

PROTESTANTISM IN POLAND AND BOHEMIA

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Chapter 1

Rise and Spread of Protestantism in Poland

WE are now approaching the era of that great "Catholic Restoration" which, cunningly devised and most perseveringly carried on by the Jesuits, who had: now perfected the organisation and discipline of their corps, and zealously aided by the arms of the Popish Powers, scourged Germany with a desolating war of thirty years, trampled out many flourishing Protestant Churches in the east of Europe, and nearly succeeded in rehabilitating Rome in her ancient dominancy of all Christendom. But before entering on the history of these events, it is necessary to follow, in a brief recital, the rise and progress of Protestantism in the countries of Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, and parts of Austria, seeing that these were the Churches which fell before the spiritual cohorts of Loyola, and the military hordes of Austria, and seeing also that these were the lands, in conjunction with

Germany, which because the seat of that great struggle which seemed as though it were destined to overthrow Protestantism wholly, till all suddenly, Sweden sent forth a champion who rolled back the tide of Popish success, and restored the balance between the two Churches, which has remained much as it was then settled, down to almost the present hour.

We begin with Poland. Its Reformation opened with brilliant promise, but it had hardly reached what seemed its noon when its light was overcast, and since that disastrous hour the farther Poland's story is pursued, it becomes but the sadder and more melancholy; nevertheless, the history of Protestantism in Poland is fraught with great lessons, specially applicable to all free countries. Christianity, it is believed, was introduced into Poland by missionaries from Great Moravia in the ninth century. In the tenth we find the sovereign of the country receiving baptism, from which we may infer that the Christian faith was still spreading in Poland,[1] It is owing to the simplicity and apostolic zeal of Cyrillus [2] and Methodius, two

pastors from Thessalonica, that the nations, the Slavonians among the rest, who inhabited the wide territories lying between the Tyrol and the Danube on the one side, and the Baltic and Vistula on the other, were at so early a period visited with the light of the Gospel.

Their first day was waxing dim, notwithstanding that they were occasionally visited by the Waldenses, when Wicliffe arose in England. This splendor which had burst out in the west, traveled, as we have already narrated, as far as Bohemia, and from Bohemia it passed on to Poland, where it came in time to arrest the return of the pagan night. The voice of Huss was now resounding through Bohemia, and its echoes were heard in Cracow. Poland was then intimately connected with Bohemia; the language of the two countries was almost the same; numbers of Polish youth resorted to the University of Prague, and one of the first martyrs of Huss's Reformation was a Pole. Stanislav Pazek, a shoemaker by trade, suffered death, along with two Bohemians, for opposing the indulgences which were preached in

Prague in 1411. The citizens interred their bodies with great respect, and Huss preached a sermon at their funeral.[3] In 1431, a conference took place in Cracow, between certain Hussite missionaries and the doctors of the university, in presence of the king and senate. The doctors did battle for the ancient faith against the "novelties" imported from the land of Huss, which they described as doctrines for which the missionaries could plead no better authority than the Bible. The disputation lasted several days, and Bishop Dlugosh, the historian of the conference, complains that although, "in the opinion of all present, the heretics were vanquished, they never acknowledged their defeat." [4]

It is interesting to find these three countries -- Poland, Bohemia, and England -- at that early period turning their faces toward the day, and hand-in-hand attempting to find a path out of the darkness. How much less happy, one cannot help reflecting, the fate of the first two countries than that of the last, yet all three were then directing their steps into the same road. Many of the first

families in Poland embraced openly the Bohemian doctrines; and it is an interesting fact that one of the professors in the university, Andreas Galka, expounded the works of Wicliffe at Cracow, and wrote a poem in honor of the English Reformer. It is the earliest production of the Polish muse in existence, a poem in praise of the Virgin excepted. The author, addressing "Poles, Germans, and all nations," says, "Wicliffe speaks the truth! Heathendom and Christendom have never had a greater man than he, and never will." Voice after voice is heard in Poland, attesting a growing opposition to Rome, till at last in 1515, two years before Luther had spoken, we find the seminal principle of Protestantism proclaimed by Bernard of Lublin, in a work which he published at Cracow, and in which he says that "we must believe the Scriptures alone, and reject human ordinances." [5] Thus was the way prepared.

Two years after came Luther. The lightnings of his Theses, which flashed through the skies of all countries, lighted up also those of Polish Prussia. Of that flourishing province Dantzic was the

capital, and the chief emporium of Poland with Western Europe. In that city a monk, called James Knade, threw off his habit (1518), took a wife, and began to preach publicly against Rome. Knade had to retire to Thorn, where he continued to diffuse his doctrines under the protection of a powerful nobleman; but the seed he had sown in Dantzic did not perish; there soon arose a little band of preachers, composed of Polish youths who had sat at Luther's feet in Wittemberg, and of priests who had found access to the Reformer's writings, who now proclaimed the truth, and made so numerous converts that in 1524: five churches in Dantzic were given up to their use.

Success made the Reformers rash. The town council, to whom the king, Sigismund, had hinted his dislike of these innovations, lagged behind in the movement, and the citizens resolved to replace that body with men more zealous. They surrounded the council, to the number of 400, and with arms in their hands, and cannon pointed on the council-hall, they demanded the resignation of the members. No sooner had the council dissolved

itself than the citizens elected another from among themselves. The new council proceeded to complete the Reformation at a stroke. They suppressed the Roman Catholic worship, they closed the monastic establishments, they ordered that the convents and other ecclesiastical edifices should be converted into schools and hospitals, and declared the goods of the "Church" to be public property, but left them untouched.[6]

This violence only threw back the movement; the majority of the inhabitants were still of the old faith, and had a right to exercise its worship till, enlightened in a better way, they should be pleased voluntarily to abandon it.

The deposed councillors, seating themselves in carriages hung in black, and encircling their heads with crape, set out to appear before the king. They implored him to interpose his authority to save his city of Dantzic, which was on the point of being drowned in heresy, and re-establish the old order of things. The king, in the main upright and tolerant, at first temporised. The members of council, by

whom the late changes had been made, were summoned before the king's tribunal to justify their doings; but, not obeying the summons, they were outlawed. In April, 1526, the king in person visited Dantzic; the citizens, as a precaution against change, received the monarch in arms; but the royal troops, and the armed retainers of the Popish lords who accompanied the king, so greatly outnumbered the Reformers that they were overawed, and submitted to the court. A royal decree restored the Roman Catholic worship; fifteen of the leading Reformers were beheaded, and the rest banished; the citizens were ordered to return within the Roman pale or quit Dantzic; the priests and monks who had abandoned the Roman Church were exiled, and the churches appropriated to Protestant worship were given back to mass. This was a sharp castigation for leaving the peaceful path. Nevertheless, the movement in Dantzic was only arrested, not destroyed. Some years later, there came an epidemic to the city, and amid the sick and the dying there stood up a pious Dominican, called Klein, to preach the Gospel. The citizens, awakened a second time to eternal things,

listened to him. Dr. Eck, the famous opponent of Luther, importuned King Sigismund to stop the preacher, and held up to him, as an example worthy of imitation, Henry VIII. of England, who had just published a book against the Reformer. "Let King Henry write against Martin," replied Sigismund, "but, with regard to myself, I shall be king equally of the sheep and of the goats." [7] Under the following reign Protestantism triumphed in Dantzie.

