed to be able to agree on the course to be followed. It was found impossible to restore order, and after a short sitting the assembly broke up.

Some Bohemian noblemen, among whom was

Baron de Chlum, the steady and most affectionate friend of the Reformer, had been witnesses of the tumult. They took care to inform Sigismund of what had passed, and prayed him to be present at the next sitting, in the hope that, though the Council did not respect itself, it would yet respect the emperor.

After a day's interval the Council again assembled. The morning of that day, the 7th June, was a memorable one. An all but total eclipse of the sun astonished and terrified the venerable Fathers and the inhabitants of Constance. The darkness was great. The city, the lake, and the surrounding plains were buried in the shadow of portentous night. This phenomenon was remembered and spoken of long after in Europe. Till the inauspicious darkness had passed the Fathers did not dare to meet. Towards noon the light returned, and the Council assembled in the hall of the Franciscans, the emperor taking his seat in it. John Huss was led in by a numerous body of armed men. Sigismund and Huss were now face to face. There sat the emperor, his princes, lords, and

suite crowding round him; there, loaded with chains, stood the man for whose safety he had put in pledge his honor as a prince and his power as emperor. The irons that Huss wore were a strange commentary, truly, on the imperial safe-conduct. Is it thus, well might the prisoner have said, is it thus that princes on whom the oil of unction has been poured, and Councils which the Holy Ghost inspires, keep faith? But Sigismund, though he could not be insensible to the silent reproach which the chains of Huss cast upon him, consoled himself with his secret resolve to save the Reformer from the last extremity. He had permitted Huss to be deprived of liberty, but he would not permit him to be deprived of life. But there were two elements he had not taken into account in forming this resolution. The first was the unyielding firmness of the Reformer, and the second was the ghostly awe in which he himself stood of the Council; and so, despite his better intentions, he suffered himself to be dragged along on the road of perfidy and dishonor, which he had meanly entered, till he came to its tragic end, and the imperial safe-conduct and the martyr's stake had taken their



place, side by side, ineffaceably, on history's eternal page.

Causis again read the accusation, and a somewhat desultory debate ensued between Huss and several doctors of the Council, especially the celebrated Peter d'Ailly, Cardinal of Cambrai. The line of accusation and defense has been sketched with tolerable fullness by all who have written on the Council. After comparing these statements it appears to us that Huss differed from the Church of Rome not so much on dogmas as on great points of jurisdiction and policy. These, while they directly attacked certain of the principles of the Papacy, tended indirectly to the subversion of the whole system – in short, to a far greater revolution than Huss perceived, or perhaps intended. He appears to have believed in transubstantiation; he declared so before the Council, although in stating his views he betrays ever and anon a revulsion from the grosser form of the dogma. He admitted the Divine institution and office of the Pope and members of the hierarchy, but he made the efficacy of their official acts dependent on their spiritual character.

Even to the last he did not abandon the communion of the Roman Church. Still it cannot be doubted that John Huss was essentially a Protestant and a Reformer. He held that the supreme rule of faith and practice was the Holy Scriptures; that Christ was the Rock on which our Lord said he would build his Church; that "the assembly of the Predestinate is the Holy Church, which has neither spot nor wrinkle, but is holy and undefiled; the which Jesus Christ, calleth his own;" that the Church needed no one visible head on earth, that it had none such in the days of the apostles; that nevertheless it was then well governed, and might be so still although it should lose its earthly head; and that the Church was not confined to the clergy, but included all the faithful. He maintained the principle of liberty of conscience so far as that heresy ought not to be punished by the magistrate till the heretic had been convicted out of Holy Scripture. He appears to have laid no weight on excommunications and indulgences, unless in cases in which manifestly the judgment of God went along with the sentence of the priest. Like Wicliffe he held that tithes were simply alms, and that of the

vast temporal revenues of the clergy that portion only which was needful for their subsistence was rightfully theirs, and that the rest belonged to the poor, or might be otherwise distributed by the civil authorities. His theological creed was only in course of formation. That it would have taken more definite form – that the great doctrines of the Reformation would have come out in full light to his gaze, diligent student as he was of the Bible had his career been prolonged, we cannot doubt. The formula of "justification by faith alone" – the foundation of the teaching of Martin Luther in after days – we do not find in any of the defenses or letters of Huss; but if he did not know the terms he had learned the doctrine, for when he comes to die, turning away from Church, from saint, from all human intervention, he casts himself simply, upon the infinite mercy and love of the Savior. "I submit to the correction of our Divine Master, and I put my trust in his infinite mercy." "I commend you," says he, writing to the people of Prague, "to the merciful Lord Jesus Christ, our true God, and the Son of the immaculate Virgin Mary, who hath redeemed us by his most bitter death, without all

our merits, from eternal pains, from the thralldom of the devil, and from sin."

The members of the Council instinctively felt that Huss was not one of them; that although claiming to belong to the Church which they constituted, he had in fact abandoned it, and renounced its authority. The two leading principles which he had embraced were subversive of their whole jurisdiction in both its branches, spiritual and temporal. The first and great authority with him was Holy Scripture; this struck at the foundation of the spiritual power of the hierarchy; and as regards their temporal power he undermined it by his doctrine touching ecclesiastical revenues and possessions.

From these two positions neither sophistry nor threats could make him swerve. In the judgment of the Council he was in rebellion. He had transferred his allegiance from the Church to God speaking in his Word. This was his great crime. It mattered little in the eyes of the assembled Fathers that he still shared in some of their common beliefs; he

had broken the great bond of submission; he had become the worst of all heretics; he had rent from his conscience the shackles of the infallibility; and he must needs, in process of time, become a more avowed and dangerous heretic than he was at that moment, and accordingly the mind of the Council was made up – John Huss must undergo the doom of the heretic.

Already enfeebled by illness, and by his long imprisonment – for "he was shut up in a tower, with fetters on his legs, that he could scarce walk in the day-time, and at night he was fastened up to a rack against the wall hard by his bed" – he was exhausted and worn out by the length of the sitting, and the attention demanded to rebut the attacks and reasonings of his accusers. At length the Council rose, and Huss was led out by his armed escort, and conducted back to prison. His trusty friend, John de Chlum, followed him, and embracing him, bade him be of good cheer. "Oh, what a consolation to me, in the midst of my trials," said Huss in one of his letters, "to see that excellent nobleman, John de Chlum, stretch forth the hand to me, miserable

heretic, languishing in chains, and already condemned by every one."

In the interval between Huss's second appearance before the Council, and the third and last citation, the emperor made an ineffectual attempt to induce the Reformer to retract and abjure. Sigismund was earnestly desirous of saving his life, no doubt out of regard for Huss, but doubtless also from a regard to his own honor, deeply at stake in the issue. The Council drew up a form of abjuration and submission. This was communicated to Huss in prison, and the mediation of mutual friends was employed to prevail with him to sign the paper. The Reformer declared himself ready to abjure those errors which had been falsely imputed to him, but as regarded those conclusions which had been faithfully deduced from his writings, and which he had taught, these, by the grace of God, he never would abandon. "He would rather," he said, "be cast into the sea with a mill-stone about his neck, than offend those little ones to whom he had preached the Gospel, by abjuring it." At last the matter was brought very

much to this point: would he submit himself implicitly to the Council? The snare was cunningly set, but Huss had wisdom to see and avoid it. "If the Council should even tell you," said a doctor, whose name has not been preserved, "that you have but one eye, you would be obliged to agree with the Council." "But," said Huss, "as long as God keeps me in my senses, I would not say such a thing, even though the whole world should require it, because I could not say it without wounding my conscience." What an obstinate, self-opinionated, arrogant man! said the Fathers. Even the emperor was irritated at what he regarded as stubbornness, and giving way to a burst of passion, declared that such unreasonable obduracy was worthy of death.

This was the great crisis of the Reformer's career. It was as if the Fathers had said, "We shall say nothing of heresy; we specify no errors, only submit yourself implicitly to our authority as an infallible Council. Burn this grain of incense on the altar in testimony of our corporate divinity. That is asking no great matter surely." This was the fiery temptation with which Huss was now tried. How

many would have yielded – how many in similar circumstances have yielded, and been lost! Had Huss bowed his head before the infallibility, he never could have lifted it up again before his own conscience, before his countrymen, before his Savior. Struck with spiritual paralysis, his strength would have departed from him. He would have escaped the stake, the agony of which is but for a moment, but he would have missed the crown, the glory of which is eternal.

From that moment Huss had peace – deeper and more ecstatic than he had ever before experienced. "I write this letter," says he to a friend, "in prison, and with my fettered hand, expecting my sentence of death tomorrow ... When, with the assistance of Jesus Christ, we shall meet again in the delicious peace of the future life, you will learn how merciful God has shown himself towards me – how effectually he has supported me in the midst of my temptations and trials." The irritation of the debate into which the Council had dragged him was forgotten, and he calmly began to prepare for death, not disquieted by the terrible



form in which he foresaw it would come. The martyrs of former ages had passed by this path to their glory, and by the help of Him who is mighty he should be able to travel by the same road to his. He would look the fire in the face, and overcome the vehemency of its flame by the yet greater vehemency of his love. He already tasted the joys that awaited him within those gates that should open to receive him as soon as the fire should loose him from the stake, and set free his spirit to begin its flight on high. Nay, in his prison he was cheered with a prophetic glimpse of the dawn of those better days that awaited the Church of God on earth, and which his own blood would largely contribute to hasten. Once as he lay asleep he thought that he was again in his beloved Chapel of Bethlehem. Envious priests were there trying to efface the figures of Jesus Christ which he had got painted upon its walls. He was filled with sorrow. But next day there came painters who restored the partially obliterated portraits, so that they were more brilliant than before. "'Now,' said these artists, 'let the bishops and the priests come forth; let them efface these if they can;'" and the crowd

was filled with joy, and I also."

"Occupy your thoughts with your defense, rather than with visions," said John de Chlum, to whom he had told his dream "And yet," replied Huss, "I firmly hope that this life of Christ, which I engraved on men's hearts at Bethlehem when I preached his Word, will not be effaced; and that after I have ceased to live it will be still better shown forth, by mightier preachers, to the great satisfaction of the people, and to my own most sincere joy, when I shall be again permitted to announce his Gospel – that is, when I shall rise from the dead."

## Chapter 7

# Condemnation and Martyrdom of Huss

THIRTY days elapsed. Huss had languished in prison, contending with fetters, fetid air, and sickness, for about two months. It was now the 6th of July, 1415 – the anniversary of his birth. This day was to see the wishes of his enemies crowned, and his own sorrows terminated. The hall of the Council was filled with a brilliant assemblage. There sat the emperor; there were the princes, the deputies of the sovereigns, the patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, and priests; and there too was a vast concourse which the spectacle that day was to witness had brought together. It was meet that a stage should be erected worthy of the act to be done upon it – that when the first champion in the great struggle that was just opening should yield up his life, all Christendom might see and bear witness to the fact.

The Archbishop of Riga came to the prison to bring Huss to the Council. Mass was being celebrated as they arrived at the church door, and Huss was made to stay outside till it was finished, lest the mysteries should be profaned by the presence of a man who was not only a heretic, but a leader of heretics. Being led in, he was bidden take his seat on a raised platform, where he might be conspicuously in the eyes of the whole assembly. On sitting down, he was seen to engage in earnest prayer, but the words were not heard. Near him rose a pile of clerical vestments, in readiness for the ceremonies that were to precede the final tragedy. The sermon, usual on such occasions, was preached by the Bishop of Lodi. He chose as his text the words, "That the body of sin might be destroyed." He enlarged on the schism as the source of the heresies, murders, sacrileges, robberies, and wars which had for so long a period desolated the Church, and drew, says Lenfant, "such a horrible picture of the schism, that one would think at first he was exhorting the emperor to burn the two anti-Popes, and not John Huss. Yet the bishop concluded in these terms, addressed to

Sigismund: 'Destroy heresies and errors, but chiefly' (pointing to John Huss) ' that OBSTINATE HERETIC.'"

The sermon ended, the accusations against Huss were again read, as also the depositions of the witnesses; and then Huss gave his final refusal to abjure. This he accompanied with a brief recapitulation of his proceedings since the commencement of this matter, ending by saying that he had come to this Council of his own free will, "confiding in the safe-conduct of the emperor here present." As he uttered these last words, he looked full at Sigismund, on whose brow the crimson of a deep blush was seen by the whole assembly, whose gaze was at the instant turned towards his majesty.

Sentence of condemnation as a heretic was now passed on Huss. There followed the ceremony of degradation – an ordeal that brought no blush upon the brow of the martyr. One after another the priestly vestments, brought thither for that end, were produced and put upon him, and now the

prisoner stood full in the gaze of the Council, sacerdotally appareled. They next put into his hand the chalice, as if he were about to celebrate mass. They asked him if now he were willing to abjure. "With what face, then," replied he, "should I behold the heavens? How should I look on those multitudes of men to whom I have preached the pure Gospel? No; I esteem their salvation more than this poor body, now appointed unto death."

Then they took from him the chalice, saying, "O accursed Judas, who, having abandoned the counsels of peace, have taken part in that of the Jews, we take from you this cup filled with the blood of Jesus Christ."

"I hope, by the mercy of God," replied John Huss, "that this very day I shall drink of his cup in his own kingdom; and in one hundred years you shall answer before God and before me."

The seven bishops selected for the purpose now came round him, and proceeded to remove the sacerdotal garments – the alb, the stole, and other

pieces of attire – in which in mockery they had arrayed him. And as each bishop performed his office, he bestowed his curse upon the martyr. Nothing now remained but to erase the marks of the tonsure.

On this there arose a great dispute among the prelates whether they should use a razor or scissors. "See," said Huss, turning to the emperor, "they cannot agree among themselves how to insult me." They resolved to use the scissors, which were instantly brought, and his hair was cut cross-wise to obliterate the mark of the crown. According to the canon law, the priest so dealt with becomes again a layman, and although the operation does not remove the character, which is indelible, it yet renders him for ever incapable of exercising the functions of the priesthood.

There remained one other mark of ignominy. They put on his head a cap or pyramidal-shaped miter of paper, on which were painted frightful figures of demons, with the word Arch-Heretic conspicuous in front. "Most joyfully," said Huss,

"will I wear this crown of shame for thy sake, O Jesus, who for me didst wear a crown of thorns."

When thus attired, the prelates said, "Now, we devote thy soul to the devil." "And I," said John Huss, lifting up his eyes toward heaven, "do commit my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus, for thou hast redeemed me."

Turning to the emperor, the bishops said, "This man John Huss, who has no more any office or part in the Church of God, we leave with thee, delivering him up to the civil judgment and power." Then the emperor, addressing Louis, Duke of Bavaria – who, as Vicar of the Empire, was standing before him in his robes, holding in his hand the golden apple, and the cross – commanded him to deliver over Huss to those whose duty it was to see the sentence executed. The duke in his turn abandoned him to the chief magistrate of Constance, and the magistrate finally gave him into the hands of his officers or city sergeants.

The procession was now formed. The martyr



walked between four town sergeants. The princes and deputies, escorted by eight hundred men-at-arms, followed. In the cavalcade, mounted on horseback, were many bishops and priests delicately clad in robes of silk and velvet. The population of Constance followed in mass to see the end.

As Huss passed the episcopal palace, his attention was attracted by a great fire which blazed and crackled before the gates. He was informed that on that pile his books were being consumed. He smiled at this futile attempt to extinguish the light which he foresaw would one day, and that not very distant, fill all Christendom.

The procession crossed the bridge and halted in a meadow, between the gardens of the city and the gate of Gottlieben. Here the execution was to take place. Being come to the spot where he was to die, the martyr kneeled down, and began reciting the penitential psalms. He offered up short and fervent supplications, and oftentimes repeated, as the bystanders bore witness, the words, "Lord Jesus, into

thy hands I commend my spirit."

"We know not," said those who were near him, "what his life has been, but verily he prays after a devout and godly fashion." Turning his gaze upward in prayer, the paper crown fell off. One of the soldiers rushed forward and replaced it, saying that "he must be burned with the devils whom he had served." Again the martyr smiled.

The stake was driven deep into the ground. Huss was tied to it with ropes. He stood facing the east. "This," cried some, "is not the right attitude for a heretic." He was again unbound, turned to the west, and made fast to the beam by a chain that passed round his neck. "It is thus," said he, "that you silence the goose, but a hundred years hence there will arise a swan whose singing you shall not be able to silence."

He stood with his feet on the faggots, which were mixed with straw that they might the more readily ignite. Wood was piled all round him up to the chin. Before applying the torch, Louis of

Bavaria and the Marshal of the Empire approached, and for the last time implored him to have a care for his life, and renounce his errors. "What errors," asked Huss, "shall I renounce? I know myself guilty of none. I call God to witness that all that I have written and preached has been with the view of rescuing souls from sin and perdition; and, therefore, most joyfully will I confirm with my blood that truth which I have written and preached." At the hearing of these words they departed from him, and John Huss had now done talking with men.

The fire was applied, the flames blazed upward. "John Huss," says Fox, "began to sing with a loud voice, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' And when he began to say the same the third time, the wind so blew the flame in his face that it choked him." Poggius, who was secretary to the Council, and Aeneas Sylvius, who afterwards became Pope, and whose narratives are not liable to the suspicion of being colored, bear even higher testimony to the heroic demeanor of both Huss and Jerome at their execution. "Both," says the latter

historian, "bore themselves with constant mind when their last hour approached. They prepared for the fire as if they were going to a marriage feast. They uttered no cry of pain. When the flames rose they began to sing hymns; and scarce could the vehemency of the fire stop their singing."