About the; same time the Protestant doctrines began to take root in other towns of Polish Prussia. In Thorn, situated on the Vistula, these doctrines appeared in 1520, There came that year to Thorn, Zacharias Fereira, a legate of the Pope. He took a truly Roman way of warning the inhabitants against the heresy which had invaded, their town. Kindling a great fire before the Church of St. John, he solemnly committed the effigies and writings of Luther to the flames. The faggots had hardly begun to blaze when a shower of stones from the townsmen saluted the legate and his train, and they were forced to flee, before they had had time to

consummate their auto- da-fe. At Braunsberg, the seat of the Bishop of Ermeland, the Lutheran worship was publicly introduced in 1520, without the bishop's taking any steps to prevent it. When reproached by his chapter for his supineness, he told his canons that the Reformer founded all he said on Scripture, and any one among them who deemed himself competent to refute him was at liberty to do so. At Elbing and many other towns the light was spreading.

A secret society, composed of the first scholars of the day, lay and cleric, was formed at Cracow, the university seat, not so much to propagate the Protestant doctrines as to investigate the grounds of their truth. The queen of Sigismund I., Bona Sforza, was an active member of this society. She had for her confessor a learned Italian, Father Lismanini. The Father received most of the Protestant publications that appeared in the various countries of Europe, and laid them on the table of the society, with the view of their being read and canvassed by the members. The society at a future period acquired a greater but not a better renown.

One day a priest named Pastoris, a native of Belgium, rose in it and avowed his disbelief of the Trinity, as a doctrine inconsistent with the unity of the Godhead. The members, who saw that this was to overthrow revealed religion, were mute with astonishment; and some, believing that what they had taken for the path of reform was the path of destruction, drew back, and took final refuge in Romanism. Others declared themselves disciples of the priest, and thus were laid in Poland the foundations of Socinianism.[8]

The rapid diffusion of the light is best attested by the vigorous efforts of the Romish clergy to suppress it. Numerous books appeared at this time in Poland against Luther and his doctrines. The Synod of Lenczyca, in 1527, recommended the re-establishment of the "Holy Inquisition." Other Synods drafted schemes of ecclesiastical reform, which, in Poland as in all the other countries where such projects were broached, were never realized save on paper. Others recommended the appointment of popular preachers to instruct the ignorant, and guide their feet past the snares which

were being laid for them in the writings of the heretics. On the principle that it would be less troublesome to prevent the planting of these snares, than after they were set to guide the unwary past them, they prohibited the introduction of such works into the country. The Synod of Lenczyca, in 1532, went a step farther, and in its zeal to preserve the "sincere faith" in Poland, recommended the banishment of "all heretics beyond the bounds of Sarmatia." [9] The Synod of Piotrkow, in 1542, published a decree prohibiting all students from resorting to universities conducted by heretical professors, and threatening with exclusion from all offices and dignities all who, after the passing of the edict, should repair to such universities, or who, being already at such, did not instantly return.

This edict had no force in law, for besides not being recognised by the Diet, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was carefully limited by the constitutional liberties of Poland, and the nobles still continued to send their sons to interdicted universities, and in particular to Wittemberg. Meanwhile the national legislation of Poland began

to flow in just the opposite channel. In 1539 a royal ordinance established the liberty of the press; and in 1543 the Diet of Cracow granted the freedom of studying at foreign universities to all Polish subjects.

At this period an event fell out which gave an additional impulse to the diffusion of Protestantism in Poland. In 1548, a severe persecution, which will come under our notice at a subsequent stage of our history, arose against the Bohemian brethren, the descendants of that valiant host who had combated for the faith under Ziska. In the year above-named Ferdinand of Bohemia published an edict shutting up their churches, imprisoning their ministers, and enjoining the brethren, under severe penalties, to leave the country within forty-two days. A thousand exiles, marshalling themselves in three bands, left their native villages, and began their march westward to Prussia, where Albert of Brandenburg, a zealous Reformer, had promised them asylum. The pilgrims, who were under the conduct of Sionins, the chief of their community—"the leader of the people of God," as a Polish

historian styles him had to pass through Silesia and Poland on their way to Prussia. Arriving in Posen in June, 1548, they were welcomed by Andreas Gorka, first magistrate of Grand Poland, a man of vast possessions, and Protestant opinions, and were offered a settlement in his States. Here, meanwhile, their journey terminated. The pious wanderers erected churches and celebrated their worship. Their hymns chanted in the Bohemian language, and their sermons preached in the same tongue, drew many of the Polish inhabitants, whose speech was Slavonic, to listen, and ultimately to embrace their opinions. A missionary army, it looked to them as if Providence had guided their steps to this spot for the conversion of all the provinces of Grand Poland. The Bishop of Posen saw the danger that menaced his diocese, and rested not till he had obtained an order from Sigismund Augustus, who had just succeeded his father (1548), enjoining the Bohemian emigrants to quit the territory. The order might possibly have been recalled, but the brethren, not wishing to be the cause of trouble to the grandee who had so nobly entertained them, resumed their journey, and arrived in due time in

Prussia, where Duke Albert, agreeably to his promise, accorded them the rights of naturalisation, and full religious liberty. But the seed they had sown in Posen remained behind them. In the following year (1549) many of them returned to Poland, and resumed their propagation of the Reformed doctrines. They prosecuted their work without molestation, and with great success. Many of the principal families embraced their opinions; and the ultimate result of their labors was the formation of about eighty congregations in the provinces of Grand Poland, besides many in other parts of the kingdom.

A quarrel broke out between the students and the university authorities at Cracow, which, although originating in a street-brawl, had important bearings on the Protestant movement. The breach it was found impossible to heal, and the students resolved to leave Cracow in a body. "The schools became silent," says a contemporary writer, "the halls of the university were deserted, and the churches were mute." [10] Nothing but farewells, lamentations, and groans resounded

through Cracow. The pilgrims assembled in a suburban church, to hear a farewell mass, and then set forth, singing a sacred hymn, some taking the road to the College of Goldberg, in Silesia, and others going on to the newly-erected University of Königsberg, in Prussia. The first-named school was under the direction of Frankendorf, one of the most eminent of Melancthon's pupils; Königsberg, a creation of Albert, Duke of Prussia, was already fulfilling its founder's intention, which was the diffusion of scriptural knowledge. In both seminaries the predominating influences were Protestant. The consequence was that almost all these students returned to their homes imbued with the Reformed doctrine, and powerfully contributed to spread it in Poland.