Huss had given up the ghost. When the flames had subsided, it was found that only the lower parts of his body were consumed, and that the upper parts, held fast by the chain, hung suspended on the stake. The executioners kindled the fire anew, in order to consume what remained of the martyr. When the flames had a second time subsided, the heart was found still entire amid the ashes. A third time had the fire to be kindled. At last all was burned. The ashes were carefully collected, the very soil was dug up, and all was carted away and thrown into the Rhine; so anxious were his persecutors that not the slightest vestige of John Huss – not even a thread of his raiment, for that too was burned along with his body – should be left upon the earth.

When the martyr bowed his head at the stake it was the infallible Council that was vanquished. It was with Huss that the victory remained; and what a victory! Heap together all the trophies of Alexander and of Caesar, what are they all when weighed in the balance against this one glorious achievement? From the stake of Huss, what blessings have flowed, and are still flowing, to the world! From the moment he expired amid the flames, his name became a power, which will continue to speed on the great cause of truth and light, till the last shackle shall be rent from the intellect, and the conscience emancipated from every usurpation, shall be free to obey the authority of its rightful Lord. What a surprise to his and the Gospel's enemies! "Huss is dead," say they, as they retire from the meadow where they have just seen him expire. Huss is dead. The Rhine has received his ashes, and is bearing them on its rushing floods to the ocean, there to bury them for ever. No: Huss is alive. It is not death, but life, that he has found in the fire; his stake has given him not an entombment, but a resurrection. The winds as they blow over Constance are wafting the spirit of the

confessor and martyr to all the countries of Christendom. The nations are being stirred; Bohemia is awakening; a hundred years, and Germany and all Christendom will shake off their slumber; and then will come the great reckoning which the martyr's prophetic spirit foretold: "In the course of a hundred years you will answer to God and to me."

## Chapter 8

# **Wicliffe and Huss Compared in their Theology, their Character, and their Labours**

BEFORE advancing to the history of Jerome, let us glance back on the two great men, representatives of their epoch, who have passed before us, and note the relations in which they stand to each other. These relations are such that the two always come up together. The century that divides them is annihilated. Everywhere in the history – in the hall of the University of Prague, in the pulpit of the Bethlehem Chapel, in the council chamber of Constance – these two figures, Wicliffe and Huss, are seen standing side by side.

Wicliffe is the master, and Huss the scholar. The latter receives his opinions from the former – not, however, without investigation and proof – and he incorporates them with himself, so to speak, at the cost of a severe mental struggle. "Both men,"

says Lechler, "place the Word of God at the foundation of their system, and acknowledge the Holy Scriptures as the supreme judge and authority. Still they differ in many respects.

Wicliffe reached his principle gradually, and with laborious effort, whilst Huss accepted it, and had simply to hold it fast, and to establish it." To Wicliffe the principle was an independent conquest, to Huss it came as a possession which another had won. The opinions of Wicliffe on the head of the sole authority of Scripture were sharply defined, and even received great prominence, while Huss never so clearly defined his sentiments nor gave them the same large place in his teaching. Wicliffe, moreover, repudiated the limitary idea that Scripture was to be interpreted according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, and held that the Spirit makes known the true sense of the Word of God, and that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture. Huss, on the other hand, was willing to receive the Scriptures as the Holy Ghost had given wisdom to the Fathers to explain them.



"Both Wicliffe and Huss held that 'the true Church lies in nothing else than the totality of the elect.' His whole conceptions and ideas of the Church, Huss has derived from no other than the great English Reformer. Wicliffe based the whole of his Church system upon the eternal purposes of God respecting the elect, building up from the foundations, and making his whole plan sublimely accordant with the nature of God, the constitution of the universe, and the divine government of all things. Huss's conception of the Church lay more on the surface, and the relations between God and his people were with him those of a disciple to his teacher, or a servant to his master."

As regards the function of Christ as the one Mediator between God and man, Huss was at one with Wicliffe. The English Reformer carried out his doctrine, with the strength and joy of a full conviction, to its logical issue, in the entire repudiation of the veneration and intercession of the saints. Huss, on the other hand, grasping the glorious truth of Christ's sole mediatorship more feebly, was never able to shake himself wholly free

from a dependence on the intercession and good offices of the glorified. Nor were the views of Huss on the doctrine of the Sacraments nearly so well defined or so accordant with Scripture as those of Wicliffe; and, as has been already said, he believed in transubstantiation to the end. On the question of the Pope's authority he more nearly approximated Wicliffe's views; Huss denied the divine right of the Bishop of Rome to the primacy of the Church, and wished to restore the original equality which he held existed among the bishops of the Church. Wicliffe would have gone farther; equality among the priests and not merely among the bishops would alone have contented him.

Lechler has drawn with discriminating hand a contrast between these two men. The power of their intellect, the graces of their character, and the achievements of their lives are finely and sharply brought out in the contrasted lights of the following comparison: —

"Huss is indeed not a primitive, creative, original genius like Wicliffe, and as a thinker

neither speculatively inclined nor of systematic talent. In the sphere of theological thinking Wicliffe is a kingly spirit, of an inborn power of mind, and through unwearied mental labor gained the position of a leader of thought; whilst Huss appears as a star of the second magnitude, and planet-like revolves around Wicliffe as his sun. Both indeed circle round the great central Sun, which is Christ himself. Further, Huss is not a character like Wicliffe, twice tempered and sharp as steel – an inwardly strong nature, going absolutely straight forward, without looking on either side, following only his conviction, and carrying it out logically and energetically to its ultimate consequences, sometimes even with a ruggedness and harshness which wounds and repulses. In comparison with Wicliffe, Huss is a somewhat soft personality, finely strung, more receptively and passively inclined than with a vocation for independent power and heroic conquest. Nevertheless, it is not to be inferred that he was a weakling, a characterless, yielding personality. With softness and tenderness of soul it is quite possible to combine a moral toughness, an

immutable faith, an unbending firmness, forming a union of qualities which exerts an attractive and winning influence, nay, challenges the highest esteem and veneration."

"Added to this is the moral purity and unselfishness of the man who exercised an almost ascetic severity towards himself; his sincere fear of God, tender conscientiousness, and heart-felt piety, whereby he cared nothing for himself or his own honor, but before all put the honor of God and his Savior, and next to that the honor of his fatherland, and the unblemished reputation for orthodox piety of his countrymen. In honest zeal for the cause of God and Jesus Christ, both men – Wicliffe and Huss – stand on the same footing. Only in Wicliffe's case the zeal was of a more fiery, manly, energetic kind, whilst in Huss it burned with a warm, silent glow, in union with almost feminine tenderness, and fervent faith and endurance. And this heart, with all its gentleness, unappalled by even the most terrible death, this unconquerable, this all-overcoming patience of the man in his confession of evangelical truth, won for him the

affections of his cotemporaries, and made the most lasting impression upon his own times and on succeeding generations. If Wicliffe was surpassingly a man of understanding, Huss was surpassingly a man of feeling; not of a genial disposition like Luther, but rather of a deep, earnest, gentle nature. Further, if Wicliffe was endowed with a powerful, resolute, manly, energetic will, Huss was gifted with a true, earnest, enduring will. I might say Wicliffe was a man of God, Huss was a child of God; both, however, were heroes in God's host, each according to the gifts which the Spirit of God had lent them, and in each these gifts of mind were used for the good of the whole body. Measured by an intellectual standard, Huss was certainly not equal to Wicliffe; Wicliffe is by far the greater; he overtops by a head not only other men, but also even a Huss. Despite that, however, John Huss, as far as his character was concerned, for his true noble personality, his conscientious piety, his conquering inviolable faith in the midst of suffering and oppression, was in all respects a worthy follower of Wicliffe, a worthy representative upon the Continent of Europe of the

evangelical principle, and of Wicliffe's true, fearless idea of reform, which so loftily upheld the honor of Christ."

## Chapter 9

# Trial and Temptation of Jerome

WE have pursued our narrative uninterruptedly to the close of Huss's life. We must now retrace our steps a little way, and narrate the fate of his disciple and fellow-laborer, Jerome. These two had received the same baptism of faith, and were to drink of the same cup of martyrdom. When Jerome heard of the arrest of Huss, he flew to Constance in the hope of being able to succor, in some way, his beloved master. When he saw that without doing anything for Huss he had brought his own life into peril, he attempted to flee. He was already far on his way back to Prague when he was arrested, and brought to Constance, which he entered in a cart, loaded with chains and guarded by soldiers, as if he had been a malefactor.

On May 23rd, 1415, he appeared before the Council. The Fathers were thrown into tumult and

uproar as on the occasion of Huss's first appearance before them. Jerome's assailants were chiefly the doctors, and especially the famous Gerson, with whom he had chanced to dispute in Paris and Heidelberg, when attending the universities of these cities. At night he was conducted to the dungeon of a tower in the cemetery of St. Paul. His chains, riveted to a lofty beam, did not permit of his sitting down; and his arms, crossed behind on his neck and tied with fetters, bent his head downward and occasioned him great suffering. He fell ill, and his enemies, fearing that death would snatch him from them, relaxed somewhat the rigor of his treatment; nevertheless in that dreadful prison he remained an entire year.

Meanwhile a letter was received from the barons of Bohemia, which convinced the Council that it had deceived itself when it fancied it had done with Huss when it threw his ashes into the Rhine. A storm was evidently brewing, and should the Fathers plant a second stake, the tempest would be all the more sure to burst, and with the more awful fury. Instead of burning Jerome, it were



better to induce him to recant. To this they now directed all their efforts, and so far they were successful. They brought him before them, and summarily offered him the alternative of retractation or death by fire. Ill in body and depressed in mind from his confinement of four months in a noisome dungeon, cut off from his friends, the most of whom had left Constance when Huss was burned, Jerome yielded to the solicitation of the Council. He shrank from the bitter stake and clung to life.

But his retractation (September 23rd, 1415) was a very qualified one. He submitted himself to the Council, and subscribed to the justice of its condemnation of the articles of Wicliffe and Huss, saving and excepting the "holy truths" which they had taught; and he promised to live and die in the Catholic faith, and never to preach anything contrary to it. It is as surprising that such an abjuration should have been accepted by the Council, as it is that it should have been emitted by Jerome. Doubtless the little clause in the middle of it reconciled it to his conscience. But one trembles

to think of the brink on which Jerome at this moment stood. Having come so far after that master whom he has seen pass through the fire to the sky, is he able to follow him no farther? Huss and Jerome have been lovely in their lives; are they to be divided in their deaths? No! Jerome has fallen in a moment of weakness, but his Master will lift him up again. And when he is risen the stake will not be able to stop his following where Huss has gone before.

To turn for a moment from Jerome to the Council: we must remark that the minds of the people were, to some extent, prepared for a reformation of the Church by the sermons preached on that subject from time to time by the members of the Council. On September 8th a discourse was delivered on the text in Jeremiah, "Where is the word of the Lord?" The name of the preacher has not been preserved. After a long time spent in inquiring after the Church, she at length appeared to the orator in the form of a great and beautiful queen, lamenting that there was no longer any virtue in the world, and ascribing this to the avarice

and ambition of the clergy, and the growth of heresy. "The Church," exclaimed the preacher, "has no greater enemies than the clergy. For who are they that are the greatest opposers of the Reformation? Are they the secular princes? Very far from it, for they are the men who desire it with the greatest zeal, and demand and court it with the utmost earnestness. Who are they who rend the garment of Jesus Christ but the clergy? – who may be compared to hungry wolves, that come into the sheepfolds in lambskins, and conceal ungodly and wicked souls under religious habits." A few days later the Bishop of Lodi, preaching from the words "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," took occasion to inveigh against the Council in similar terms. It seemed almost as if it was a voluntary penance which the Fathers had set themselves when they permitted one after another of their number to mount the pulpit only to draw their likenesses and to publish their faults. An ugly picture it truly was on which they were invited to gaze, and they had not even the poor consolation of being able to say that a heretic had painted it.

The abjuration of Jerome, renouncing the errors but adhering to the truths which Wicliffe and Huss had taught, was not to the mind of the majority of the Council. There were men in it who were resolved that he should not thus escape. His master had paid the penalty of his errors with his life, and it was equally determined to spill the blood of the disciple. New accusations were preferred against him, amounting to the formidable number of a hundred and seven. It would be extraordinary, indeed, if in so long a list the Council should be unable to prove a sufficient number to bring Jerome to the stake. The indictment now framed against him had reference mainly to the real presence, indulgences, the worship of images and relics, and the authority of the priests. A charge of disbelief in the Trinity was thrown in, perhaps to give all air of greater gravity to the inculpation; but Jerome purged himself of that accusation by reciting the Athanasian Creed.. As regarded transubstantiation, the Fathers had no cause to find fault with the opinions of Huss and Jerome. Both were believers in the real presence. "It is bread before consecration," said Jerome, "it is the body of

Christ after." One would think that this dogma would be the first part of Romanism to be renounced; experience shows that it is commonly the last; that there is in it a strange power to blind, or fascinate, or enthral the mind. Even Luther, a century later, was not able fully to emancipate himself from it; and how many others, some of them in almost the first rank of Reformers, do we find speaking of the Eucharist with a mysticism and awe which show that neither was their emancipation complete! It is one of the greatest marvels in the whole history of Protestantism that Wicliffe, in the fourteenth century, should have so completely rid himself of this enchantment, and from the very midnight of superstition passed all at once into the clear light of reason and Scripture on this point.

As regards the other points included in the inculcation, there is no doubt that Jerome, like his master John Huss, fell below the standard of the Roman orthodox faith. He did not believe that a priest, be he scandalous or be he holy, had power to anathematize whomsoever he would; and

pardons and indulgences he held to be worthless unless they came from God. There is reason, too, to think that his enemies spoke truly when they accused him of showing but scant reverence for relics, and of putting the Virgin's veil, and the skin of the ass on which Christ sat when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, on the same level as regards their claim to the homage of Christians. And beyond doubt he was equally guilty with Huss in arraigning the priesthood for their avarice, ambition, tyranny, and licentiousness. Of the truth of this charge, Constance itself was a monument. That city had become a Sodom, and many said that a shower of fire and brimstone only could cleanse it from its manifold and indescribable iniquities. But the truth of the charge made the guilt of Jerome only the more heinous.

Meanwhile Jerome had reflected in his prison on what he had done. We have no record of his thoughts, but doubtless the image of Huss, so constant and so courageous in the fire, rose before him. He contrasted, too, the peace of mind which he enjoyed before his retractation, compared with

the doubts that now darkened his soul and shut out the light of God's loving-kindness. He could not conceal from himself the yet deeper abjurations that were before him, before he should finish with the Council and reconcile himself to the Church. On all this he pondered deeply. He saw that it was a gulf that had no bottom, into which he was about to throw himself. There the darkness would shut him in, and he should no more enjoy the society of that master whom he had so greatly revered on earth, nor behold the face of that other Master in heaven, who was the object of his yet higher reverence and love. And for what was he foregoing all these blessed hopes? Only to escape a quarter of an hour's torment at the stake! "I am cast out of Thy sight," said he, in the words of one in a former age, whom danger drove for a time from the path of duty, "but I will look again toward Thy holy temple." And as he looked, God looked on him. The love of his Savior anew filled his soul – that love which is better than life – and with that love returned strength and courage. "No," we hear him say, "although I should stand a hundred ages at the stake, I will not deny my Savior. Now I am ready

to face the Council; it can kill the body, but it has no more that it can do." Thus Jerome rose stronger from his fall.



## Chapter 10

# The Trial of Jerome

WHEN the accusations were communicated to Jerome, he refused to reply to them in prison; he demanded to be heard in public. With this request his judges deemed it expedient to comply; and on May 23rd, 1416, he was taken to the cathedral church, where the Council had assembled to proceed with his cause.

The Fathers feared exceedingly the effect of the eloquence of their prisoner, and they strove to limit him in his defenses to a simple "Yes" or "No." "What injustice! What cruelty!" exclaimed Jerome. "You have held me shut up three hundred and forty days in a frightful prison, in the midst of filth, noisomeness, stench, and the utmost want of everything. You then bring me out before you, and lending an ear to my mortal enemies, you refuse to hear me. If you be really wise men, and the lights of the world, take care not to sin against justice. As for me, I am only a feeble mortal; my life is but of

little importance; and when I exhort you not to deliver an unjust sentence, I speak less for myself than for you."

The uproar that followed these words drowned his further utterance. The furious tempest by which all around him were shaken left him untouched. As stands the rock amid the weltering waves, so stood Jerome in the midst of this sea of passion. His face breathing peace, and lighted up by a noble courage, formed a prominent and pleasant picture amid the darkened and scowling visages that filled the hall. When the storm had subsided it was agreed that he should be fully heard at the sitting of the 26th of May.

On that day he made his defense in an oration worthy of his cause, worthy of the stage on which he pleaded it, and of the death by which he was to seal it. Even his bitterest enemies could not withhold the tribute of their admiration at the subtlety of his logic, the resources of his memory, the force of his argument, and the marvelous powers of his eloquence. With great presence of

mind he sifted every accusation preferred against him, admitting what was true and rebutting what was false. He varied his oration, now with a pleasantry so lively as to make the stern faces around him relax into a smile, now with a sarcasm so biting that straightway the smile was changed into rage, and now with a pathos so melting that something like "dewy pity" sat upon the faces of his judges. "Not once," says Poggio of Florence, the secretary, "during the whole time did he express a thought which was unworthy of a man of worth." But it was not for life that he appeared to plead; for life he did not seem to care. All this eloquence was exerted, not to rescue himself from the stake, but to defend and exalt his cause.

Kneeling down in presence of the Council before beginning his defense, he earnestly prayed that his heart and mouth might be so guided as that not one false or unworthy word should fall from him. Then turning to the assembly he reviewed the long roll of men who had stood before unrighteous tribunals, and been condemned, though innocent; the great benefactors of the pagan world, the heroes

and patriots of the Old Dispensation, the Prince of martyrs, Jesus Christ, the confessors of the New Dispensation – all had yielded up their life in the cause of righteousness, and by the sentence of mistaken or prejudiced judges. He next recounted his own manner of life from his youth upward; reviewed and examined the charges against him; exposed the prevarications of the witnesses, and, finally, recalled to the minds of his judges how the learned and holy doctors of the primitive Church had differed in their sentiments on certain points, and that these differences had tended to the explication rather than the ruin of the faith.

The Council was not unmoved by this address; it awoke in some breasts a sense of justice – we cannot say pity, for pity Jerome did not ask – and not a few expressed their astonishment that a man who had been shut up for months in a prison, where he could see neither to read nor to write, should yet be able to quote so great a number of authorities and learned testimonies in support of his opinions. The Council forgot that it had been promised,

"When ye are brought before rulers and kings for my sake,... take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." (Mark 13:9, 11)

Jerome at his former appearance before the Council had subscribed to the justice of Huss's condemnation. He bitterly repented of this wrong, done in a moment of cowardice, to a master whom he venerated, and he cannot close without an effort to atone for it. "I knew him from his childhood," said he, speaking of Huss; "he was a most excellent man, just and holy. He was condemned notwithstanding his innocence. He has ascended to heaven, like Elias, in the midst of flames, and from thence he will summon his judges to the dread tribunal of Christ. I also – I am ready to die. I will not recoil before the torments which are prepared for me by my enemies and false witnesses, who will one day have to render an account of their impostures before the great God whom nothing can

deceive."

The Council was visibly agitated. Some desired to save the life of a man so learned and eloquent. The spectacle truly was a grand one. Pale, enfeebled by long and rigorous confinement, and loaded with fetters, he yet compelled the homage of those before whom he stood, by his intellectual and moral grandeur. He stood in the midst of the Council, greater than it, throwing its assembled magnificence into the shade by his individual glory, and showing himself more illustrious by his virtues and sufferings than they by their stars and miters. Its princes and doctors felt humbled and abashed in presence of their own prisoner.

But in the breast of Jerome there was no feeling of self-exaltation. If he speaks of himself it is to accuse himself.

"Of all the sins," he continued, "that I have committed since my youth, none weighs so heavily on my mind, and causes me such poignant remorse, as that which I committed in this fatal place, when

I approved of the iniquitous sentence recorded against Wicliffe, and against the holy martyr John Huss, my master and my friend. Yes, I confess it from my heart, and declare with horror that I disgracefully quailed when, through a dread of death, I condemned their doctrines. I therefore supplicate Almighty God to deign to pardon me my sins, and this one in particular, the most heinous of all. You condemned Wicliffe and Huss, not because they shook the faith, but because they branded with reprobation the scandals of the clergy – their pomp, their pride, and their luxuriousness."

These words were the signal for another tumult in the assembly. The Fathers shook with anger. From all sides came passionate exclamations. "He condemns himself. What need have we of further proof? The most obstinate of heretics is before us."

Lifting up his voice – which, says Poggio, "was touching, clear, and sonorous, and his gesture full of dignity" – Jerome resumed: "What! do you think that I fear to die? You have kept me a whole year in a frightful dungeon, more horrible than death.

You have treated me more cruelly than Saracen, Turk, Jew, or Pagan, and my flesh has literally rotted off my bones alive; and yet I make no complaint, for lamentation ill becomes a man of heart and spirit, but I cannot but express my astonishment at such great barbarity towards a Christian."

The clamor burst out anew, and the sitting closed in confusion. Jerome was carried back to his dungeon, where he experienced more rigorous treatment than ever. His feet, his hands, his arms were loaded with fetters. This severity was not needed for his safe-keeping, and could have been prompted by nothing but a wish to add to his torments.

Admiration of his splendid talents made many of the bishops take an interest in his fate. They visited him in his prison, and conjured him to retract. "Prove to me from the Scriptures," was Jerome's reply to all these importunities, "that I am in error." The Cardinal of Florence, Zabarella, sent for him, and had a lengthened conversation with



him. He extolled the choice gifts with which he had been enriched; he dwelt on the great services which these gifts might enable him to render to the Church, and on the brilliant career open to him, would he only reconcile himself to the Council; he said that there was no office of dignity, and no position of influence, to which he might not aspire, and which he was not sure to win, if he would but return to his spiritual obedience; and was it not, he asked, the height of folly to throw away all these splendid opportunities and prospects by immolating himself on the heretic's pile? But Jerome was not moved by the words of the cardinal, nor dazzled by the brilliant offers he made him. He had debated that matter with himself in prison, in tears and agonies, and he had made up his mind once for all. He had chosen the better part. And so he replied to this tempter in purple as he had done to those in lawn, "Prove to me from the Holy Writings that I am in error, and I will abjure it."

"The Holy Writings!" scornfully replied the cardinal; "is everything then to be judged by them?"

Who can understand them till the Church has interpreted them?"

"What do I heal?" cried Jerome; "are the traditions of men more worthy of faith than the Gospel of our Savior? Paul did not exhort those to whom he wrote to listen to the traditions of men, but said, 'Search the Scriptures.'"

"Heretic," said the cardinal, fixing his eyes upon him and regarding him with looks of anger, "I repent having pleaded so long with you. I see that you are urged on by the devil." Jerome was remanded to his prison.

## Chapter 11

# Condemnation and Burning of Jerome

ON the 30th of May, 1416, Jerome was brought to receive his sentence. The grandees of the Empire, the dignitaries of the Church, and the officials of the Council filled the cathedral. What a transition from the gloom of his prison to this brilliant assembly, in their robes of office and their stars of rank! But neither star of prince nor miter of bishop was so truly glorious as the badges which Jerome wore – his chains.

The troops were under arms. The townspeople, drawn from their homes by the rumor of what was about to take place, crowded to the cathedral gates, or pressed into the church.

Jerome was asked for the last time whether he were willing to retract; and on intimating his refusal he was condemned as a heretic, and

delivered up to the secular power. This act was accompanied with a request that the civil judge would deal leniently with him, and spare his life, a request scarcely intelligible when we think that the stake was already planted, that the faggots were already prepared, and that the officers were in attendance to lead him to the pile.

Jerome mounted on a bench that he might the better be heard by the whole assembly. All were eager to catch his last words. He again gave expression to his sorrow at having, in a moment of fear, given his approval of the burning of John Huss. He declared that the sentence now pronounced on himself was wicked and unjust, like that inflicted upon that holy man. "In dying," said he, "I shall leave a sting in your hearts, and a gnawing worm in your consciences. And I cite you all to answer to me before the most high and just Judge within all hundred years."

A paper miter was now brought in, with red devils painted upon it. When Jerome saw it he threw his cap on the floor among the cardinals, and

put the miter upon his head, accompanying the act with the words which Huss had used on a similar occasion: "As my Lord for me did wear a crown of thorn, so I, for Him, do wear with joy this crown of ignominy." The soldiers now closed round him. As they were leading him out of the church, "with a cheerful countenance," says Fox, "and a loud voice, lifting his eyes up to heaven, he began to sing, 'Credo in unum Deum,' as it is accustomed to be sung in the Church." As he passed along through the streets his voice was still heard, clear and kind, singing Church canticles. These he finished as he came to the gate of the city leading to Gottlieben, and then he began a hymn, and continued singing it all the way to the place of execution. The spot where he was to suffer was already consecrated ground to Jerome, for here John Huss had been burned. When he came to the place he kneeled down and began to pray. He was still praying when his executioners raised him up, and with cords and chains bound him to the stake, which had been carved into something like a rude likeness of Huss. When the wood and faggots began to be piled up around him, he again began to sing, "Hail, happy

day!" When that hymn was ended, he sang once more, "Credo in unum Deum," and then he addressed the people, speaking to them in the German tongue, and saying, "Dearly-beloved children, as I have now sung, so do I believe, and none otherwise; and this creed is my whole faith."

The wood was heaped up to his neck, his garments were then thrown upon the pile, and last of all the torch was brought to light the mass. His Savior, who had so graciously supported him amid his dreadful sufferings in prison, was with him at the stake. The courage that sustained his heart, and the peace that filled his soul, were reflected upon his countenance, and struck the beholders. One short, sharp pang, and then the sorrows of earth will be all behind, and the everlasting glory will have come. Nay, it was already come; for, as Jerome stood upon the pile, he looked as one who had gotten the victory over death, and was even now tasting the joys to which he was about to ascend. The executioner was applying the torch behind, when the martyr checked him. "Come forward," said he, "and kindle the pile before my

face; for had I been afraid of the fire I should not be here."

When the faggots began to burn, Jerome with a loud voice began to sing "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit." As the flame waxed fiercer and rose higher, and the martyr felt its scorching heat, he was heard to cry out in the Bohemian language, "O Lord God, Father Almighty, have mercy upon me, and be merciful unto mine offenses, for Thou knewest how sincerely I have loved Thy truth."

Soon after the flame checked his utterance, and his voice ceased to be heard. But the movement of his head and rapid motion of his lips, which continued for about a quarter of an hour, showed that he was engaged in prayer. "So burning in the fire," says Fox, "he lived with great pain and martyrdom whilst one might easily have gone from St. Clement's over the bridge unto our Lady Church."

When Jerome had breathed his last, the few

things of his which had been left behind in his prison were brought out and burned in the same fire. His bedding, his boots, his hood, all were thrown upon the still smoldering embers and consumed. The heap of ashes was then carefully gathered up, and put into a cart, and thrown into the Rhine. Now, thought his enemies, there is an end of the Bohemian heresy. We have seen the last of Huss and Jerome. The Council may now sleep in peace. How short-sighted the men who so thought and spoke! Instead of having stamped out this heresy, they had but scattered its seeds over the whole face of Christendom; and, so far from having erased the name and memory of Huss and Jerome, and consigned them to an utter oblivion, they had placed them in the eyes of the whole world, and made them eternal.

We have recorded with some minuteness these two martyrdoms. We have done so not only because of the rare qualities of the men who endured them, the tragic interest that belongs to their sufferings, and the light which their story throws upon their lives, but because Providence



gave their deaths a representative character, and a moulding influence. These two martyr-piles were kindled as beacon-lights in the dawn of modern history. Let us briefly show why.

## Chapter 12

# **Wicliffe, Huss, and Jerome, or the First Three Witnesses of Modern Christendom**

EACH new era, under the Old Dispensation, was ushered in by the ministry of some man of great character and splendid gifts, and the exhibition of miracles of stupendous grandeur. This was needful to arouse and fix the attention of men, to tell them that the ages were passing, that God was "changing the times and the seasons," and bringing in a new order of things. Gross and brutish, men would otherwise have taken no note of the revolutions of the moral firmament. Abraham stands at the head of one dispensation; Moses at that of another; David at the head of a third; and John the Baptist occupies the van in the great army of the preachers, confessors and martyrs of the Evangelic Dispensation. These are the four mighties who preceded the advent of One who was yet mightier.

And so was it when the time drew nigh that a great moral and spiritual change should pass over the world, communicating a new life to Churches, and a liberty till then unknown to nations. When that era approached Wicliffe was raised up. Abundantly anointed with that Holy Spirit of which Councils and Popes vainly imagined they had an exclusive monopoly, what a deep insight he had into the Scriptures; how firmly and clearly was he able to lay hold of the scheme of Free Salvation revealed in the Bible; how completely did he emancipate himself from the errors that had caused so many ages to miss the path which he found, and which he found not by a keener subtilty or a more penetrating intellect than that of his contemporaries, but simply by his profound submission to the Bible. As John the Baptist emerged from the very bosom of Pharisaical legalism and traditionalism to become the preacher of repentance and forgiveness, so Wicliffe came forth from the bosom of a yet more indurated traditionalism, and of a legalism whose iron yoke was a hundred times heavier than that of

Pharisaism, to preach repentance to Christendom, and to proclaim the great Bible truth that Christ's merits are perfect and cannot be added to; for God bestows His salvation upon men freely, and that "he that believeth on the Son hath life."

So had Wicliffe spoken. Though his living voice was now silent, he was, by his writings, at that hour publishing God's re-discovered message in all the countries of Europe. But witnesses were needed who should come after Wicliffe, and attest his words, and seal with their blood the doctrine which he had preached. This was the office to which Huss and Jerome were appointed. First came the great preacher; after him came the two great martyrs, attesting that Wicliffe had spoken the truth, and sealing their testimony with their lives. At the mouth of these Three, Christendom had admonition tendered to it. They said to an age sunk in formalism and legalism,

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the

Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Such is the place which these two martyrdoms occupy, and such is the importance which attaches to them. If proof of this were needed, we have it in the proceedings of the Council of Constance. The Fathers, not knowing what they did, first and with much solemnity condemned the doctrines of Wicliffe; and in the next place, they burned at the stake Huss and Jerome for adhering to these doctrines. Yes, the Spirit of God was present at Constance, guiding the Council in its decisions, but after a different fashion, and toward another and different end, than the Fathers dreamed of.

The "still small voice," which was now heard speaking in Christendom after ages of silence, must needs be followed by mighty signs – not physical, but moral – not changes in the sky, but changes still more wonderful in the hearts of men. And such was the phenomenon displayed to the eyes of the men of that age in the testimony of Huss and Jerome. All about that testimony was arranged by God with the view of striking the imagination and,

if possible, convincing the understandings of those before whom it was borne. It was even invested with dramatic effect, that nothing might be wanting to gain its end, and leave those who resisted it without excuse. A conspicuous stage was erected for that testimony; all Christendom was assembled to hear it. The witnesses were illustrious for their great intellectual powers. These compelled the attention and extorted the admiration even of their enemies. Yet more illustrious were they for their spiritual graces – their purity, their humility, their patience of suffering, their forgiveness of wrong, their magnanimity and noble-mindedness – the garlands that adorned these victims. And the splendor of these virtues was brought out in relief against the dark background of an age woefully corrupt, and the yet darker background of a Council whose turpitude rotted the very soil on which it met, poisoned the very air, and bequeathed to history one of the foulest blots that darken it. And to crown all there comes, last and highest, the glory of their deaths, tarnished by no dread of suffering, by no prayer for deliverance, by no tear shed over their fate, by no cry wrung from them by

pain and anguish; but, on the contrary, glorified by their looks of gladness as they stood at the stake, and the triumphant hallelujahs which they sang amid the fires.

Such was the testimony of these three early witnesses of Christendom, and such were the circumstances that adapted it to the crisis at which it was borne. Could portent in the sky, could even preacher from the dead, have been so emphatic? To a sensual age, sunk in unbelief, without faith in what was inward, trusting only in what it saw or did, and content with a holiness that was entirely dissevered from moral excellence and spiritual virtue, how well fitted was this to testify that there was a diviner agency than the ghostly power of the priesthood, which could transform the soul and impart a new life to men – in short, that the early Gospel had returned to the world, and that with it was returning the piety, the self-sacrifice, and the heroism of early times!

God, who brings forth the natural day by gradual stages – first the morning star, next the

dawn, and next the great luminary whose light brightens as his orb ascends, till from his meridian height he sheds upon the earth the splendors of the perfect day – that same God brought in, in like manner, by almost imperceptible stages, the evangelical, day. Claudius and Berengarius, and others, were the morning stars; they appeared while as yet all was dark. With Wicliffe the dawn broke; souls caught its light in France, in Italy, and especially in Bohemia. They in their turn became light-bearers to others, and thus the effulgence continued to spread, till at last, "centum reuolutis annis," the day shone out in the ministry of the Reformers of the sixteenth century.



## Chapter 13

# The Hussite Wars

HUSS had been burned; his ashes, committed to the Rhine, had been borne away to their dark sepulcher in the ocean; but his stake had sent a thrill of indignation and horror through Bohemia. His death moved the hearts of his countrymen more powerfully than even his living voice had been able to do. The vindicator of his nation's wrongs – the reformer of his nation's religion – in short, the representative man of Bohemia, had been cruelly, treacherously immolated; and the nation took the humiliation and insult as done to itself. All ranks, from the highest to the lowest, were stirred by what had occurred. The University of Prague issued a manifesto addressed to all Christendom, vindicating the memory of the man who had fallen a victim to the hatred of the priesthood and the perfidy of the emperor. His death was declared to be murder, and the Fathers at Constance were styled "an assembly of the satraps of Antichrist." Every day the flame of the popular indignation was

burning more fiercely. It was evident that a terrible outburst of pent-up wrath was about to be witnessed in Bohemia.

The barons assumed a bolder tone. When the tidings of Huss's martyrdom arrived, the magnates and great nobles held a full council, and, speaking in the name of the Bohemian nation, they addressed an energetic protest to Constance against the crime there enacted. They eulogized, in the highest terms, the man whom the Council had consigned to the flames as a heretic, calling him the "Apostle of Bohemia; a man innocent, pious, holy, and a faithful teacher of the truth." Holding the pen in one hand, while the other rested on their sword's hilt, they said, "Whoever shall affirm that heresy is spread abroad in Bohemia, lies in his throat, and is a traitor to our kingdom; and, while we leave vengeance to God, to Whom it belongs, we shall carry our complaints to the footstool of the indubitable apostolic Pontiff, when the Church shall again be ruled by such an one; declaring, at the same time, that no ordinance of man shall hinder our protecting the humble and faithful

preachers of the words of our Lord Jesus, and our defending them fearlessly, even to the shedding of blood." In this remonstrance the nobles of Moravia concurred.