So stood the movement when Sigismund Augustus ascended the throne in 1548. Protestant truth was widely spread throughout the kingdom. In the towns of Polish Prussia, where many Germans resided, the Reformation was received in its Lutheran expression; in the rest of Poland it was embraced in its Calvinistic form. Many powerful

nobles had abandoned Romanism; numbers of priests taught the Protestant faith; but, as yet, there existed no organisation -- no Church. This came at a later period. The priesthood had as yet erected no stake. They thought to stem the torrent by violent denunciations, thundered from the pulpit, or sent abroad over the kingdom through the press. They raised their voices to the loftiest pitch, but the torrent continued to flow broader and deeper every day.

They now began to make trial of coercive measures. Nicholas Olesnicki, Lord of Pinczov, ejecting the images from a church on his estates, established Protestant worship in it according to the forms of Geneva. This was the first open attack on the ancient order of things, and Olesnicki was summoned before the ecclesiastical tribunal of Cracow. He obeyed the summons, but the crowd of friends and retainers who accompanied him was such that the court was terrified, and dared not open its sittings. The clergy had taken a first step, but had lost ground thereby.

The next move was to convoke a Synod (1552) at Piotrkow. At that Convocation, the afterwards celebrated Cardinal Hosius produced a summary of the Roman faith, which he proposed all priests and all of senatorial and equestrian degree should be made to subscribe. Besides the fundamental doctrines of Romanism, this creed of Hosius made the subscriber express his belief in purgatory, in the worship of saints and images, in the efficacy of holy water, of fasts, and similar rites.[11] The suggestion of Hosius was adopted; all priests were ordered to subscribe this test, and the king was petitioned to exact subscription to it from all the officers of his Government, and all the nobles of his realm. The Synod further resolved to set on foot a Vigorous war against heresy, to support which a tax was to be levied on the clergy. It was sought to purchase the assistance of the king by offering him the confiscated property of all condemned heretics.[12] It seemed as if Poland was about to be lighted up with martyr-piles.

A beginning was made with Nicholas, Rector of Kurow. This good man began in 1550 to preach

the doctrine of salvation by grace, and to give the Communion in both kinds to his parishioners. For these offenses he was cited before the ecclesiastical tribunal, where he courageously defended himself. He was afterwards thrown into a dungeon, and deprived of life, but whether by starvation, by poison, or by methods more violent still, cannot now be known. One victim had been offered to the insulted majesty of Rome in Poland. Contemporary chroniclers speak of others who were immolated to the intolerant genius of the Papacy, but their execution took place, not in open day, but in the secrecy of the cell, or in the darkness of the prison.

The next move of the priests landed them in open conflict with the popular sentiment and the chartered rights of the nation. No country in Europe enjoyed at that hour a greater degree of liberty than did Poland. The towns, many of which were flourishing, elected their own magistrates, and thus each city, as regarded its internal affairs, was a little republic. The nobles, who formed a tenth of the population, were a peculiar and privileged class. Some of them were owners of vast

domains, inhabited castles, and lived in great magnificence. Others of them tilled their own lands; but all of them, grandee and husbandman alike, were equal before the law, and neither their persons nor property could be disposed of, save by the Diet. The king himself was subject to the law. We find the eloquent but versatile Orichovius, who now thundered against the Pope, and now threw himself prostrate before him, saying in one of his philippics, "Your Romans bow their knees before the crowd of your menials; they bear on their necks the degrading yoke of the Roman scribes; but such is not the case with us, where the law rules even the throne." The free constitution of the country was a shield to its Protestantism, as the clergy had now occasion to experience. Stanislav Stadnicki, a nobleman of large estates and great influence, having embraced the Reformed opinions, established the Protestant worship according to the forms of Geneva on his domains. He was summoned to answer for his conduct before the tribunal of the bishop. Stadnicki replied that he was quite ready to justify both his opinions and his acts. The court, however, had no wish to hear what he

had to say in behalf of his faith, and condemned him, by default, to civil death and loss of property. Had the clergy wished to raise a flame all over the kingdom, they could have done nothing more fitted to gain their end.

Stadnicki assembled his fellow-nobles and told them what the priests had done. The Polish grandees had ever been jealous of the throne, but here was an ecclesiastical body, acting under an irresponsible foreign chief, assuming a power which the king had never ventured to exercise, disposing of the lives and properties of the nobles without reference to any will or ally tribunal save their own. The idea was not to be endured. There rung a loud outcry against ecclesiastical tyranny all throughout Poland; and the indignation was brought to a height by numerous apprehensions, at that same time, at the instance of the bishops, of influential persons -- among others, priests of blameless life, who had offended against the law of clerical celibacy, and whom the Roman clergy sought to put to death, but could not, simply from the circumstance that they could find no magistrate

willing to execute their sentences.

At this juncture it happened that the National Diet (1552) assembled. Unmistakable signs were apparent at its opening of the strong anti-Papal feeling that animated many of its members. As usual, its sessions were inaugurated by the solemn performance of high mass. The king in his robes was present, and with him were the ministers of his council, the officers of his household, and the generals of his army, bearing the symbols of their office, and wearing the stars and insignia of their rank; and there, too, were the senators of the Upper Chamber, and the members of the Lower House. All that could be done by chants and incense, by splendid vestments and priestly Fires, to make the service impressive, and revive the decaying veneration of the worshippers for the Roman Church, was done. The great words which effect the prodigy of transubstantiation had been spoken; the trumpet blared, and the clang of grounded arms rung through the building. The Host was being elevated, and the king and his court fell on their knees; but many of the deputies, instead of

prostrating themselves, stood erect and turned away their faces. Raphael Leszczyński, a nobleman of high character and great possessions, expressed his dissent from Rome's great mystery in manner even more marked: he wore his hat all through the performance. The priests saw, but dared not reprove, this contempt of their rites.[13]