But deeper feelings were at work among the Bohemian people than those of anger. The faith which had produced so noble a martyr was compared with the faith which had immolated him, and the contrast was found to be in no wise to the advantage of the latter. The doctrines which Huss had taught were recalled to memory now that he was dead. The writings of Wicliffe, which had escaped the flames, were read, and compared with such portions of Holy Writ as were accessible to the people, and the consequence was a very general reception of the evangelical doctrines. The new opinions struck their roots deeper every day, and their adherents, who now began to be called Hussites, multiplied one might almost say hourly.

The throne of Bohemia was at that time filled by Wenceslaus, the son of the magnanimous and patriotic Charles IV. In this grave position of

affairs much would of necessity depend on the course the king might adopt. The inheritor of his father's dignities and honors, Wenceslaus did not inherit his father's talents and virtues. A tyrant and voluptuary, he had been dethroned first by his nobles, next by his own brother Sigismund, King of Hungary; but, regaining his throne, he discovered an altered but not improved disposition. Broken in spirit, he was now as supine and lethargic as formerly he had been overbearing and tyrannical. If his pride was stifled and his violence curbed, he avenged himself by giving the reins to his low propensities and vices. Shut up in his palace, and leading the life of a sensualist, the religious opinions of his subjects were to him matters of almost supreme indifference. He cared but little whether they kept the paths of orthodoxy or strayed into those of heresy. He secretly rejoiced in the progress of Hussism, because he hoped the end would be the spoiling of the wealthy ecclesiastical corporations and houses, and that the lion's share would fall to himself. Disliking the priests, whom he called "the most dangerous of all the comedians," he turned a deaf ear to the

ecclesiastical authorities when they importuned him to forbid the preaching of the new opinions.

The movement continued to make progress. Within four years from the death of Huss, the bulk of the nation had embraced the faith for which he died. His disciples included not a few of the higher nobility, many of the wealthy burghers of the towns, some of the inferior clergy, and the great majority of the peasantry. The accession of the latter, whose single-heartedness makes them capable of a higher enthusiasm and a more entire devotion, brought great strength to the cause. It made it truly national. The Bohemians now resumed in their churches the practice of Communion in both kinds, and the celebration of their worship in the national language. Rome had signalized their subjugation by forbidding the cup, and permitting prayers only in Latin. The Bohemians, by challenging freedom in both points, threw off the marks of their Roman vassalage.

A slight divergence of sentiment was already traceable among the Hussites. One party entirely

rejected the authority of the Church of Rome, and made the Scriptures their only standard. These came to bear the name of Taborites, from the scene of one of their early encampments, which was a hill in the neighborhood of Prague bearing a resemblance, it was supposed, to the Scriptural Tabor. The other party remained nominally in the communion of Rome, though they had abandoned it in heart. Their distinctive tenet was the cup or chalice, meaning thereby Communion in both kinds; hence their name, Calixtines. The cup became the national Protestant symbol. It was blazoned on their standards and carried in the van of their armies; it was sculptured on the portals of their churches, and set up over the gates of their cities. It was ever placed in studied contrast to the Roman symbol, which was the cross. The latter, the Hussites said, recalled scenes of suffering, and so was an emblem of gloom; the former, the cup, was the sign of an accomplished redemption, and so a symbol of gladness. This divergence of the two parties was meanwhile only incipient. It widened in process of time; but for years the great contest in which the Hussites were engaged with Rome, and

which assembled Taborites and Calixtines on the same battle-field, where they joined their prayers as well as their arms, kept them united in one body.

We must bestow a glance on what meanwhile was transacting at Constance. The Council knew that a fire was smoldering in Bohemia, and it did its best to fan it into a conflagration. The sentence of utter extermination, pronounced by old Rome against Carthage, was renewed by Papal Rome against Bohemia, a land yet more accursed than Carthage, overrun by heresy, and peopled by men not worthy to enjoy the light of day. But first the Council must select a new Pope. The conclave met; and being put upon "a thin diet," the cardinals came to an early decision. In their haste to announce the great news to the outer world, they forced a hole in the wall, and shouted out, "We have a Pope, and Otho de Colonna is he!" (November 14th, 1417.)

Acclamations of voices and the pealing of bells followed this announcement, in the midst of which the Emperor Sigismund entered the conclave, and, in the first burst of his joy or superstition, falling

down before the newly elected Pope, he kissed the feet of the Roman Father. The doors of the conclave being now thrown open, the cardinals eagerly rushed out, glad to find themselves again in the light of day. Their temporary prison was so guarded and shut in that even the sun's rays were excluded, and the Fathers had to conduct their business with the light of wax tapers. They had been shut up only from the 8th to the 11th of November, but so thin and altered were their visages when they emerged, owing to the meager diet on which they were compelled to subsist, that their acquaintances had some difficulty in recognizing them. There were fifty-three electors in all – twenty-three cardinals, and thirty deputies of the nations – for whom fifty-three separate chambers had been prepared, and distributed by lot. They were forbidden all intercourse with their fellow-electors within the conclave, as well as with their friends outside, and even the dishes which were handed in to them at a window were carefully searched, lest they should conceal contraband letters or missives.



Proclamation was made by a herald that no one was to come within a certain specified distance of the conclave, and it was forbidden, under pain of excommunication, to pillage the house of the cardinal who might happen to be elected Pope. It was a custom at Rome to hold the goods of the cardinal elect a free booty, on pretense that being now arrived at all riches he had no further need of anything. At the gates of the conclave the emperor and princes kept watch day and night, singing devoutly the hymn "Veni Creator," but in a low strain, lest the deliberations within should be disturbed. The election was finished in less time than is usually required to fill the Papal chair. The French and Spanish members of the conclave contended for a Pope of their own nation, but the matter was cut short by the German deputies, who united their votes in favor of the Italian candidate, and so the affair issued in the election of Otho, of the most noble and ancient house of Colonna. His election falling on the fete of St. Martin of Tours, he took the title of Martin V. Platina, who is not very lavish of his incense to Popes, commends his prudence, good-nature, love of justice, and his

dexterity in the management of affairs and of tempers. Windeck, one of Sigismund's privy councilors, says, in his history of the emperor, that the Cardinal de Colonna was poor and modest, but that Pope Martin was very covetous and extremely rich.

A few hours after the election, through the same streets along which Huss and Jerome had been led in chains to the stake, there swept another and very different procession. The Pope was going in state to be enthroned. He rode on a white horse, covered with rich scarlet housings. The abbots and bishops, in robes of white silk, and mounted on horses, followed in his train. The Pontiff's bridle-rein was held on the right by the emperor, and on the left by the Elector of Brandenburg, these august personages walking on foot. In this fashion was he conducted to the cathedral, where seated on the high altar he was incensed and received homage under the title of Martin V.

Bohemia was one of the first cares of the newly anointed Pope. The great movement which had

Wicliffe for its preacher, and Huss and Jerome for its martyrs, was rapidly advancing. The Pope hurled excommunication against it, but he knew that he must employ other and more forcible weapons besides spiritual ones before he could hope to crush it. He summoned the emperor to give to the Papal See worthier and more substantial proofs of devotion than the gala service of holding his horse's bridle-rein. Pope Martin V., addressing himself to Sigismund, with all the kings, princes, dukes, barons, knights, states, and commonwealths of Christendom, adjured them, by "the wounds of Christ," to unite their arms and exterminate that "sacrilegious and accursed nation." A liberal distribution was promised of the customary rewards – crowns and high places in Paradise – to those who should display the most zeal against the obnoxious heresy by shedding the greatest amount of Bohemian blood. Thus exhorted, the Emperor Sigismund and several of the neighboring German states made ready to engage in the crusade. The Bohemians saw the terrible tempest gathering on their borders, but they were not dismayed by it.

While this storm is brewing at Prague, we shall return for the last time to Constance; and there we find that considerable self-satisfaction is prevalent among the members of the Council, which has concluded its business amid general felicitations and loud boastings that it had pacified Christendom. It had extinguished heresy by the stakes of Huss and Jerome. It had healed the schism by the deposition of the rival Popes and the election of Martin V. It had shot a bolt at Bohemian discontent which would save all further annoyance on that side; and now, as the result of these vigorous measures, an era of tranquillity to Europe and of grandeur to the Popedom might be expected henceforth to commence. Deafened by its own praises, the Council took no note of the underground mutterings, which in all countries betokened the coming earthquake. On the 18th of April, 1418, the Pope promulgated a bull "declaring the Council at an end, and giving every one liberty to return home." As a parting gift he bestowed upon the members "the plenary remission of all their sins." If only half of what is reported touching the doings of the Fathers at Constance be

true, this beneficence of Pope Martin must have constituted a very large draft indeed on the treasury of the Church; but doubtless it sent the Fathers in good spirits to their homes.

On the 15th of May the Pope sang his last mass in the cathedral church, and next day set out on his return for Italy. The French prelates prayed him to establish his chair at Avignon, a request that had been made more than once of his predecessors without avail. But the Pope told them that "they must yield to reason and necessity; that as he had been acknowledged by the whole world for St. Peter's successor, it was but just that he should go and seat himself on the throne of that apostle; and that as the Church of Rome was the head and mother of all the Churches, it was absolutely necessary that the sovereign Pontiff should reside at Rome, as a good pilot ought to keep at the stern and not at the prow of the vessel." Before turning to the tragic scenes on the threshold of which we stand, let us bestow a moment's glance on the gaudy yet ambitious pomp that marked the Pope's departure for Rome. It is thus related by

Reichenthal: –

"Twelve led horses went first, with scarlet housings; which were followed by four gentlemen on horseback, bearing four cardinals' caps upon pikes. After them a priest marched, beating a cross of gold; who was followed by another priest, that carried the Sacrament. Twelve cardinals marched next, adorned with their red hats, and followed by a priest tiding on a white horse, and offering the Sacrament to the populace, under a kind of canopy surrounded by men bearing wax tapers. After him followed John de Susate, a divine of Westphalia, who likewise carried a golden cross, and was encompassed by the canons and senators of the city, beating wax tapers in their hands. At last the Pope appeared in his Pontificalibus, riding on a white steed. He had upon his head a tiara, adorned with a great number of jewels, and a canopy was held over his head by four counts – viz., Eberhard, Count of Nellenburg; William, Count of Montserrat; Berthold, Count of Ursins; and John, Count de Thirstein. The emperor held the reins of the Pope's horse on the right hand, being followed

by Lewis, Duke of Bavaria of Ingolstadt, who held up the housing or horse-cloth. The Elector of Brandenburg held the reins on the left, and behind him Frederick of Austria performed the same office as Lewis of Ingolstadt. There were four other princes on both sides, who held up the horse-cloth. The Pope was followed by a gentleman on horseback, who carried an umbrella to defend him in case of need, either from the rain or sun. After him marched all the clergy and all the nobility on horseback, in such numbers, that they who were eye-witnesses reckoned up no less than forty thousand, besides the multitudes of people that followed on foot. When Martin V. came to the gate of the town, he alighted from his horse, and changed his priest's vestments for a red habit. He also took another hat, and put that which he wore upon the head of a certain prelate who is not named. Then he took horse again, as did also the emperor and the princes, who accompanied him to Gottlieben, where he embarked on the Rhine for Schaffhausen. The cardinals and the rest of his court followed him by land, and the emperor returned to Constance with the other princes."

Leaving Pope Martin to pursue his journey to Rome, we shall again turn our attention to Prague. Alas, the poor land of Bohemia! Woe on woe seemed coming upon it. Its two most illustrious sons had expired at the stake; the Pope had hurled excommunication against it; the emperor was collecting his forces to invade it; and the craven Wenceslaus had neither heart to feel nor spirit to resent the affront which had been done his kingdom. The citizens were distracted, for though on fire with indignation they had neither counselor nor captain. At that crisis a remarkable man arose to organize the nation and lead its armies. His name was John Trocznowski, but he is better known by the sobriquet of Ziska – -that is, the one-eyed. The circumstances attending his birth were believed to foreshadow his extraordinary destiny. His mother went one harvest day to visit the reapers on the paternal estates, and being suddenly taken with the pains of labor, she was delivered of a son beneath an oak-tree in the field. The child grew to manhood, adopted the profession of arms, distinguished himself in the wars of Poland, and



returning to his native country, became chamberlain to King Wenceslaus. In the palace of the jovial monarch there was little from morning to night save feasting and revelry, and Ziska, nothing loth, bore his part in all the coarse humors and boisterous sports of his master. But his life was not destined to close thus ignobly.

The shock which the martyrdom of Huss gave the whole nation was not unfelt by Ziska in the palace. The gay courtier suddenly became thoughtful. He might be seen traversing, with pensive brow and folded arms, the long corridors of the palace, the windows of which look down on the broad stream of the Moldau, on the towers of Prague, and the plains beyond, which stretch out towards that quarter of the horizon where the pile of Huss had been kindled. One day the monarch surprised him in this thoughtful mood. "What is this?" said Wenceslaus, somewhat astonished to see one with a sad countenance in his palace. "I cannot brook the insult offered to Bohemia at Constance by the murder of John Huss," replied the chamberlain. "Where is the use," said the king, "of

vexing one's self about it? Neither you nor I have the means of avenging it. But," continued the king, thinking doubtless that Ziska's fit would soon pass off, "if you are able to call the emperor and Council to account, you have my permission." "Very good, my gracious master," rejoined Ziska, "will you be pleased to give me your permission in writing?" Wenceslaus, who liked a joke, and deeming that such a document would be perfectly harmless in the hands of one who had neither friends, nor money, nor soldiers, gave Ziska what he asked under the royal seal.

Ziska, who had accepted the authorization not in jest but in earnest, watched his opportunity. It soon came. The Pope fulminated his bull of crusade against the Hussites. There followed great excitement throughout Bohemia, and especially in its capital, Prague. The burghers assembled to deliberate on the measures to be adopted for avenging the nation's insulted honor, and defending its threatened independence. Ziska, armed with the royal authorization, suddenly appeared in the midst of them. The citizens were emboldened when they

saw one who stood so high, as they believed, in the favor of the king, putting himself at their head; they concluded that Wenceslaus also was with them, and would further their enterprise. In this, however, they were mistaken. The liberty accorded their proceedings they owed, not to the approbation, but to the pusillanimity of the king. The factions became more embittered every day. Tumult and massacre broke out in Prague. The senators took refuge in the town-house; they were pursued thither, thrown out at the window, and received on the pikes of the insurgents. The king, on receiving the news of the outrage, was so excited, whether from fear or anger is not known, that he had a fit of apoplexy, and died in a few days.

## Chapter 14

# Commencement of the Hussite Wars

WENCESLAUS being dead, and the queen espousing the side of the Catholics, the tumults burst out afresh. There was a whole week's fighting, night and day, between the Romanists and the Hussites, on the bridge of the Moldau, leading to the royal castle. No little blood was shed; the churches and convents were pillaged, the monks driven away, and in some instances massacred. But it was likely to have fared ill with the insurgent Bohemians. The Emperor Sigismund, brother of the deceased Wenceslaus, now claimed the crown of Bohemia.. A bitter partizan of Rome, for whose sake he had incurred the eternal disgrace of burning the man to whom he had given his solemn promise of safety, was not likely to stand on scruples or fear to strike. He was marching on Prague to quell the insurrection and take possession of the crown. "Perish that crown," said the

Bohemians, "rather than it shall sit on the head of one who has incurred the double odium of tyrant and traitor." The Bohemians resolved on resistance; and now it was that the tempest burst. But the party to strike the first blow was Sigismund.

The campaign, which lasted eighteen years, and which was signalized throughout by the passions of the combatants, the carnage of its fields, and the marvelous, we had almost said miraculous victories which crowned the arms of the Hussites, owed its commencement to the following incident: –

The Hussites had agreed to meet on Michaelmas Day, 1419, on a great plain not far from Prague, and celebrate the Eucharist. On the day appointed some 40,000, it is said, from all the towns and villages around, assembled at the place of rendezvous. Three tables were set, the sacred elements were brought forth and placed upon them, and a priest officiated at each, and gave the Communion in both kinds to the people. The affair was the simplest possible; neither were the tables

covered, nor did the priests wear their habits, nor had the people arms; they came as pilgrims with their walking-staves. The affair over, they made a collection to indemnify the man on whose ground they had met; and agreeing to assemble again for a like purpose before Martinmas, they separated, the most part taking the road to Prague, where they arrived at night with lighted torches. Such is the account given by an eye-witness, Benesius Horzowicki, a disciple and friend of Huss; but, says the Jesuit Balbinus, "though a heretic, his account of the affair is trustworthy."

The matter got wind; and the second meeting was not allowed to pass off so quietly as the first. Several hundreds were already on their way, bearing, as before, not arms but walking-staves, when they were met by the intelligence that the troops of the emperor, lying in ambuscade, were waiting their approach. They halted on the road, and sent messengers to the towns in their rear begging assistance. A small body of soldiers was dispatched to their aid, and in the conflict which followed, the imperial cavalry, though in superior

force, were put to flight. After the battle, the pilgrims with their defenders pursued their way to Prague, which they entered amid acclamations of joy. The first battle had been fought with the troops of the emperor, and the victory remained with the Bohemians.