The auguries with which the Diet had opened did not fail of finding ample fulfilment in its subsequent proceedings. The assembly chose as its president Leszczyński -- the nobleman who had remained uncovered during mass, and who had previously resigned his senatorial dignity in order to become a member of the Lower House.[14] The Diet immediately took into consideration the jurisdiction wielded by the bishops. The question put in debate was this -- Is such jurisdiction, carrying civil effects, compatible with the rights of the crown and the freedom of the nation? The Diet decided that it was consistent with neither the prerogatives of the sovereign nor the liberties of the people, and resolved to abolish it, so far as it had force in law. King Sigismund Augustus

thought it very possible that if he were himself to mediate in the matter he would, at least, succeed in softening the fall of the bishops, if only he could persuade them to make certain concessions. But he was mistaken: the ecclesiastical dignitaries were perverse, and resolutely refused to yield one iota of their powers. Thereupon the Diet issued its decree, which the king ratified, that the clergy should retain the power of judging of heresy, but have no power of inflicting civil or criminal punishment on the condemned. Their spiritual sentences were henceforward to carry no temporal effects whatever. The Diet of 1552 may be regarded as the epoch of the downfall of Roman Catholic predominancy in Poland, and of the establishment in that country of the liberty of all religious confessions. [15]

The anger of the bishops was inflamed to the utmost. They entered their solemn protest against the enactment of the Diet. The mitre was shorn of half its splendor, and the crozier of more than half its power, by being disjoined from the sword. They left the Senate-hall in a body, and threatened to

resign their senatorial dignities. The Diet heard their threats unmoved, and as it made not the slightest effort either to prevent their departure or to recall them after they were gone, but, on the contrary, went on with its business as if nothing unusual had occurred, the bishops returned and took their seats of their own accord.

Footnotes:

1. Krasinski, History Reform. in Poland, vol. 1., p. 2; Lond.; 1838.
2. A remarkable man, the inventor of the Slavonic alphabet.
3. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., p. 61.
4. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 174.
5. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 182; Lond., 1849.
6. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol 1., pp. 115, 116.
7. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 185.
8. Krasinski Hist. Reform. Poland, vol 1., pp. 138 -- 140.
9. Constitutiones Synodorum -- apud Krasinski.
10. Zalaszowski, Jus Publicum Regni Poloniae --

- Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., p. 157.
11. Vide Hosii Opera, Antverpise, 1571; and Stanislai Hosii Vita autore Rescio, Romae, 1587. Subscription to the above creed by the clergy was enjoined because many of the bishops were suspected of heresy -- " quod multi inter episcopos erant suspecti."
 12. Bzovius, ann. 1551
 13. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., pp. 186 -- 188.
 14. This nobleman was the descendant of that Wenceslaus of Leszna who defended John Huss at the Council of Krasinski, Hist. Constance. He had adopted for his motto, Malo periculosam libertatem quam tutum servitium- "Better the dangers of liberty than the safeguards of slavery."
 15. Vide Reform. Poland, vol. 1., pp. 188, 189, where the original Polish authorities are cited.

Chapter 2

John Alasco, and Reformation of East Friesland

WE see the movement marching on, but we can see no one leader going before it. The place filled by Luther in Germany, by Calvin in Geneva, and by men not dissimilarly endowed in other countries, is vacant in the Reformation of Poland. Here it is a Waldensian missionary or refugee who is quietly sowing the good seed which he has drawn from the garner of some manuscript copy of the New Testament, and there it is a little band of Bohemian brethren, who have preserved the traditions of John Huss, and are trying to plant them in this new soil. Here it is a university doctor who is expounding the writings of Wicliffe to his pupils, and there it is a Polish youth who has just returned from Wittemberg, and is anxious to communicate to his countrymen the knowledge which he has there learned, and which has been so sweet and refreshing to himself. Nevertheless,

although amid all these laborers we can discover no one who first gathers all the forces of the new life into himself, and again sends them forth over the land, we yet behold the darkness vanishing on every side. Poland's Reformation is not a sunrise, but a daybreak: the first dim streaks are succeeded by others less doubtful; these are followed by brighter shades still; till at last something like the clearness of day illuminates its sky. The truth has visited some nobleman, as the light will strike on some tall mountain at the morning hour, and straightway his retainers and tenantry begin to worship as their chief worships; or some cathedral abbot or city priest has embraced the Gospel, and their flocks follow in the steps of their shepherd, and find in the doctrine of a free salvation a peace of soul which they never experienced amid the burdensome rites and meritorious services of the Church of Rome. There are no combats; no stakes; no mighty hindrances to be vanquished; Poland seems destined to enter without struggle or bloodshed into possession of that precious inheritance which other nations are content to buy with a great price.

But although there is no one who, in intellectual and spiritual stature, towers so far above the other workers in Poland as to be styled its Reformer there are three names connected with the history of Protestantism in that country so outstanding as not to be passed without mention. The first is that of King Sigismund Augustus. Tolerant, accomplished, and pure in life, this monarch had read the Institutes, and was a correspondent of Calvin, who sought to inflame him with the ardor of making his name and reign glorious by laboring to effect the Reformation of his dominions. Sigismund Augustus was favourably disposed toward the doctrines of Protestantism, and he had nothing of that abhorrence of heresy and terror of revolution which made the kings of France drive the Gospel from their realm with fire and sword; but he vacillated, and could never make up his mind between Rome and the Reformation. The Polish king would fain have seen an adjustment of the differences that divided his subjects into two great parties, and the dissensions quieted that agitated his kingdom, but

he feared to take the only effectual steps that could lead to that end. He was surrounded constantly with Protestants, who cherished the hope that he would yet abandon Rome, and declare himself openly in favour of Protestantism, but he always drew back when the moment came for deciding. We have seen him, in conjunction with the Diet of 1552, pluck the sword of persecution from the hands of the bishops; and he was willing to go still further, and make trial of any means that promised to amend the administration and reform the doctrines of the Roman Church. He was exceedingly favorable to a project much talked of in his reign -- namely, that of convoking a National Synod for reforming the Church on the basis of Holy Scripture.

The necessity of such an assembly had been mooted in the Diet of 1552; it was revived in the Diet of 1555, and more earnestly pressed on the king, and thus contemporaneously with the abdication of the imperial sovereignty by Charles V., and the yet unfinished sittings of the great Council of Trent, the probability was that

Christendom would behold a truly (Ecumenical Council assemble in Poland, and put the topstone upon the Reformation of its Church and kingdom. The projected Polish assembly, over which it was proposed that King Sigismund Augustus should preside, was to be composed of delegates from all the religious bodies in the kingdom -- Lutherans, Calvinists, and Bohemians -- who were to meet and deliberate on a perfect equality with the Roman clergy.

Nor was the constituency of this Synod to be confined to Poland; other Churches and lands were to be represented in it. All the living Reformers of note were to be invited to it; and, among others, it was to include the great names of Calvin and Beza, of Melancthon and Vergerius. But this Synod was never to meet. The clergy of Rome, knowing that tottering fabrics can stand only in a calm air, and that their Church was in a too shattered condition to survive the shock of free discussion conducted by such powerful antagonists, threw every obstacle in the way of the Synod's meeting. Nor was the king very zealous in the affair. It is: doubtful

whether Sigismund Augustus was ever brought to test the two creeds by the great question which of the twain was able to sustain the weight of his soul's salvation; and so, with convictions feeble and ill-defined, his purpose touching the reform of the Church never ripened into act.

The second name is that of no vacillating man - - we have met it before -- it is that of John Alasco. John Alasco, born in the last year save one of the fifteenth century [1] was sprung of one of the most illustrious families in Poland. Destined for the Church, he received the best education which the schools of his native land could bestow, and he afterwards visited Germany, France, Italy, and Belgium in order to enlarge and perfect his studies. At the University of Louvain, renowned for the purity of its orthodoxy, and whither he resorted, probably at the recommendation of his uncle, who was Primate of Poland, he contracted a close friendship with Albert Hardenberg.[2] After a short stay at Louvain, finding the air murky with scholasticism, he turned his steps in the direction of Switzerland, and arriving at Zurich, he made the

acquaintance of Zwingle.

"Search the Scriptures," said the Reformer of Zurich to the young Polish nobleman. Alasco turned to that great light, and from that moment he began to be delivered from the darkness which had till then encompassed him. Quitting Zurich and crossing the Jura, he entered Basle, and presented himself before Erasmus. This great master of the schools was not slow to discover the refined grace, the beautiful genius, and the many and great acquirements of the stranger who had sought his acquaintance. Erasmus was charmed with the young Pole, and Alasco on his part was equally enamoured of Erasmus. Of all then living, Erasmus, if not the man of highest genius, was the man of highest culture, and doubtless the young scholar caught the touch of a yet greater suavity from this prince of letters, as Erasmus, in the enthusiasm of his friendship, confesses that he had grown young again in the society of Alasco. The Pole lived about a year (1525) under the roof,[3] but not at the cost of the great scholar; for his disposition being as generous as his means were

ample, he took upon himself the expenses of housekeeping; and in other ways he ministered, with equal liberality and delicacy, to the wants of his illustrious host. He purchased his library for 300 golden crowns, leaving to Erasmus the use of it during his life-time.[4] He formed a friendship with other eminent men then living at Basle; in particular, with Oecolampadius and Pellicanus, the latter of whom initiated him into the study of the Hebrew Scriptures.

His uncle, the primate, hearing that his nephew had fallen into "bad company," recalled him by urgent letters to Poland. It cost Alasco a pang to tear himself from his friends in Basle. He carried back to his native land a heart estranged from Rome, but he did not dis sever himself from her communion, nor as yet did he feel the necessity of doing so; he had tested her doctrines by the intellect only, not by the conscience, He was received at court, where his youth, the refinement of his manners, and the brilliance of his talents made him a favourite. The pomps and galeties amid which he now lived weakened, but did not

wholly efface, the impressions made upon him at Zurich and Basle. Destined for the highest offices in the Church of Poland, his uncle demanded that he should purge himself by oath from the suspicions of heresy which had hung about him ever since his return from Switzerland. Alasco complied. The document signed by him is dated in 1526, and in it Alasco promises not to embrace doctrines foreign to those of the Apostolic Roman Church, and to submit in all lawful and honest things to the authority of the bishops and of the Papal See. "This I swear, so help me, God, and his holy Gospel." [5]

This fall was meant to be the first step towards the primacy. Ecclesiastical dignities began now to be showered upon him, but the duties which these imposed, by bringing him into close contact with clerical men, disclosed to him more and more every day the corruptions of the Papacy, and the need of a radical reform of the Church. He resumed his readings in the Bible, and renewed his correspondence with the Reformers. His spiritual life revived, and he began now to try Rome by the

only infallible touch-stone -- "Can I, by the performance of the works she prescribes, obtain peace of conscience, and make myself holy in the sight of God?" Alasco was constrained to confess that he never should. He must therefore, at whatever cost, separate himself from her. At this moment two mitres -- that of Wesprim in Hungary, and that of Cujavia in Poland -- were placed at his acceptance.[6] The latter mitre opened his way to the primacy in Poland. On the one side were two kings proffering him golden dignities, on the other was the Gospel, with its losses and afflictions. Which shall he choose? "God, in his goodness," said he, writing to Pellicanus, "has brought me to myself." He went straight to the king, and frankly and boldly avowing his convictions, declined the Bishopric of Cujavia.

Poland was no place for Alasco after such an avowal, he left his native land in 1536, uncertain in what country he should spend what might yet remain to him of life, which was now wholly devoted to the cause of the Reformation. Sigismund, who knew his worth, would most

willingly have retained Alasco the Romanist, but perhaps he was not sorry to see Alasco the Protestant leave his dominions. The Protestant princes, to whom his illustrious birth and great parts had made him known, vied with each other to secure his services. The Countess Regent of East Friesland, where the Reformation had been commenced in 1528, urged him to come and complete the work by assuming the superintendence of the churches of that province. After long deliberation he went, but the task was a difficult one. The country had become the battleground of the sectaries. All things were in confusion; the churches were full of images, and the worship abounded in mummeries; the people were rude in manners, and many of the nobles dissolute in life; one less resolute might have been dismayed, and retired.

Alasco made a commencement. His quiet, yet persevering, and powerful touch was telling. Straightway a tempest arose around him. The wrangling sectaries on the one side, and the monks Oh the other, united in assailing the man in whom

both recognised a common foe. Accusations were carried to the court at Brussels against him, and soon there came an imperial order to expel "the fire-brand" from Friesland. "Dost thou hear the gowl of the thunder?"[7] said Alasco, writing to his friends; he expected that the bolt would follow. Anna, the sovereign princess of the kingdom, terrified at the threat of the emperor, began to cool in her zeal toward the superintendent and his work; but in proportion as the clouds grew black and danger menaced, the courage and resolution of the Reformer waxed strong. He addressed a letter to the princess (1543), fit which he deemed it "better to be unpolite than to be unfaithful," warning her that should she "take her hand from the plough" she would have to "give account to the eternal Judge." "I am only a foreigner," he added, "burdened with a family,[8] and having no home. I wish, therefore, to be friends with all, but... as far as to the altar. This barrier I cannot pass, even if I had to reduce my family to beggary." [9]

This noble appeal brought the princess once more to the side of Alasco, not again to withdraw

her support from one whom she had found so devoted and so courageous. Prudent, yet resolute, Alasco went on steadily in his work. Gradually the remnants of Romanism were weeded out; gradually the images disappeared from the temples; the order and discipline of the Church were reformed on the Genevan model; the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was established according to the doctrine of Calvin;[10] and, as regarded the monks, they were permitted to occupy their convents in peace, but were forbidden the public performance of their worship. Not liking this restraint, the Fathers quietly withdrew from the kingdom. In six years John Alasco had completed the Reformation of the Church of East Friesland. It was a great service. He had prepared an asylum for the Protestants of the Netherlands during the evil days that were about to come upon them, and he had helped to pave the way for the appearance of William of Orange.