The Rubicon had been crossed. The Bohemians must now go forward into the heart of the conflict, which was destined to assume dimensions that were not dreamed of by either party. The Turk, without intending it, came to their help. He attacked the Empire of Sigismund on the side opposite to that of Bohemia. This divided the emperor's forces, and weakened his front against Ziska. But for this apparently fortuitous but in reality Providential occurrence, the Hussite movement might have been crushed before there was time to organize it. The prompt and patriotic Hussite leader saw his advantage, and made haste to rally the whole of Bohemia, before the emperor should have got the Moslem off his hands, and before the armed bands of Germany, now mustering in obedience to the Papal summons,

should have had time to bear down upon his little country. He issued a manifesto, signed "Ziska of the Chalice," in which he invoked at once the religion and the patriotism of his countrymen. "Imitate," said he, "your ancestors the ancient Bohemians, who were always able to defend the cause of God and their own... We are collecting troops from all parts, in order to fight against the enemies of truth, and the destroyers of our nation, and I beseech you to inform your preacher that he should exhort, in his sermons, the people, to make war on the Antichrist, and that every one, old and young, should prepare himself for it. I also desire that when I shall be with you there should be no want of bread, beer, victuals, or provender, and that you should provide yourselves with good arms... Remember your first encounter, when you were few against many, unarmed against well-armed men. The hand of God has not been shortened. Have courage, and be ready. May God strengthen you! – Ziska of the Chalice: in the hope of God, Chief of the Taborites."

This appeal was responded to by a burst of



enthusiasm. From all parts of Bohemia, from its towns and villages and rural plains, the inhabitants rallied to the standard of Ziska, now planted on Mount Tabor. These hastily assembled masses were but poorly disciplined, and still more poorly armed; but the latter defect was about to be supplied in a way they little dreamed of.

They had scarce begun their march towards the capital when they encountered a body of imperial cavalry. They routed, captured, and disarmed them. The spoils of the enemy furnished them with the weapons they so greatly needed, and they now saw themselves armed. Flushed with this second victory, Ziska, at the head of his now numerous host, a following rather than an army, entered Prague, where the righteousness of the Hussite cause, and the glory of the success that had so far attended it, were tarnished by the violence committed on their opponents. Many of the Roman Catholics lost their lives, and the number of churches and convents taken possession of, according to both Protestant and Catholic historians, was about 500. The monks were

specially obnoxious from their opposition to Huss. Their establishments in Prague and throughout Bohemia were pillaged. These were of great magnificence. Aeneas Sylvius, accustomed though he was to the stately edifices of Italy, yet speaks with admiration of the number and beauty of the Bohemian monasteries. A very short while saw them utterly wrecked, and their treasure, which was immense, and which consisted in gold and silver and precious stones, went a long way to defray the expenses of the war.

That the emperor could be worsted, supported as he was by the whole forces of the Empire and the whole influence of the Church, did not enter into any man's mind. Still it began to be apparent that the Hussites were not the contemptible opponents Sigismund had taken them for. He deemed it prudent to come to terms with the Turk, that he might be at liberty to deal with Ziska.

Assembling an army, contemporary historians say of 100,000 men, of various nationalities, he marched on Prague, now in possession of the

Hussites, and laid siege to it. An idea may be formed of the strength of the besieging force from the rank and number of the commanders. Under the emperor, who held of course the supreme command, were five electors, two dukes, two landgraves, and more than fifty German princes. But this great host, so proudly officered, was destined to be ignominiously beaten. The citizens of Prague, under the brave Ziska, drove them with disgrace from before their walls. The imperialists avenged themselves for their defeat by the atrocities they inflicted in their retreat. Burning, rapine, and slaughter marked their track, for they fancied they saw in every Bohemian a Hussite and enemy.

A second attempt did the emperor make on Prague the same year (1420), only to subject himself and the arms of the Empire to the disgrace of a second repulse. Outrages again marked the retreating steps of the invaders. These repeated successes invested the name of Ziska with great renown, and raised the expectations and courage of his followers to the highest pitch. It is not

wonderful if their minds began to be heated, seeing as they did the armies of the Empire fleeing before them. Mount Tabor, where the standard of Ziska continued to float, was to become, so they thought, the head of the earth, more holy than Zion, more invulnerable than the Capitol. It was to be the center and throne of a universal empire, which was to bless the nations with righteous laws, and civil and religious freedom. The armies of Ziska were swelled from another and different cause. A report was spread throughout Bohemia that all the towns and villages of the country (five only excepted) were to be swallowed up by an earthquake, and this prediction obtaining general credence, the cities were forsaken, and many of their inhabitants crowded to the camp, deeming the chance of victory under so brave and fortunate a leader as Ziska very much preferable to waiting the certainty of obscure and inglorious entombment in the approaching fate of their native villages.

At this stage of the affair the Bohemians held a Diet at Czaslau (1521) to deliberate on their course for the future. The first matter that occupied them

was the disposal of their crown. They declared Sigismund unworthy to wear it, and resolved to offer it to the King of Poland or to a prince of his dynasty. The second question was, on what basis should they accept a Peace? The four following articles they declared indispensable in order to this, and they ever after adhered to them in all their negotiations, whether with the imperial or with the ecclesiastical authorities. These were as follow: –

1. The free preaching of the Gospel.
2. The celebration of the Sacrament of the Supper in both kinds.
3. The secularization of the ecclesiastical property, reserving only so much of it as might yield a comfortable subsistence to the clergy.
4. The execution of the laws against all crimes, by whomsoever committed, whether laics or clerics.

Further, the Diet established a regency for the government of the kingdom, composed of magnates, nobles, and burghers, with Ziska as its president. The Emperor Sigismund sent proposals

to the Diet, offering to confirm their liberties and redress all their just wrong, provided they would accept him as their king, and threatening them with war in case of refusal. The promises and the threats of the emperor, the Diet held in equal contempt. They returned for answer an indignant rejection of his propositions, reminding Sigismund that he had broken his word in the matter of the safe-conduct, that he had inculpated himself by participating in the murder of Huss and Jerome, and that he had assumed the attitude of an enemy of Bohemia by publishing the bull of excommunication which the Pope had fulminated against their native land, and by stirring up the German nationalities to invade it.

The war now resumed its course. It was marked by the usual concomitants of military strife, rapine and siege, fields wasted, cities burned, and the arts and industries suspended. The conflict was interesting as terrible, the odds being so overwhelming. A little nation was seen contending single-handed against the numerous armies and various nationalities of the Empire. Such a conflict the Bohemians never could have sustained but for

their faith in God, whose aid would not be wanting, they believed, to their righteous cause. Nor can any one who surveys the wonderful course of the campaign fail to see that this aid was indeed vouchsafed. Victory invariably declared on the side of the Hussites. Ziska won battle after battle, and apart from the character of the cause of which he was the champion, he may be said to have deserved the success that attended him, by the feats of valor which he performed in the field, and the consummate ability which he displayed as a general. He completely outmaneuvered the armies of the emperor; he overwhelmed them by surprises, and baffled them by new and masterly tactics. His name had now become a tower of strength to his friends, and a terror to his enemies. Every day his renown extended, and in the same proportion did the confidence of his soldiers in him and in themselves increase. They forgot the odds arrayed against them, and with every new day they went forth with redoubled courage to meet their enemies in the field, and to achieve new and more glorious victories.

The cause for which they fought had a hallowing effect upon their conduct in the camp, and raised them above the fear of death. In their marches they were commonly preceded by their pastors, who bore aloft the Cup, the symbol in which they conquered. Before joining battle the Sacrament was administered in both kinds to the soldiers, and, having partaken, they went into action singing hymns. The spirit with which the Hussites contended, combining that of confessors with soldiers, was wholly new in the armies of that age. In the rear of the army came the women, who tended the sick and wounded, and in cases of necessity worked upon the ramparts. Let us pause a moment in our tragic narration. To this day the Hussites have never had justice done them. Their cause was branded with every epithet of condemnation and abhorrence by their contemporaries. At this we do not wonder. But succeeding ages even have been slow to perceive the sublimity of their struggle, and reluctant to acknowledge the great benefits that flowed from it to Christendom. It is time to remove the odium under which it has long lain. The Hussites present



the first instance in history of a nation voluntarily associating in a holy bond to maintain the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience. True, they maintained that right with the sword; but for this they were not to blame. It was not left to them to choose the weapons with which to fight their sacred battle. The fulmination of the Pope, and the invasion of their country by the armies of the emperor, left them no alternative but arms. But, having reluctantly unsheathed the sword, the Hussites used it to such good purpose that their enemies long remembered the lesson that had been taught them. Their struggle paved the way for the quiet entrance of the Reformation upon the stage of the sixteenth century. Had not the Hussites fought and bled, the men of that era would have had a harder struggle before they could have launched their great movement. Charles V. long stood with his hand upon his sword before he found courage to draw it, remembering the terrible recoil of the Hussite war on those who had commenced it.

## Chapter 15

# Marvellous Genius of Ziska as a General

OUR space does not permit us to narrate in detail the many battles, in all of which Ziska bore himself so gallantly. He was one of the most remarkable generals that ever led all army. Cochlaeus, who bore him no good-will, says, that all thing considered, his blindness, the peasants he had to transform into soldiers, and the odds he had to meet, Ziska was the greatest general that ever lived. Accident deprived him in his boyhood of one of his eyes. At the siege of Raby he lost the other, and was now entirely blind. But his marvelous genius for arranging an army and directing its movements, for foreseeing every emergency and coping with every difficulty, instead of being impaired by this untoward accident, seemed to be strengthened and enlarged, for it was only now that his great abilities as a military leader fully revealed themselves. When an action was about to take

place, he called a few officers around him, and made them describe the nature of the ground and the position of the enemy. His arrangement was instantly made as if by intuition. He saw the course the battle must run, and the succession of maneuvers by which victory was to be grasped.

While the armies were fighting in the light of day, the great chief who moved them stood apart in a pavilion of darkness. But his inner eye surveyed the whole field, and watched its every movement. That blind giant, like Samson his eyes put out, but unlike Samson his hands not bound, smote his enemies with swift, terrible, and unerring blows, and having overwhelmed them in ruin, himself retired from the field victorious.

What contributed not a little to this remarkable success were the novel methods of defense which Ziska employed in the field. He conferred on his soldiers the advantages of men who contend behind walls and ramparts, while their enemy is all the time exposed. It is a mode of warfare in use among Eastern and nomadic tribes, from whom it is

probable the Poles borrowed it, and Ziska in his turn may have learned it from them when he served in their wars. It consisted in the following contrivance: – The wagons of the commissariat, linked one to another by strong iron chains, and ranged in line, were placed in front of the host. This fortification was termed a Wagenburg; ranged in the form of a circle, this wooden wall sometimes enclosed the whole army. Behind this first rampart rose a second, formed of the long wooden shields of the soldiers, stuck in the ground. These movable walls were formidable obstructions to the German cavalry. Mounted on heavy horses, and armed with pikes and battle-axes, they had to force their way through this double fortification before they could close with the Bohemians. All the while that they were hewing at the wagons, the Bohemian archers were plying them with their arrows, and it was with thinned ranks and exhausted strength that the Germans at length were able to join battle with the foe.

Even after forcing their way, with great effort and loss, through this double defense, they still

found themselves at a disadvantage; for their armor scarce enabled them to contend on equal terms with the uncouth but formidable weapons of their adversaries. The Bohemians were armed with long iron flails, which they swung with prodigious force. They seldom failed to hit, and when they did so, the flail crashed through brazen helmet, skull and all. Moreover, they carried long spears which had hooks attached, and with which, clutching the German horseman, they speedily brought him to the ground and dispatched him. The invaders found that they had penetrated the double rampart of their foes only to be dragged from their horses and helplessly slaughtered. Besides numerous skirmishes and many sieges, Ziska fought sixteen pitched battles, from all of which he returned a conqueror.

The career of this remarkable man terminated suddenly. He did not fall by the sword, nor did he breathe his last on the field of battle; he was attacked by the plague while occupied in the siege of Prysbislav, and died on October 11th, 1424.

The grief of his soldiers was great, and for a moment they despaired of their cause, thinking that with the death of their leader all was lost. Bohemia laid her great warrior in the tomb with a sorrow more universal and profound than that with which she had ever buried any of her kings. Ziska had made the little country great; he had filled Europe with the renown of its arms; he had combated for the faith which was now that of a majority of the Bohemian nation, and by his hand God had humbled the haughtiness of that power which had sought to trample their convictions and consciences into the dust. He was buried in the Cathedral of Czaaslau, in fulfillment of his own wish. His countrymen erected a monument of marble over his ashes, with his effigies sculptured on it, and an inscription recording his great qualities and the exploits he had performed. Perhaps the most touching memorial of all was his strong iron mace, which hung suspended above his tomb.

The Bohemian Jesuit Balbinus, who had seen numerous portraits of Ziska, speaks of him as a man of middle size, strong chest, broad shoulders,

large round head, and aquiline nose. He dressed in the Polish fashion, wore a mustache, and shaved his head, leaving only a tuft of brown hair, as was the manner in Poland.

## Chapter 16

# Second Crusade Against Bohemia

THE Hussites had lost their great leader; still the tide of success continued to flow. When dying Ziska had named Procopius as his successor, and his choice, so amply justified by its results, attests that his knowledge of men was not inferior to his skill in the field. When the Bohemians laid Ziska in the grave, they looked around with no hope of finding one equally great to fill his place. In Procopius they found a greater, though his fame has been less. Nor is this surprising. A few great qualities intensely, and it may be disproportionately developed, strike the world even more than an assemblage of gifts harmoniously blended.

Procopius was the son of a nobleman of small fortune. Besides an excellent education, which his maternal uncle, who had adopted him as his heir,



took care he should receive, he had traveled in many foreign countries, the Holy Land among others, and his taste had been refined, and his understanding enlarged, by what he had seen and learned abroad. On his return he entered the Church – in compliance with his uncle's solicitations, it is said, not from his own bent – and hence he was sometimes termed the Tonsured. But when the war broke out he entered with his whole heart into his country's quarrel, and, forsaking the Church, placed himself under the standard of Ziska. His devotion to the cause was not less than Ziska's. If his spirit was less fiery it was not because it was less brave, but because it was better regulated. Ziska was the soldier and general; Procopius was the statesman in addition.

The enemies of the Hussites knowing that Ziska was dead, but not knowing that his place was filled by a greater, deemed the moment opportune for striking another blow. Victory they confidently hoped would now change sides. They did not reflect that the blood of Huss and Jerome was weighing upon their swords. The terrible blind

warrior, before whom they had so often fled, they would never again encounter in battle; but that righteous Power that had made Ziska its instrument in chastising the perfidy which had torn in pieces the safe-conduct of Huss, and then burned his body at the stake, they should assuredly meet on every battle-field on Bohemian soil on which they should draw sword. But this they had yet to learn, and so they resolved to resume the war, which from this hour, as they fondly believed, would run in a prosperous groove.

The new summons to arms came from Rome. The emperor, who was beginning to disrelish being continually beaten, was in no great haste to resume the campaign. To encourage and stimulate him, the Pope wrote to the princes of Germany and the King of Poland, exhorting them to unite their arms with those of Sigismund, and deal a blow which should make an end, once for all, of this troublesome affair. Than the Hussite heretics, the Turk himself, he said, was less the foe of Christianity; and it was a more urgent as well as a more meritorious work to endeavor to bring about the extirpation of the

Bohemian adversary than the overthrow of the Moslem one.

This letter was speedily followed by a bull, ordaining a new crusade against the Hussites. In addition to the letter which the Pope caused to be forwarded to the King of Poland, exhorting him to extirpate the Bohemian heresy, he sent two legates to see after the execution of his wishes. He also ordered the Archbishop of Lemberg to levy in his diocese 20,000 golden ducats, to aid the king in prosecuting the war. The Pontiff wrote to the same effect to the Duke of Lithuania. There is also a bull of the same Pope, Martin V., addressed to the Archbishops of Mainz, of Treves, and of Cologne, confirming the decree of the Council of Constance against the Hussites, and the several parties into which they were divided.

At the first mutterings of the distant tempest, the various sections of the Hussites drew together. On the death of Ziska they had unhappily divided. There were the Taborites, who acknowledged Procopius as leader; there were the Orphans, who

had lost in Ziska a father, and would accept no one in his room; and there were the Calixtines, whom Coribut, a candidate for the Bohemian crown, commanded. But the sword, now so suddenly displayed above their heads, reminded them that they had a common country and a common faith to defend. They forgot their differences in presence of the danger that now menaced them, stood side by side, and waited the coming of the foe.

The Pontiff's summons had been but too generally responded to. The army now advancing against this devoted land numbered not less than 70,000 picked men; some historians say 100,000. They brought with them 3,000 wagons and 180 pieces of cannon. On Saturday, June 15th, 1426, they entered Bohemia in three columns, marching in the direction of Aussig, which the Hussites were besieging, and which lies on the great plain between Dresden and Toplitz, on the confines of the Slavonic and German worlds. On Sabbath morning, as they drew near the Hussite camp, Procopius sent a proposal to the invaders that quarter should be given on both sides. The

Germans, who did not expect to need quarter for themselves, refused the promise of it to the Hussites, saying that they were under the curse of the Pope, and that to spare them would be to violate their duty to the Church. "Let it be so, then," replied Procopius, "and let no quarter be given on either side."