The Church order established by Alasco in Friesland was that of Geneva. This awoke against him the hostility of the Lutherans, and the adherents of that creed continuing to multiply in

Friesland, the troubles of Alasco multiplied along with them. He resigned the general direction of ecclesiastical affairs, which he had exercised as superintendent, and limited his sphere of action to the ministry of the single congregation of Emden, the capital of the country.

But the time was come when John Alasco was to be removed to another sphere. A pressing letter now reached him from Archbishop Cranmer, inviting him to take part, along with other distinguished Continental Reformers, in completing the Reformation of the Church of England.[11] The Polish Reformer accepted the invitation, and traversing Brabant and Flanders in disguise, he arrived in London in September, 1548. A six months' residence with Cranmer at Lambeth satisfied him that the archbishop's views and his own, touching the Reformation of the Church, entirely coincided; and an intimate friendship sprang up between the two, which bore good fruits for the cause of Protestantism in England, where Alaseo's noble character and great learning soon won him high esteem.

After a short visit to Friesland, in 1549, he returned to England, and was nominated by Edward VI., in 1550, Superintendent of the German, French, and Italian congregations erected in London, numbering between 3,000 and 4,000 persons, and which Cranmer hoped would yet prove a seed of Reformation in the various countries from which persecution had driven them,[12] and would also excite the Church of England to pursue the path of Protestantism. And so, doubtless, it would have been, had not the death of Edward VI. and the accession of Mary suddenly changed the whole aspect of affairs in England.[13] The Friesian Reformer and his congregation had now to quit our shore. They embarked at Gravesend on the 15th of September, 1553, in the presence of thousands of English Protestants, who crowded the banks of the Thames, and on bended knees supplicated the blessing and protection of Heaven on the wanderers.

Setting sail, their little fleet was scattered by a storm, and the vessel which bore John Alasco

entered the Danish harbor of Elsinore. Christian III. of Denmark, a mild and pious prince, received Alasco and his fellow-exiles at first with great kindness; but soon their asylum was invaded by Lutheran intolerance. The theologians of the court, Westphal and Pomeranus (Bugenhagen), poisoned the king's mind against the exiles, and they were compelled to re-embark at an inclement season, and traverse tempestuous seas in quest of some more hospitable shore. This shameful breach of hospitality was afterwards repeated at Lubeck, Hamburg, and Rostock; it kindled the indignation of the Churches of Switzerland, and it drew from Calvin an eloquent letter to Alasco, in which he gave vent not only to his deep sympathy with him and his companions in suffering, but also to his astonishment "that the barbarity of a Christian people should exceed even the sea in savageness.[14]

Driven hither and thither, not by the hatred of Rome, but by the intolerance of brethren, Gustavus Vasa, the reforming monarch of Sweden, gave a cordial welcome to the pastor and his flock, should

they choose to settle in his dominions. Alasco, however, thought better to repair to Friesland, the scene of his former labors; but even here the Lutheran spirit, which had been growing in his absence, made his stay unpleasant. He next sought asylum in Frankfort-on-the-Maine, where he established a Church for the Protestant refugees from Belgium.[15] During his stay at Frankfort he essayed to heal the breach between the Lutheran and the Calvinistic branches of the Reformation. The mischiefs of that division he had amply experienced in his own person; but its noxious influence was felt far beyond the little community of which he was the center. It was the great scandal of Protestantism; it disfigured it with dissensions and hatreds, and divided and weakened it in the presence of a powerful foe. But his efforts to heal this deplorable and scandalous schism, although seconded by the Senate of Frankfort and several German princes, were in vain.[16]

He never lost sight of his native land; in all his wanderings he cherished the hope of returning to it at a future day, and aiding in the Reformation of its

Church; and now (1555) he dedicated to Sigismund Augustus of Poland a new edition of an account he had formerly published of the foreign Churches in London of which he had acted as superintendent. He took occasion at the same time to explain in full his own sentiments on the subject of Church Reformation. With great calmness and dignity, but with great strength of argument, he maintained that the Scriptures were the one sole basis of Reformation; that neither from tradition, however venerable, nor from custom, however long established, were the doctrines of the Church's creed or the order of her government to be deduced; that neither Councils nor Fathers could infallibly determine anything; that apostolic practice, as recorded in the inspired canon that is to say, the Word of God -- alone possessed authority in this matter, and was a sure guide. He also took the liberty of urging on the, king the necessity of a Reformation of the Church of Poland, "of which a prosperous beginning had already been made by the greatest and best part of the nation;" but the matter, he added, was one to be prosecuted "with judgment and care, seeing every one who reasoned

against Rome was not orthodox;" and touching the Eucharist -- that vexed question, and in Poland, as elsewhere, so fertile in divisions -- Alasco stated "that doubtless believers received the flesh and blood of Christ in the Communion, but by the lip of the soul, for there was neither bodily nor personal presence in the Eucharist." [17]

It is probable that it was this publication that led to his recall to Poland, in 1556, by the king and nobles. [18] The Roman bishops heralded his coming with a shout of terror and wrath. "The 'butcher' [19] of the Church has entered Poland!" they cried. "Driven out of every land, he returns to that one that gave him birth, to afflict it with troubles and commotions. He is collecting troops to wage war against the king, root out the Churches, and spread riot and bloodshed over the kingdom." This clamor had all the effect on the royal mind which it deserved to have -- that is, none at all. [20]

Alasco, soon after his return, was appointed superintendent of all the Reformed Churches of Little Poland. [21] His long-cherished object

seemed now within his reach. That was not the tiara of the primacy -- for, if so, he needed not have become the exile; his ambition was to make the Church of Poland one of the brightest lights in the galaxy of the Reformation. He had arrived at his great task with fully-ripened powers. Of illustrious birth, and of yet more illustrious learning and piety, he was nevertheless, from remembrance of his fall, humble as a child. Presiding over the Churches of more than half the kingdom, Protestantism, under his fostering care, waxed stronger every day. He held Synods. He actively assisted in the translation of the first Protestant Bible in Poland, that he might give his countrymen direct access to the fountain of truth. He laboured unweariedly in the cause of union. He had especially at heart the healing of the great breach between the Lutheran and the Reformed -- the sore through which so much of the vital force of Protestantism was ebbing away. The final goal which he kept ever in eye, and at which he hoped one day to arrive, was the erection of a national Church, Reformed in doctrine on the basis of the Word of God, and constituted in government as similarly to the Churches over which he had

presided in London as the circumstances of Poland would allow. Besides the opposition of the Roman hierarchy, which was to be looked for, the Reformer found two main hindrances obstructing his path. The first was the growth of anti-Trinitarian doctrines, first broached, as we have seen, in the secret society of Cracow, and which continued to spread widely among the Churches superintended by Alasco, in spite of the polemical war he constantly maintained against them. The second was the vacillation of King Sigismund Augustus. Alasco urged the convocation of a National Synod, in order to the more speedy and universal Reformation of the Polish Church. But the king hesitated. Meanwhile Rome, seeing in the measures on foot, and more especially in the projected Synod, the impending overthrow of her power in Poland, dispatched Lippomani, one of the ablest of the Vatican diplomatists, with a promise, sealed with the Fisherman's ring, of a General Council, which should reform the Church and restore her unity.

What need, then, for a National Council? The

Pope would do, and with more order and quiet, what the Poles wished to have done. How many score of times had this promise been made, and when had it proved aught save a delusion and a snare? It served, however, as an excuse to the king, who refused to convoke the Synod which Alasco so much desired to see assemble. It was a great crisis. The Reformation had essayed to crown her work in Poland, but she was hindered, and the fabric remained unfinished: a melancholy monument of the egregious error of letting slip those golden opportunities that are given to nations, which "they that are wise" embrace, but they that are void of wisdom neglect, and 'bewail their folly with floods of tears and torrents of blood in the centuries that come after.

In January, 1560, John Alasco died, and was buried with great pomp in the Church of Pintzov.[22] After him there arose in Poland no Reformer of like adaptability and power, nor did the nation ever again enjoy so favorable an opportunity of planting its liberties on a stable foundation by completing its Reformation.[23]

After John Alasco, but not equal to him, arose Prince Radziwill. His rank, his talents, and his zealous labors in the cause of Protestantism give him a conspicuous place in the list of Poland's Reformers. Nicholas Radziwill was sprung of a wealthy family of Lithuania. He was brother to Barbara, the first queen of Sigismund Augustus, whose unlimited confidence he enjoyed. Appointed ambassador to the courts of Charles V. and Ferdinand I., the grace of his manners and the charm of his discourse so attracted the regards of these monarchs, that he received from the Emperor Charles the dignity of a Prince of the Empire. At the same time he so acquitted himself in the many affairs of importance in which he was employed by his own sovereign, that honors and wealth flowed upon him in his native land. He was created Chancellor of Lithuania, and Palatine of Vilna. Hitherto politics alone had engrossed him, but the time was now come when something nobler than the pomp of courts, and the prizes of earthly kingdoms, was to occupy his thoughts and call forth his energies. About 1553 he was brought into

intercourse with some Bohemian Protestants at Prague, who instructed him in the doctrines of the Reformation, which he embraced in the Genevan form. From that time his influence and wealth -- both of which were vast -- were devoted to the cause of his country's Reformation. He summoned to his help Vergerius [24] from Italy. He supported many learned Protestants. He defrayed the expense of the printing of the first Protestant Bible at Brest, in Lithuania, in 1563. He diffused works written in defense of the Reformed faith. He erected a magnificent church and college at Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, and in many other ways fostered the Reformed Church in that powerful province where he exercised almost royal authority. Numbers of the priests now embraced the Protestant faith. "Almost the whole of the Roman Catholic nobles," says Krasinski, "including the first families of the land, and a great number of those who had belonged to the Eastern Church, became Protestants; so that in the diocese of Samogitia there were only eight Roman Catholic clergymen remaining. The Reformed worship was established not only in the estates of the nobles, but also in

many towns." [25] On the other side, the testimony to Radziwill's zeal as a Reformer is equally emphatic. We find the legate, Lippomani, reproaching him thus: -- " Public rumor says that the Palatine of Vilna patronises all heresies, and that all the dangerous innovators are gathering under his protection; that he erects, wherever his influence reaches, sacrilegious altars against the altar of God, and that he establishes pulpits of falsehood against the pulpits of truth." Besides these scandalous deeds, the legate charges Radziwill with other heinous transgressions against the Papacy, as the casting down the images of the saints, the forbidding of prayers to the dead, and the giving of the cup to the laity; by all of which he had greatly offended against the Holy Father, and put his own salvation in peril set about writing a work against "the apostates of Germany," which resulted in his own conversion to Protestantism. He communicated his change of mind to his brother, Bishop of Pola, who at first opposed, and at last embraced his opinions. The Bishop of Pola soon after met his fate, though how is shrouded in mystery. The Bishop of Capo d'Istria was witness

to the horrors of the death-bed of Francis Spira, and was so impressed by them that he resigned his bishopric and left Italy. He it was that now came to Poland. (See McCrie, Italy.)

Had the life of Prince Radziwill been prolonged, so great was his influence with the king, it is just possible that the vacillation of Sigismund Augustus might have been overcome, and the throne permanently won for the cause of Poland's Reformation; but that possibility, if it ever existed, was suddenly extinguished. In 1565, while yet in the prime of life, and in the midst of his labors for the emancipation of his native land from the Papal yoke, the prince died. When he felt his last hour approaching he summoned to his bed-side his eldest son, Nicholas Christopher, and solemnly charged him to abide constant in the profession of his father's creed, and the service of his father's God; and to employ the illustrious name, the vast possessions, and the great influence which had descended to him for the cause of the Reformation.

So ill did that son fulfill the charge, delivered

to him in circumstances so solemn, that he returned into the bosom of the Roman Church, and to repair to the utmost of his power the injury his father had done the Papal See, he expended 5,000 ducats in purchasing copies of his father's Bible, which he burned publicly in the market-place of Vilna. On the leaves, now sinking in ashes, might be read the following words, addressed in the dedication to the Polish monarch, and which we who are able to compare the Poland of the nineteenth century with the Poland of the sixteenth, can hardly help regarding as prophetic. "But if your Majesty (which may God avert) continuing to be deluded by this world, unmindful of its vanity, and fearing still some hypocrisy, will persevere in that error which, according to the prophecy of Daniel, that impudent priest, the idol of the Roman temple, has made abundantly to grow in his infected vineyard, like a true and real Antichrist; if your Majesty will follow to the end that blind chief of a generation of vipers, and lead us the faithful people of God the same way, it is to be feared that the Lord may, for such a rejection of his truth, condemn us all with your Majesty to shame, humiliation, and

destruction, and afterwards to an eternal perdition." [26]