On Sabbath forenoon, the 16th of June, the battle began. The Bohemians were entrenched behind 500 wagons, fastened to one another by chains, and forming a somewhat formidable rampart. The Germans attacked with great impetuosity. They stormed the first line of defense, hewing in pieces with their battle-axes the iron fastenings of the wagons, and breaking through them. Pressing onward they threw down the second and weaker line, which consisted of the wooden shields stuck into the ground. They arrived in the area within, weary with the labor it had cost them to break through into it. The Bohemians the while were resting on their arms, and discharging an occasional shot from their swivel guns on the foe as he struggled with the wagons. Now that they

were face to face with the enemy they raised their war-cry, they swung their terrible flails, they plied their long hooks, and pulling the Germans from their horses, they enacted fearful slaughter upon them as they lay on the ground. Rank after rank of the invaders pressed forward, only to be blended in the terrible carnage which was going on, on this fatal spot. The battle raged till a late hour of the afternoon. The German knights contested the action with great valor and obstinacy, on a soil slippery with the blood and cumbered with the corpses of their comrades. But their bravery was in vain. The Bohemian ranks were almost untouched; the Germans were every moment going down in the fearful tempest of arrows and shot that beat upon them, and in the yet more terrible buffeting of the iron flails, which crushed the hapless warrior on whom they fell. The day closed with the total rout of the invaders, who fled from the field in confusion, and sought refuge in the mountains and woods around the scene of action.

The fugitives when overtaken implored quarter, but themselves had settled it, before going into

battle, and, accordingly, no quarter was given. Twenty-four counts and barons stuck their swords in the ground, and knelt before their captors, praying that their lives might be spared. But in vain. In one place three hundred slain knights are said to have been found lying together in a single heap. The loss in killed of the Germans, according to Palacky, whose history of Bohemia is based upon original documents, and the accuracy of which has never been called in question, was fifteen thousand. The wounded and missing may have swelled the total loss to fifty thousand, the number given in the Bohemian ballad, a part of which we are about to quote. The German nobility suffered tremendous loss, nearly all their leaders being left on the field. Of the Hussites there fell in battle thirty men.

A rich booty was reaped by the victors. All the wagons, artillery, and tents, and a large supply of provisions and coin fell into their hands. "The Pope," said the Hussites jeeringly, "owes the Germans his curse, for having enriched us heretics with such boundless store of treasure." But the

main advantage of this victory was the splendid prestige it gave the Hussites. From that day their arms were looked upon as invincible.

The national poets of Bohemia celebrated in song this great triumph. The following fragment is not unlike the ballads in which some of the early conflicts of our own country were commemorated. In its mingled dialogue and description, its piquant interrogatories and stinging retorts, it bears evidence of being contemporary, or nearly so, with the battle. It is only a portion of this spirited poem for which we can here find room.

"In mind let all Bohemians bear,  
How God the Lord did for them care,  
And victory at Aussig gave,  
When war they waged their faith to save.  
The year of grace – the time to fix –  
Was fourteen hundred twenty-six;  
The Sunday after holy Vite  
The German host dispersed in flight.  
Many there were look'd on the while,  
Looked on Bohemia's risk with guile,



For gladsome they to see had been  
Bohemians suffer woe and teen.  
But thanks to God the Lord we raise,  
To God we glory give and praise,  
Who aided us with mighty hand  
To drive the German from our land.  
The host doth nigh Bavaria war,  
Crusading foes to chase afar,  
Foes that the Pope of Rome had sent,  
That all the faithful might be shent.  
The tale of woe all hearts doth rend,  
Thus to the host for aid they send:  
'Bohemia's faith doth stand upright,  
If comrade comrade aids in fight.'  
The Count of Meissen said in sight,  
'If the Bohemian bands unite,  
Evil, methinks, will us betide;  
Asunder let us keep them wide.  
Fear strikes me, when the flails I see,  
And those black lads so bold and free!  
'Tis said that each doth crush the foe  
Upon whose mail he sets a blow.'  
Our Marshal, good Lord Vanek, spake:  
'Whoe'er God's war will undertake,

Whoe'er will wage it free from guile,  
Himself with God must reconcile.'  
On Friday then, at morning light,  
The Czechians service held aright,  
Received God's body and His blood,  
Ere for their faith in fight they stood.  
Prince Sigmund did the same likewise,  
And prayed to God with tearful eyes,  
And urged the warriors firm to stand,  
And cheer'd the people of the land.  
By Predlitz, on Behani's height,  
The armies met and closed in fight;  
Stout Germans there, Bohemians here,  
Like hungry lions, know no fear.  
The Germans loud proclaim'd that day,  
The Czechians must their creed unsay,  
Submit themselves and sue for grace,  
Or leave their lives upon the place.  
'Gainst us ye cannot stand,' they said,  
'Against our host ye are but dead;  
Look at our numbers; what are ye?  
A cask of poppy-seed are we.'

The bold Bohemians made reply:

'Our creed we hold until we die,  
Our fatherland we will defend,  
Though in the fight we meet our end.  
And though a little band to see,  
A spoonful small of mustard we,  
Yet none the less we'll sharply bite,  
If Christ but aid us in the fight.  
But be this pact betwixt us twain:  
Whoe'er's by either army ta'en,  
Bind him and keep him, slay him not;  
Expect from us the selfsame lot.'  
Said they: 'This thing we cannot do;  
The Pope's dread curse is laid on you,  
And we must slay in fury wild  
Both old and young, both maid and child.'  
The Czechians too same pact did make,  
No German prisoners to take;  
Then each man call'd his God upon,  
And thought his faith, his honor on.  
The Germans jeer'd them as they stood,  
On came their horsemen like a flood:  
'Our foes,' they say, 'like geese to-day  
With axe, with dirk, with mace we'll slay.  
Soon lose shall many a maid and wife,

Sire, brother, husband in the strife,  
In sad bereavement shall remain;  
Woe waits the orphans of the slain.'  
When each on other 'gan to fall,  
The Czechians on their God did call;  
They saw before their van in view  
A stranger knight, whom no man knew.  
The Taborites begin the fight,  
Like men they forwards press and smite;  
Where'er the Orphans took their road,  
There streams of blood like brooklets flow'd.  
And many a knight display'd his might,  
And many a lord was good in fight,  
'Twere vain to strive each name to say –  
Lord! bless them and their seed for aye!  
For there with valor without end  
They did the truth of God defend,  
They gave their lives right valiantly,  
With thee, O Lord! in heav'n to be.  
When long the fight had fiercely burn'd,  
The wind against the Germans turn'd,  
Their backs the bold Bohemians see,  
Quick to the woods and hills they flee.  
And those that 'scaped the bloody scene

Right sadly told the Margravine,  
For faith and creed how fierce and wood  
The Czechian heretics had stood.  
Then fourteen counts and lords of might  
Did from their coursers all alight,  
Their sword-points deep in earth did place  
And to the Czechians sued for grace.  
For prayers and cries they cared not aught,  
Silver and gold they set at naught,  
E'en as themselves had made reply,  
So ev'ry man they did to die.  
Thus thousands fifty, thousands twain,  
Or more, were of the Germans slain,  
Besides the youths, that did abide  
In helmets by the army's side;  
But these they kept alive, to tell  
Their lady how her people fell,  
That all might think the fight upon,  
At Aussig that for God was won.  
Ho! all ye faithful Christian men!  
Each lord and knight and citizen!  
Follow and hold your fathers' creed  
And show ye are their sons indeed!  
Be steadfast in God's truth always,

And so from God ye shall have praise;  
God on your offspring blessings pour,  
And grant you life for evermore!"

## Chapter 17

# Brilliant Successes of the Hussites

SCARCE had this tempest passed over the Hussites when a more terrible one was seen rolling up against their devoted land. The very next year (1427) a yet greater crusade than that which had come to so inglorious an issue, was organized and set in motion. This invasion, like the former, was instigated by the Pope, who this time turned his eyes to a new quarter for a captain to lead it. He might well despair of finding a German prince willing to head such an expedition, after the woeful experience the nobles, of that land had had of Bohemian warfare. The English were at that time winning great renown in France, and why should they be unwilling, thought the Pope, to win equal fame, and at the same time to serve the Church, by turning their arms against the heretics of Bohemia?. Who could tell but the warlike Norman might know how to break the spell which had

hitherto chained victory to the Hussite banners, although the Teuton had not found out the important secret?

Pope Martin, following out his idea, selected Henry de Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, the son of the celebrated John of Gaunt, and brother of Henry IV., as a suitable person on whom to bestow this mark of confidence. He first created him a cardinal, he next made him his legate-a-latere, accompanying this distinguished dignity with a commission equally distinguished, and which, if difficult, would confer honor proportionately great if successfully accomplished. In short, the Pope put him at the head of a new Bohemian crusade, which he had called into existence by his bull given at Rome, February 16th, 1427. This bull the Pope sent to Henry of Winchester, and the bishop had forthwith to provide the important additions of money, soldiers, and success.

The bishop, now become legate-a-latere, published in England the bull sanctioning the crusade, not doubting that he should instantly see



thousands of enthusiastic warriors pressing forward to fight under his banner. He was mortified, however, to find that few Englishmen were ambitious of taking part in an enterprise beyond doubt very holy, but which beyond doubt would be very bloody. Beaufort crossed the sea to Belgium, where better fortune awaited him. In the venerable and very ecclesiastical city of Mechlin he published the Pope's bull, and waited the effect. It was all that the warlike legate-a-latere could wish. No such response had been given to any similar summons since the day that the voice of Peter the Hermit had thrilled the Western nations, and precipitated them in fanatical masses upon the infidels of Palestine. The whole of that vast region which extends from the Rhine to the Elbe, and from the shores of the Baltic to the summits of the Alps, seemed to rise up at the voice of this new Peter. Around his standard there gathered a host of motley nationalities, composed of the shepherds of the mountains, and the artisans and traders of the towns, of the peasants who tilled the fields, and the lords and princes that owned them. Contemporary writers say that the army that now assembled

consisted of ninety thousand infantry and an equal number of cavalry. This doubtless is so far a guess, for in those days neither armies nor nations were accurately told, but it is without doubt that the numbers that swelled this the fourth crusade very much exceeded those of the former one. Here were swords enough surely to convert all the heretics in Bohemia.

Led by three electors of the Empire, by many princes and counts, and headed by the legate-a-late of the Pope, this great host marched forward to the scene, as it believed, of its predestined triumph. It would strike such a blow as would redeem all past defeats, and put it out of the power of heresy ever again to lift up its head on the soil of the holy Roman Empire. The very greatness of the danger that now threatened the Hussites helped to ward it off. The patriotism of all ranks in Bohemia, from the magnate to the peasant, was roused. Many Roman Catholics who till now had opposed their Protestant countrymen, feeling the love of country stronger in their bosom than the homage of creed, joined the standard of the great Procopius. The

invaders entered Bohemia in June, 1427, and sat down before the town of Meiss which they meant to besiege.

The Bohemians marched to meet their invaders. They were now within sight of them, and the two armies were separated only by the river that flows past Meiss. The crusaders were in greatly superior force, but instead of dashing across the stream, and closing in battle with the Hussites whom they had come so far to meet, they stood gazing in silence at those warriors, whose features, hardened by constant exposure, and begrimed with the smoke and dust of battle, seemed to realize the pictures of terror which report had made familiar to their imaginations long before they came in contact with the reality. It was only for a few moments that the invaders contemplated the Hussite ranks. A sudden panic fell upon them. They turned and fled in the utmost confusion. The legate was as one who awakens from a dream. His labors and hopes at the very moment when, as he thought, they were to be crowned with victory, suddenly vanished in a shameful rout. The Hussites, plunging into the

river, and climbing the opposite bank, hung upon the rear of the fugitives, slaughtering them mercilessly. The carnage was increased by the fury of the peasantry, who rose and avenged upon the foe, in his retreat, the ravages he had committed in his advance. The booty taken was so immense that there was scarcely an individual, of whatever station, in all Bohemia, who was not suddenly made rich.

The Pope comforted the humiliated Henry de Beaufort by sending him a letter of condolence (October 2nd, 1427), in which he hinted that a second attempt might have a better issue. But the legate, who had found that if the doctrines of the Hussites were false their swords were sharp, would meddle no further in their affairs. Not so the Emperor Sigismund. Still coveting the Bohemian crown, but despairing of gaining possession of it by arms, he now resolved to try what diplomacy could effect. But the Bohemians, who felt that the gulf between the emperor and themselves, first opened by the stake of Huss, had been vastly widened by the blood since shed in the wars into which he had

forced them, declined being ruled by him. Such, at least, was the feeling of the great majority of the nation. But Procopius was unwilling to forego the hopes of peace, so greatly needed by a stricken and bleeding country. He had combated for the Bohemian liberties and the Hussite faith on the battle-field. He was ready to die for them. But he hinged, if it were possible on anything like honorable and safe terms, to close these frightful wars. In this hope he assembled the Bohemian Diet at Prague, in 1429, and got its consent to go to Vienna and lay the terms of the Bohemian people before the emperor in person.

These were substantially the same as the four articles mentioned in a former chapter, and which the Hussites, when the struggle opened, had agreed on as the indispensable basis of all negotiations for peace that might at any time be entered upon – namely, the free preaching of the Gospel, Communion in both kinds, a satisfactory arrangement of the ecclesiastical property, and the execution of the laws against all crimes by whomsoever committed. The likelihood was small

that so bigoted a monarch as Sigismund would agree to these terms; but though the journey had been ten times longer, and the chance of success ten times smaller, Procopius would have done what he did if thereby he might bind up his country's wounds. It was as might have been anticipated. Sigismund would not listen to the voice of a suffering but magnanimous and pious people; and Procopius returned to Prague, his embassy unaccomplished, but with the satisfaction that he had held out the olive-branch, and that if the sword must again be unsheathed, the blood which would flow would lie at the door of those who had spurned the overtures of a just and reasonable peace.

The Hussites now assumed the offensive, and those nations which had so often carried war into Bohemia experienced its miseries on their own soil. This policy might appear to the Bohemians, on a large view of their affairs, the wisest that they could pursue. We know at least that it was adopted at the recommendation of the enlightened and patriotic man who guided their councils. Their

overtures for peace had been haughtily rejected; and it was now manifest that they could reckon on not a day's tranquillity, save in the way of an unconditional surrender of their crown to the emperor, and an equally unconditional surrender of their conscience to the Pope. Much as they loved peace, they were not prepared to purchase it at such a price. And instead of waiting till war should come to them, they thought it better to anticipate it by carrying it into the countries of their enemies. Procopius entered Germany (1429) at the head of 80,000 warriors, and in the campaign of that and the following summers he carried his conquests from the gates of Magdeburg in the north, to the further limits of Franconia in the south. The whole of Western Germany felt the weight of his sword. Some hundred towns and castles he converted into ruins: he exacted a heavy ransom from the wealthy cities, and the barons and bishops he made to pay sums equally large as the price of their escape from captivity or death. Such towns as Bamberg and Nuremberg, and such magnates as the Elector of Brandenburg and the Bishop of Salzburg, were rated each at 10,000 ducats. This was an enormous

sum at a time when the gold-yielding countries were undiscovered, and the affluence of their mines had not cheapened the price of the precious metals in the markets of Europe. The return homeward of the army of Procopius was attended by 300 wagons, which groaned under the weight of the immense booty that he carried with him on his march back to Bohemia.

We record this invasion without either justifying or condemning it. Were we to judge of it, we should feel bound to take into account the character of the age, and the circumstances of the men. The Bohemians were surrounded by nationalities who bitterly hated them, and who would not be at peace with them. They knew that their faith made them the objects of incessant intrigues. They had it in their choice, they believed, to inflict these ravages or to endure them, and seeing war there must be, they preferred that it should be abroad, not at home.

But we submit that the lasting tranquillity and the higher interests of the nation might have been



more effectually secured in the long run by a policy directed to the intellectual, the moral, and especially the spiritual elevation of Bohemia. The heroism of a nation cannot be maintained apart from its moral and spiritual condition. The seat of valor is the conscience.

Conscience can make of the man a coward, or it can make of him a hero. Living as the Hussites did in the continual excitement of camps and battles and victories, it could not be but that their moral and spiritual life should decline. If, confiding in that Arm which had hitherto so wonderfully guarded their land, which had given them victory on a score of battlefields, and which had twice chased their enemies from their soil when they came against them in overwhelming numbers – if, we say, leaning on that Arm, they had spread, not their swords, but their opinions over Germany, they would have taken the best of all revenges, not on the Germans only, but on Her whose seat is on the Seven Hills, and who had called up and directed against their nation all those terrible tempests that had burst, one after the other, over it. These are the

invasions which Rome dreads most. It is not men clad in mail, but men clad in the armor of truth, wielding not the sword but the Scriptures, before whom Rome trembles. But we must recall our canon of criticism, and judge the Hussites by the age in which they lived.

It was not their fault if the fifteenth century did not put them in possession of that clear, well-defined system of Truth, and of those great facilities for spreading it over the earth, which the nineteenth has put within our reach. Their piety and patriotism, as a principle, may have been equal, nay, superior to ours, but the ethical maxims which regulate the display of these virtues were not then so fully developed. Procopius, the great leader of the Bohemians, lived in an age when missions were yet remote.

There was trembling through all Germany. Alarm was felt even at Rome, for the Hussites had made their arms the terror of all Europe. The Pope and the emperor took counsel how they might close a source of danger which threatened to devastate

Christendom, and which they themselves in an evil hour had opened. They convoked a Diet at Nuremberg. There it was resolved to organize a new expedition against Bohemia. The Pope – not Martin V., who died of apoplexy on the 20th of February, 1431; but Eugenius IV., who succeeded him on the 16th of March – proclaimed through his legate, Cardinal Julian Cesarini, a fifth crusade. No ordinary advantages were held forth as inducements to embark in this most meritorious but most hazardous service. Persons under a vow of pilgrimage to Rome, or to St. James of Compostella in Spain, might have release on condition of giving the money they would have spent on their journey to aid in the war. Nor were rewards wanting to those who, though unable to fight, were yet willing to pray. Intending crusaders might do shrift for half a Bohemian penny, nor need the penitent pay even this small sum unless he chose. Confessors were appointed to give absolution of even the most heinous crimes, such as burning churches, and murdering priests, that the crusader might go into battle with a clear conscience. And verily he had need of all these

aids to fortify him, when he thought of those with whom he was about to join battle; for every Hussite was believed to have within him a legion of fiends, and it was no light matter to meet a foe like this. But whatever might happen, the safety of the crusader had been cared for. If he fell in battle, he went straight to Paradise; and if he survived, there awaited him a Paradise on earth in the booty he was sure to reap in the Bohemian land, which would make him rich for life.

Besides these spiritual lures, the feeling of exasperation was kept alive in the breasts of the Germans, by the memorials of the recent Hussite invasion still visible on the face of the country. Their ravaged fields and ruined cities continually in their sight whetted their desire for vengeance. Besides, German valor had been sorely tarnished by defeat abroad and by disaster at home, and it was not wonderful that the Teutons should seize this chance of wiping out these stains from the national escutcheon. Accordingly, every day new troops of crusaders arrived at the place of rendezvous, which was the city of Nuremberg, and

the army now assembled there numbered, horse and foot, 130,000 men.

On the 1st of August, 1431, the crusaders crossed the Bohemian frontier, penetrating through the great forest which covered the country on the Bavarian side. They were brilliantly led, as concerned rank, for at their head marched quite a host of princes spiritual and temporal. Chief among these was the legate Julian Cesarini. The very Catholic Cochlaeus hints that these cardinals and archbishops might have found worthier employment, and he even doubts whether the practice of priests appearing in mail at the head of armies can be justified by the Levites of old, who were specially exempt from serving in arms that they might wholly attend to their service in the Tabernacle. The feelings of the Hussites as day by day they received tidings of the numbers, equipments, and near approach of the host, we can well imagine. Clouds as terrible had ere this darkened their sky, but they had seen an omnipotent Hand suddenly disperse them. They were prepared, as aforetime, to stand shoulder to

shoulder in defense of their country and their faith, but any army they could hope to bring into the field would not amount to half the number of that which was now marching against them. They reflected, however, that victory did not always declare on the side of the largest battalions, and, lifting their eyes to heaven, they calmly awaited the approach of the foe. The invading host advanced, "chanting triumph before victory," says Lenfant, and arriving at Tachau, it halted there a week. Nothing could have better suited the Bohemians. Forming into three columns the invaders moved forward. Procopius fell back on their approach, sowing reports as he retreated that the Bohemians had quarreled among themselves, and were fleeing. His design was to lure the enemy farther into the country, and fall upon him on all sides. On the morning of the 14th August the Bohemians marched to meet the foe. That foe now became aware of the stratagem which had been practiced upon him. The terrible Hussite soldiers, who were believed to be in flight, were advancing to offer battle.

The enemy were encamped near the town of Reisenberg. The Hussites were not yet in sight, but the sounds of their approach struck upon the ear of the Germans. The rumble of their wagons, and their war-hymn chanted by the whole army as it marched bravely forward to battle, were distinctly heard. Cardinal Cesarini and a companion climbed a little hill to view the impending conflict. Beneath them was the host which they expected soon to see engaged in victorious fight. It was an imposing spectacle, this great army of many nationalities, with its waving banners, its mail-clad knights, its helmeted cavalry, its long lines of wagons, and its numerous artillery. The cardinal and his friend had gazed only a few minutes when they were startled by a strange and sudden movement in the host. As if smitten by some invisible power, it appeared all at once to break up and scatter. The soldiers threw away their armor and fled, one this way, another that; and the wagoners, emptying their vehicles of their load, set off across the plain at full gallop. Struck with consternation and amazement, the cardinal hurried down to the field, and soon learned the cause of the catastrophe. The army had been

seized with a mysterious panic. That panic extended to the officers equally with the soldiers. The Duke of Bavaria was one of the first to flee. He left behind him his carriage, in the hope that its spoil might tempt the enemy and delay their pursuit. Behind him, also in inglorious flight, came the Elector of Brandenburg; and following close on the elector were others of less note, chased from the field by this unseen terror. The army followed, if that could be styled an army which so lately had been a marshaled and bannered host but was now only a rabble rout, fleeing when no man pursued.

To do him justice, the only man who did not lose his head that day was the Papal legate Cesarini. Amazed, mortified, and indignant, he took his stand in the path of the crowd of fugitives, in the hope of compelling them to stand and show fight. He addressed them with the spirit of a soldier, bidding them remember the glory of their ancestors. If their pagan forefathers had shown such courage in fighting for dumb idols, surely it became their descendants to show at least equal courage in fighting for Christ, and the salvation of



souls. But deeming, it may be, this style of argument too high-pitched for the men and the occasion, the cardinal pressed upon the terrified crowd the more prudential and practical consideration, that they had a better chance of saving their lives by standing and fighting than by running away; that they were sure to be overtaken by the light cavalry of the Bohemians, and that the peasantry, whose anger they had incurred by the pillage and slaughter they had inflicted in their advance, would rise upon them and cut them down in their flight. With these words he succeeded in rallying some bodies of the fugitives. But it was only for a few minutes. They stood their ground only till the Bohemians were within a short distance of them, and then that strange terror again fell upon them, and the stampede (to use a modern phrase) became so perfectly uncontrollable, that the legate himself was borne away in the current of bewildered and hurrying men. Much did the cardinal leave behind him in his enforced flight. First and chiefly, he lost that great anticipated triumph of which he had been so sure. His experience in this respect was precisely that of

another cardinal-legate, his predecessor, Henry de Beaufort. It was a rude awakening, in which he opened his eyes, not on glorious victory, but on humiliating and bitter defeat. Cesarini incurred other losses on this fatal field. He left behind him his hat, his cross, his bell, and the Pope's bull proclaiming the crusade – that same crusade which had come to so ridiculous a termination. The booty was immense. Wagon-loads of coin, destined for the payment of the troops, became now the property of the Bohemians, besides the multifarious spoil of the field – artillery, arms, banners, dresses, gold and silver plate, and utensils of all kinds; and, adds an old chronicler, with a touch of humor, "many wagons of excellent wine."

This was now the second time the strange phenomenon of panic had been repeated in the Hussite wars. The Germans are naturally brave; they have proved their valor on a hundred fields. They advanced against the Bohemians in vastly superior numbers; and if panic there was to be, we should rather have looked for it in the little Hussite army. When they saw the horizon filled with

German foot and horse, it would not have been surprising if the Bohemians had turned and fled. But that the Germans should flee is explicable only with reference to the moral state of the combatants. It shows that a good conscience is the best equipment of an army, and will do much to win victory. But there is something more in the facts we have related than the courage inspired by the consciousness of a good cause, and the feebleness and cowardice engendered by the consciousness of a bad one. There is here the touch of a Divine finger – the infusion of a preternatural terror. So great was the stupefaction with which the crusaders were smitten that many of them, instead of continuing their flight into their own country, wandered back into Bohemia; while others of them, who reached their homes in Nuremberg, did not know their native city when they entered it, and began to beg for lodgings as if they were among strangers.

## Chapter 18

# The Council of Basle

ARMS, which had served the cause of Rome so ill, were now laid aside, and in their room resort was had to wiles. It was now evident that those great armaments, raised and fitted out at an expense so enormous, and one after another launched against Bohemia – a little country, but peopled by heroes – were accomplishing no end at all, save that of fattening with corpses and enriching with booty the land they were meant to subdue. There were other considerations which recommended a change of policy on the part of the imperial and ecclesiastical powers. The victorious Hussites were carrying the war into the enemy's country. They had driven the Austrian soldiers out of Moravia. They had invaded Hungary and other provinces, burning towns and carrying off booty. These proceedings were not without their effect in opening the eyes of the Pope and the emperor to the virtue of conciliation, to which till now they had been blind. In the year 1432, they addressed

letters to the Bohemians, couched in the most friendly terms, and evidently designed to open the way to peace, and to give the emperor quiet possession of the kingdom in which, as he said, he was born, and over which his father, brother, and uncle had reigned. Not otherwise than as they had reigned would he reign over them, should they permit him peaceably to enter. So he promised.

A General Council of the Church had been convoked, and was now in session at Basle. On the frontier between Germany and Switzerland, washed by the Rhine, skirted on the east by the hills of the Black Forest, while in the southern horizon appear the summits of the Jura Alps, is situated the pleasant town where the Council was now assembled, and where a century later the seeds of the Reformation found a congenial soil. Letters from the emperor and the legate Julian invited the Bohemians to come to Basle and confer on their points of difference. To induce them to accept this invitation, the Fathers offered them a safe-conduct to and from the Council, and a guarantee for the free celebration of their worship during their stay,

adding the further assurance that the Council "would lovingly and gently hear their reasons."

The Hussites were not at all sanguine that the result of the conference would be such as would enable them to sheathe the sword over a satisfactory arrangement of their affairs. They had doubts, too, touching their personal safety. Still the matter was worth a good deal of both labor and risk; and after deliberating, they resolved to give proof of their desire for peace by attending the Council. They chose deputies to represent them at Basle, of whom the chief were Procopius "the Great," William Rosca, Baron of Poscupicz, a valiant knight; John Rochezana, preacher of Prague; and Nicolas Galecus, pastor of the Taborites. They were accompanied by Peter Payne, an Englishman, "of excellent prompt and pregnant wit," says Fox; and who did good service at Basle. A company of 300 in all set out on horseback for the Council.

The arrival of the Bohemian deputies was looked forward to with much interest in the Swiss

town. The prodigies recently enacted upon its soil had made Bohemia a land of wonders, and very extraordinary pictures indeed had been circulated of the men by whom the victories with which all Europe was now ringing had been won. The inhabitants of Basle waited their arrival half in expectation, half in terror, not knowing whether they were heroes or monsters whom they were about to receive into their city. At length their approach was announced. All the inhabitants of Basle turned out to see those men whose tenets were so abominable, and whose arms were so terrible. The streets were lined with spectators; every window and roof had its cluster of eager and anxious sight-seers; and even the venerable Fathers of the Council mingled in the crowd, that they might have an early view of the men whom they were to meet in theological battle. As the cavalcade crossed the long wooden bridge that spans the Rhine, and slowly climbed the opposite bank, which is crowned with the cathedral towers and other buildings of the city, its appearance was very imposing. The spectators missed the "teeth of lions and eyes of demons" with which the Hussites were

credited by those who had fled before them on the battle-field; but they saw in them other qualities which, though less rare, were more worthy of admiration. Their tall figures and gallant bearing, their faces scarred with battle, and their eyes lit with courage, were the subject of general comment. Procopius drew all eyes upon him. "This is the man," said they one to another, "who has so often put to flight the armies of the faithful – who has destroyed so many cities – who has massacred so many thousands; the invincible – the valiant."

The deputies had received their instructions before leaving Prague. They were to insist on the four following points (which, as already mentioned, formed the pre-arranged basis on which alone the question of a satisfactory adjustment of affairs could be considered) as the indispensable conditions of peace: – I. The free preaching of the Word. II. The right of the laity to the Cup, and the use of the vernacular tongue in all parts of Divine worship. III. The ineligibility of the clergy to secular office and rule. IV. The execution of the laws in the case of all crimes, without respect of



persons. Accordingly, when the deputies appeared before the Council, they made the Fathers aware that their deliberations must be confined to these four points; that these were the faith of the Bohemian nation; that that nation had not empowered them to entertain the question of a renunciation of that faith, but only to ascertain how far it might be possible, in conformity with the four articles specified, to arrange a basis of peace with the Church of Rome, and permit a Roman Catholic sovereign to wear the crown of Bohemia, and that they had appeared in the Council not to discuss with it generally the tenets of Huss and Jerome.

These four articles may be said to have formed the new constitution of the kingdom of Bohemia. They struck at the foundation of the Roman hierarchy, and implied a large measure of reformation. The eventual consolidation of the nation's civil and religious liberties would have been their inevitable result. The supreme authority of the Scriptures, which the Hussites maintained, implied the emancipation of the conscience, the beginning of all liberty. The preaching of the

Gospel and the celebration of public worship in the language of the people, implied the purification of the nation's morals and the enlightenment of the national intellect. Communion in both kinds was a practical repudiation of the doctrine of the mass; for to insist on the Cup as essential to the Sacrament is tacitly to maintain that the bread is simply bread, and not the literal flesh of Christ. And the articles which disqualified priests from civil rule, displaced them from the state offices which they filled, and subjected them to the laws in common with others. This article struck at the idea that the priesthood forms a distinct and theocratic kingdom. The four articles as they stand, it will be observed, lie within the sphere of administration; they do not include any one principle fundamentally subversive of the whole scheme of Romanism. In this respect, they fall short of Wicliffe's programme, which preceded them, as well as of Luther's which came after. In Bohemia, the spiritual and intellectual forces are less powerfully developed; the patriotic and the military are in the ascendant. Still, it is to be borne in mind that the Bohemians had acknowledged the great

principle that the Bible is the only infallible authority, and where this principle is maintained and practically carried out, there the fabric of Romanism is undermined. Put the priest out of court as an infallible oracle, and the Bible comes in his room; and the moment the Word of God enters, the shackles of human authority and tradition fall off.

Cardinal Julian, the Papal legate, opened the proceedings with a long and eloquent oration of a conciliatory character. He exhorted the delegates from Bohemia, says Fox, to unity and peace, saying that "the Church was the spouse of Jesus Christ, and the mother of all the faithful; that it hath the keys of binding and loosing, and also that it is white and fair, and without spot or wrinkle, and that it cannot err in those points necessary to salvation. He exhorted them also to receive the decrees of the Council, and to give no less credit unto the Council than unto the Gospel, by whose authority the Scriptures themselves are received and allowed. Also, that the Bohemians, who call themselves the children of the Church, ought to

hear the voice of their mother, who is never unmindful of her children ... that in the time of Noah's flood as many as were without the ark perished; that the Lord's passover was to be eaten in one house; that there is no salvation to be sought for out of the Church, and that this is the famous garden and fountain of water, whereof whosoever shall drink shall not thirst everlastingly; that the Bohemians have done as they ought, in that they have sought the fountains of this water at the Council, and have now at length determined to give ear unto their mother."

The Bohemians made a brief reply, saying that they neither believed nor taught anything that was not founded on the Word of God; that they had come to the Council to vindicate their innocence in open audience, and ended by laying on the table the four articles they had been instructed to insist on as the basis of peace.

Each of these four articles became in its turn the subject of discussion. Certain of the members of Council were selected to impugn, and certain of

the Bohemian delegates were appointed to defend them. The Fathers strove, not without success, to draw the deputies into a discussion on the wide subject of Catholicism. They anticipated, it may be, an easy victory over men whose lives had been passed on the battle-field; for if the Hussites were foiled in the general argument, they might be expected to yield more easily on the four points specially in debate. But neither on the wider field of Catholicism or on the narrower ground of the four articles did the Bohemians show any inclination to yield. Wherever they had learned their theology, they proved themselves as obstinate combatants in the council-chamber as they had done on the field of battle; they could marshal arguments and proofs as well as soldiers, and the Fathers soon found that Rome was likely to win as little fame in this spiritual contest as she had done in her military campaigns. The debates dragged on through three tedious months; and at the close of that period the Council was as far from yielding the Hussite articles, and the delegates were as far from being convinced that they ought to refrain from urging them, as they had been on the first day of

the debate. This was not a little mortifying to the Fathers; all the more so that it was the reverse of what they had confidently anticipated. The Hussites, they thought, might cling to their errors in the darkness that brooded over the Bohemian soil; but at Basle, in the presence of the polemical giants of Rome, and amidst the blaze of an Ecumenical Council, that they should continue to maintain them was not less a marvel than a mortification to the Council. Procopius especially bore himself gallantly in this debate. A scholar and a theologian, as well as a warrior, the Fathers saw with mingled admiration and chagrin that he could wield his logic with not less dexterity than his sword, and could strike as heavy a blow on the ecclesiastical arena as on the military. "You hold a great many heresies," said the Papal legate to him one day. "For example, you believe that the Mendicant orders are an invention of the devil." If Procopius grant this, doubtless thought the legate, he will mortally offend the Council; and if he deny it, he will scandalize his own nation. The legate waited to see on which horn the leader of the Taborites would do penance. "Can you show,"

replied Procopius, "that the Mendicants were instituted by either the patriarchs or the prophets under the Old Testament, or Jesus Christ and the apostles under the New? If not, I ask you, by whom were they instituted?" We do not read that the legate pressed the charge further.

After three months' fruitless debates, the Bohemian delegates left Basle and returned to their own country. The Council would come to no terms unless the Bohemians would engage to surrender the faith of Huss, and submit unconditionally to Rome. Although the Hussites, vanquished and in fetters, had been prostrate at the feet of the Council, it could have proposed nothing more humiliating. The Council forgot that the Bohemians were victorious, and that it was it that was suing for peace. In this light, it would seem, did the matter appear to the members when the deputies were gone, for they sent after them a proposal to renew at Prague the negotiations which had been broken off at Basle.

Shrinking from the dire necessity of again

unsheathing the sword, and anxious to spare their country the calamities that attend even victorious warfare, the Bohemian chiefs returned answer to the Council bidding them send forward their delegates to Prague. Many an armed embassy had come to Prague, or as near to it as the valor of its heroic sons would permit; now messengers of peace were traveling toward the land of John Huss. Let us, said the Bohemians, display as great courtesy and respect on this occasion as we have shown bravery and defiance on former ones. The citizens put on their best clothes, the bells were tolled, flags were suspended from the steeples and ramparts and gates, and every expression of public welcome greeted the arrival of the delegates of the Council.

The Diet of Bohemia was convoked (1434) with reference to the question which was about to be reopened. The negotiations proceeded more smoothly on the banks of the Moldau than they had done on those of the Rhine. The negotiations ended in a compromise. It was agreed that the four articles of the Hussites should be accepted, but that



the right of explaining them, that is of determining their precise import, should belong to the Council – in other words, to the Pope and the emperor. Such was the treaty now formed between the Roman Catholics and the Hussites; its basis was the four articles, explained by the Council – obviously an arrangement which promised a plentiful crop of misunderstandings and quarrels in the future. To this agreement was given the name of the Compactata. As with the Bible so with the four Hussite articles – Rome accepted them, but reserved to herself the right of determining their true sense. It might have been foreseen that the Interpretation and not the Articles would henceforth be the rule. So was the matter understood by Aeneas Sylvius, an excellent judge of what the Council meant. "This formula of the Council," said he, "is short, but there is more in its meaning than in its words. It banishes all such opinions and ceremonies as are alien to the faith, and it takes the Bohemians bound to believe and to maintain all that the Church Catholic believes and maintains." This was said with special reference to the Council's explication of the Hussite article of

Communion in both kinds. The administrator was to teach the recipient of the Eucharist, according to the decree of the Council in its thirtieth session, that a whole Christ was in the cup as well as in the bread. This was a covert reintroduction of transubstantiation.

The Compactata, then, was but a feeble guarantee of the Bohemian faith and liberties; in fact, it was a surrender of both; and thus the Pope and the emperor, defeated on so many bloody fields, triumphed at last on that of diplomacy. Many of the Bohemians, and more especially the party termed the Calixtines, now returned to their obedience to the Roman See, the cup being guaranteed to them, and the Emperor Sigismund was now acknowledged as legitimate sovereign of Bohemia.

## Chapter 19

# Last Scenes of the Bohemian Reformation

THE Bohemians were now divided into two strongly marked and widely separated parties, the Taborites and the Calixtines. This division had existed from the first; but it widened in proportion as the strain of their great struggle was relaxed. The party that retained most of the spirit of John Huss were the Taborites. With them the defense of their religion was the first concern, that of their civil rights and privileges the second. The latter they deemed perfectly safe under the aegis of the former. The Calixtines, on the other hand, had become lukewarm so far as the struggle was one for religion. They thought that the rent between their country and Rome was unnecessarily wide, and their policy was now one of approximation. They had secured the cup, as they believed, not reflecting that they had got transubstantiation along with it; and now the conflict, they thought, should

cease. To the party of the Calixtines belonged the chief magnates, and most of the great cities, which threw the preponderance of opinion on the side of the Compactata. Into this scale was thrown also the influence of Rochny, the pastor of the Calixtines. "He was tempted with the hope of a bishopric," says Comenius, and used his influence both at Basle and Prague to further conciliation on terms more advantageous to Rome than honorable to the Bohemians. "In this manner," says Comenius, "they receded from the footsteps of Huss and returned to the camp of Antichrist."

In judging of the conduct of the Bohemians at this crisis of their affairs, we are to bear in mind that the events narrated took place in the fifteenth century; that the points of difference between the two Churches, so perfectly irreconcilable, had not yet been so dearly and sharply defined as they came to be by the great controversies of the century that followed. But the Bohemians in accepting this settlement stepped down from a position of unexampled grandeur. Their campaigns are amongst the most heroic and brilliant of the wars of

the world. A little country and a little army, they nevertheless were at this hour triumphant over all the resources of Rome and all the armies of the Empire. They had but to keep their ground and remain united, and take care that their patriotism, kindled at the altar, did not decline, and there was no power in Europe that would have dared attack them. From the day that the Bohemian nation sat down on the Compactata, their prestige waned, they gained no more victories; and the tone of public feeling, and the tide of national prosperity, began to go back. The Calixtines accepted, the Taborites rejected this arrangement. The consequence was the deplorable one of an appeal to arms by the two parties. Formerly, they had never unsheathed the sword except against a common enemy, and to add new glory to the glory already acquired; but now, alas! divided by that power whose wiles have ever been a hundred times more formidable than her arms, Bohemian unsheathed the sword against Bohemian. The Calixtines were by much the larger party, including as they did not only the majority of those who had been dissentients from Rome, but also all the

Roman Catholics. The Taborites remained under the command of Procopius, who, although most desirous of composing the strife and letting his country have rest, would not accept of peace on terms which he held to be fatal to his nation's faith and liberty. Bohemia, he clearly saw, had entered on the descending path. Greater concessions and deeper humiliations were before it. The enemy before whom she had begun to humble herself would not be satisfied till he had reft from her all she had won on the victorious field. Rather than witness this humiliation, Procopius betook himself once more to the field at the head of his armed Taborites.

Bloody skirmishes marked the opening of the conflict. At last, the two armies met on the plain of Lipan, twelve English miles from Prague, the 29th of May, 1434, and a great battle was fought. The day, fiercely contested on both sides, was going in favor of Procopius, when the general of his cavalry rode off the field with all under his command. This decided the action. Procopius, gathering round him the bravest of his soldiers, rushed into the thick of

the foe, where he contended for awhile against fearful odds, but at last sank overpowered by numbers. With the fall of Procopius came the end of the Hussite wars.

A consummate general, a skillful theologian, an accomplished scholar, and an incorruptible patriot, Procopius had upheld the cause of Bohemia so long as Bohemia was true to itself, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini said of him that "he fell weary with conquering rather than conquered." His death fulfilled the saying of the Emperor Sigismund, "that the Bohemians could be overcome only by Bohemians." With him fell the cause of the Hussites. No effectual stand could the Taborites make after the loss of their great leader; and as regards the Calixtines, they riveted their chains by the same blow that struck down Procopius. Yet one hardly can wish that this great patriot had lived longer. The heroic days of Bohemia were numbered, and the evil days had come in which Procopius could take no pleasure. He had seen the Bohemians united and victorious. He had seen puissant kings and mighty armies fleeing before

them. He had seen their arts, their literature, their husbandry, all flourishing. For the intellectual energy evoked by the war did not expend itself in the camp; it overflowed, and nourished every interest of the nation. The University of Prague continued open, and its classrooms crowded, all throughout that stormy period. The common schools of the country were equally active, and education was universally diffused. Aeneas Sylvius says that every woman among the Taborites was well acquainted with the Old and New Testaments, and unwilling as he was to see any good in the Hussites, he yet confesses that they had one merit – namely, "the love of letters." It was not uncommon at that era to find tracts written by artisans, discussing religious subjects, and characterized by the elegance of their diction and the rigor of their thinking. All this Procopius had seen. But now Bohemia herself had dug the grave of her liberties in the Compactata. And when all that had made Bohemia dear to Procopius was about to be laid in the sepulcher, it was fitting that he too should be consigned to the tomb.



One is compelled to ask what would the result have been, had the Bohemians maintained their ground? Would the Hussite Reformation have regenerated Christendom? We are disposed to say that it would not. It had in it no principle of sufficient power to move the conscience of mankind. The Bohemian Reformation had respect mainly to the corruptions of the Church of Rome – not those of doctrine, but those of administration. If the removal of these could have been effected, the Bohemians would have been content to accept Rome as a true and apostolic Church. The Lutheran Reformation, on the other hand, had a first and main respect to the principle of corruption in the individual man. This awoke the conscience. "How shall I, a lost sinner, obtain pardon and life eternal?" This was the first question in the Reformation of Luther. It was because Rome could not lift off the burden from the conscience, and not simply because her administration was tyrannical and her clergy scandalous, that men were constrained to abandon her. It was a matter of life and death with them. They must flee from a society where, if they remained, they saw they should

perish everlastingly. Had Huss and Jerome lived, the Bohemian Reformation might have worked itself into a deeper groove; but their death destroyed this hope: there arose after them no one of equally commanding talents and piety; and the Bohemian movement, instead of striking its roots deeper, came more and more to the surface. Its success, in fact, might have been a misfortune to Christendom, inasmuch as, by giving it a reformed Romanism, it would have delayed for some centuries the advent of a purer movement.

The death of Procopius, as we have already mentioned, considerably altered the position of affairs. With him died a large part of that energy and vitality which had invariably sustained the Bohemians in their resolute struggles with their military and ecclesiastical enemies; and, this being so, the cause gradually pined away.

The Emperor Sigismund was now permitted to mount the throne of Bohemia, but not till he had sworn to observe the Compactata, and maintain the liberties of the nation (July 12th, 1436). A feeble

guarantee! The Bohemians could hardly expect that the man who had broken his pledge to Huss would fulfill his stipulations to them. "In striking this bargain with the heretics," says Aeneas Sylvius, "the emperor yielded to necessity, being desirous at any price of gaining the crown, that he might bring back his subjects to the true Church." And so it turned out, for no sooner did the emperor feel himself firm in his seat than, forgetful of the Compactata, and his oath to observe it, he proceeded to restore the dominancy of the Church of Rome in Bohemia. This open treachery provoked a storm of indignation; the country was on the brink of war, and this calamity was averted only by the death of the emperor in 1437, within little more than a year after being acknowledged as king by the Bohemians.

Born to empire, not devoid of natural parts, and endowed with not a few good qualities, Sigismund might have lived happily and reigned gloriously. But all his gifts were marred by a narrow bigotry which laid him at the feet of the priesthood. The stake of Huss cost him a twenty years' war. He

wore out life in labors and perils; he never knew repose, he never tasted victory. He attempted much, but succeeded in nothing. He subdued rebellion by subtle arts and deceitful promises; content to win a momentary advantage at the cost of incurring a lasting disgrace. His grandfather, Henry VII., had exalted the fortunes of his house and the splendor of the Empire by opposing the Papal See; Sigismund lowered both by becoming its tool. His misfortunes thickened as his years advanced. He escaped a tragical end by a somewhat sudden death. No grateful nation mourned around his grave.

There followed some chequered years. The first rent in Bohemian unity, the result of declension from the first rigor of the Bohemian faith, was never healed. The Calixtines soon began to discover that the Compactata was a delusion, and that it existed only on paper. Their monarchs refused to govern according to its provisions. To plead it as the charter of their rights was only to expose themselves to contempt. The Council of Basle no doubt had appended its seal to it, but the

Pope refused to look at it, and ultimately annulled it. At length, during the minority of King Vladislav, George Podiebrad, a Bohemian nobleman, and head of the Calixtines, became regent of the kingdom, and by his great talents and upright administration gave a breathing-space to his distracted nation. On the death of the young monarch, Podiebrad was elected king. He now strove to make the Compactata a reality, and revive the extinct rights and bring back the vanished prestige of Bohemia; but he found that the hour of opportunity had passed, and that the difficulties of the situation were greater than his strength could overcome. He fondly hoped that Aeneas Sylvius, who had now assumed the tiara under the title of Pius II., would be more compliant in the matter of the Compactata than his predecessor had been. As secretary to the Council of Basle, Aeneas Sylvius had drafted this document; and Podiebrad believed that, as a matter of course, he would ratify as Pope what he had composed as secretary. He was doomed to disappointment. Pius II. repudiated his own handiwork, and launched excommunication against Podiebrad (1463) for attempting to govern

on its principles. Aeneas' successor in the Papal chair, Paul II., walked in his steps. He denounced the Compactata anew; anathematized Podiebrad as an excommunicated heretic, whose reign could only be destructive to mankind, and published a crusade against him. In pursuance of the Papal bull a foreign army entered Bohemia, and it became again the theater of battles, sieges, and great bloodshed.

Podiebrad drove out the invaders, but he was not able to restore the internal peace of his nation. The monks had returned, and priestly machinations were continually fomenting party animosities. He retained possession of the throne; but his efforts were crippled, his life was threatened, and his reign continued to be full of distractions till its very close, in 1471. The remaining years of the century were passed in similar troubles, and after this the history of Bohemia merges in the general stream of the Reformation.

We turn for a few moments to the other branch of the Bohemian nation, the Taborites. They

received from Sigismund, when he ascended the throne, that lenient treatment which a conqueror rarely denies to an enemy whom he despises. He gave them the city of Tabor, with certain lands around, permitting them the free exercise of their worship within their allotted territory, exacting in return only a small tribute. Here they practiced the arts and displayed the virtues of citizens. Exchanging the sword for the plough, their domain bloomed like a garden. The rich cultivation that covered their fields bore as conclusive testimony to their skill as husbandmen, as their victories had done to their courage as warriors. Once, when on a tour through Bohemia, Aeneas Sylvius came to their gates; and though "this rascally people" did not believe in transubstantiation, he preferred lodging amongst them for the night to sleeping in the open fields, where, as he confesses, though the confession somewhat detracts from the merit of the action, he would have been exposed to robbers. They gave the future Pope a most cordial welcome, and treated him with "Slavonic hospitality."

About the year 1455, the Taborites formed

themselves into a distinct Church under the name of the "United Brethren." They looked around them: error covered the earth; all societies needed to be purified, the Calixtines as well as the Romanists; "the evil was immedicable." So they judged; therefore they resolved to separate themselves from all other bodies, and build up truth anew from the foundations. This step exposed them to the bitter enmity of both Calixtines and Roman Catholics. They now became the object of a murderous persecution, in which they suffered far more than they had done in common with their countrymen in the Hussite wars. Rochyzana, who till now had befriended them, suffered himself to be alienated from and even incensed against them; and Podiebrad, their king, tarnished his fame as a patriotic and upright ruler by the cruel persecution which he directed against them. They were dispersed in the woods and mountains; they inhabited dens and caves; and in these abodes they were ever careful to prepare their meals by night, lest the ascending smoke should betray their lurking-places. Gathering round the fires which they kindled in these subterranean retreats in the



cold of winter, they read the Word of God, and united in social worship. At times, when the snow lay deep, and it was necessary to go abroad for provisions, they dragged a branch behind them on their return, to obliterate their footsteps and make it impossible for their enemies to track them to their hiding-places.

Were they alone of all the witnesses of truth left on the earth, or were there others, companions with them in the faith and patience of the kingdom of Jesus Christ? They sent messengers into various countries of Christendom, to inquire secretly and bring them word again. These messengers returned to say that everywhere darkness covered the face of the earth, but that nevertheless, here and there, they had found isolated confessors of the truth – a few in this city and a few in that, the object like themselves of persecution; and that amid the mountains of the Alps was an ancient Church, resting on the foundations of Scripture, and protesting against the idolatrous corruptions of Rome. This intelligence gave great joy to the Taborites; they opened a correspondence with

these confessors, and were much cheered by finding that this Alpine Church agreed with their own in the articles of its creed, the form of its ordination, and the ceremonies of its worship.

The question of ordination occasioned the Taborites no little perplexity. They had left the Roman Church, they had no bishop in their ranks; how were they to perpetuate that succession of pastors which Christ had appointed in his Church? After many anxious deliberations, for "their minds were harassed," says Comenius, "with the fear that the ordination of presbyter by presbyter would not be held valid," they proceeded according to the following somewhat novel fashion. In the year 1467 their chief men, to the number of about seventy, out of all Bohemia and Moravia, met in a plain called Lhota, in the neighborhood of the town of Richnovia. Humbling themselves with many tears and prayers before God, they resolved on an appeal by lot to the Divine omniscience as to who should be set over them as pastors. They selected by suffrage nine men from among themselves, from whom three were to be chosen to be ordained.

They then put twelve schedules or voting papers into the hands of a boy who was kept ignorant of the matter, and they ordered him to distribute these schedules among the nine persons already selected. Of the twelve voting papers nine were blanks, and three were inscribed with the word Est – -i.e., It is the will of God. The boy distributed the schedules, and it was found that the three bearing the word Est had been given to the three following persons: – Matthew Kunwaldius, "one of the most pious of men;" Thomas Przelaucius, "a very learned man;" and Elias Krzenovius, who was "distinguished for his great parts." They received ordination, by the imposition of hands, from a body of Waldensian pastors, including two whom Comenius styles bishops, and one of whom, Stephen, soon thereafter suffered martyrdom at the stake in Vienna.

The death of Podiebrad and the accession of the Polish prince, Vladislav, in 1471 brought them deliverance from persecution. The quiet they now enjoyed was followed by an increase in the number of their congregations. Their lot was cast in evil

days, but they knew that the appointed years of darkness must be fulfilled. They remembered the words first uttered by Huss, and repeated by Jerome, that a century must revolve before the day should break. These were to the Taborites what the words of Joseph were to the tribes in the House of Bondage: "I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out." The prediction kept alive their hopes in the night of their persecution, and in the darkest hour their eyes were still turned towards the horizon like men who watch for the morning. Year passed after year. The end of the century arrived: it found 200 churches of the "United Brethren" in Bohemia and Moravia. So goodly was the remnant which, escaping the destructive fury of fire and sword, was permitted to see the dawning of that day which Huss had foretold.