Footnotes:

1. Gerdesius, Hist. Reform., vol 3., p. 146.
2. Ibid. This is the date (1523) of their friendship as given by Gerdesius; it is doubtful, however, whether it began so early'.
3. "Is in iisdem cum Erasmo aedibus vixerat Basileae." (Gerdesius, vol. 3., p. 146.)
4. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., p. 247
5. Alasco, Opp., vol. 2., p. 548 -- apud D'Aubigne, 7:546.
6. Gerdesius, Hist. Reform., vol 3., p. 147.
7. Alasco, Opp., vol. 2., p. 558.
8. In 1540, Alasco had married at Mainz, to put an insurmountable barrier between himself and Rome.
9. Alasco, Opp., vol. 2., p. 560.
10. Gerdesius, Hist. Reform., vol. 3., p. 148.
11. Gerdesius, Hist. Reform., vol. 3., p. 150.
12. Strype, Cranmer, pp. 234 -- 240. The young king granted him letters patent, erecting

Alasco and the other ministers of the foreign congregations into a body corporate. The affairs of each congregation were managed by a minister, ruling elders and deacons. The oversight of all was committed to Alasco as superintendent. He had greater trouble but no more authority than the others, and was subject equally with them to the discipline of the Church. Although he allowed no superiority of office or authority to superintendents, he considered that they were of Divine appointment, and that Peter held this rank among the apostles. (Vide McCrie, Life of Knox, vol. 1., p. 407, notes.)

13. Gerdesius, vol. 3., p. 151. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol 1., pp. 264 -- 266.
14. Vide Letter of Calvin to John Alasco -- Bonnet, vol. 2., p. 432.
15. Gerdesius, vol. 3., p. 151
16. Krasinski, Slovenia, pp. 214, 215.
17. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 217; and Hist. Reform Poland, vol. 1., pp. 272, 273
18. Gerdesius, vol, 3., p. 151.
19. "Carnifex."

20. Krasinski, Slavonia, pp. 217, 218.
21. Poland was divided politically into Great and Little Poland. The first comprehended the western parts, and being the original seat of the Polish power, was called Great Poland, although actually less than the second division, which comprehended the south-eastern provinces, and was styled Little Poland.
22. Gerdesius, vol. 3., p. 152.
23. Krasinski says that but scanty materials exist for illustrating the last four years of John Alasco's life. This the count explains by the fact that his descendants returned into the bosom of the Roman Church after his death, and that all records of his labors for the Reformation of his native land, as well as most of his published works, were destroyed by the Jesuits.
24. There were two brothers of that name, both zealous Protestants. The one was Bishop of Capo d'Istria, and
25. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 227.
26. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland. vol. 1., p. 309, foot-note.

Chapter 3

Acme of Protestantism in Poland

IS following the labors of those eminent men whom God inspired with the wish to emancipate their native land from the yoke of Rome, we have gone a little way beyond the point at which we had arrived in the history of Protestantism in Poland. We go back a stage. We have seen the Diet of 1552 inflict a great blow on the Papal power in Poland, by abolishing the civil jurisdiction of the bishops. Four years after this (1556) John Alasco returned, and began his labors in Poland; these he was prosecuting with success, when Lippomani was sent from Rome to undo his work.

Lippomani's mission bore fruit. He revived the fainting spirits and rallied the wavering courage of the Romanists. He sowed with subtle art suspicions and dissensions among the Protestants; he stoutly promised in the Pope's name all necessary

ecclesiastical reforms; this fortified the king in his vacillation, and furnished those within the Roman Church who had been demanding a reform, with an excuse for relaxing their efforts. They would wait "the good time coming." The Pope's manager with skillful hand lifted the veil, and the Romanists saw in the future a purified, united, and Catholic Church as clearly as the traveler sees the mirage in the desert. Vergerius labored to convince them that what they saw was no lake, but a shimmering vapor, floating above the burning sands, but the phantasm was so like that the king and the bulk of the nation chose it in preference to the reality which John Alasco would have given them.

Meanwhile the Diet of 1552 had left the bishops crippled; their temporal arm had been broken, and their care now was to restore this most important branch of their jurisdiction. Lippomani assembled a General Synod of the Popish clergy at Lowicz. This Synod passed a resolution declaring that heretics, now springing up on every side, ought to be visited with pains and penalties, and then proceeded to make trial how far the king and

nation would permit them to go in restoring their punitive power. They summoned to their bar the Canon of Przemyśl, Lutomirski by name, on a suspicion of heresy. The canon appeared, but with him came his friends, all of them provided with Bibles -- the best weapons, they thought, for such a battle as that to which they were advancing; but when the bishops saw how they were armed, they closed the doors of their judgment-hall and shut them out. The first move of the prelates had not improved their position.

Their second was attended with a success that was more disastrous than defeat. They accused a poor girl, Dorothy Lazecka, of having obtained a consecrated wafer on pretense of communicating, and of selling it to the Jews. The Jews carried the Host to their synagogue, where, being pierced with needles, it emitted a quantity of blood. The miracle, it was said, had come opportunely to show how unnecessary it was to give the cup to the laity. But further, it was made a criminal charge against both the girl and the Jews. The Jews pleaded that such an accusation was absurd; that they did not believe

in transubstantiation, and would never think of doing anything so preposterous as experimenting on a wafer to see whether it contained blood. But in spite of their defense, they, as well as the unfortunate girl, were condemned to be burned. This atrocious sentence could not be carried out without the royal exequatur. The king, when applied to, refused his consent, declaring that he could not believe such an absurdity, and dispatched a messenger to Sochaczew, where the parties were confined, with orders for their release. The Synod, however, was determined to complete its work. The Bishop of Chelm, who was Vice-Chancellor of Poland, attached the royal seal without the knowledge of the king, and immediately sent off a messenger to have the sentence instantly executed. The king, upon being informed of the forgery, sent in haste to counteract the nefarious act of his minister; but it was too late. Before the royal messenger arrived the stake had been kindled, and the innocent persons consumed in the flames.[1]

This deed, combining so many crimes in one, filled all Poland with horror. The legate,

Lippomani, disliked before, was now detested tenfold. Assailed in pamphlets and caricatures, he quitted the kingdom, followed by the execration of the nation. Nor was it Lippomani alone who was struck by the recoil of this, in every way, unfortunate success; the Polish hierarchy suffered disgrace and damage along with him, for the atrocity showed the nation what the bishops were prepared to do, should the sword which the Diet of 1552 had plucked from their hands ever again be grasped by them.

An attempt at miracle, made about this time, also helped to discredit the character and weaken the influence of the Roman clergy in Poland. Christopher Radziwill, cousin to the famous Prince Radziwill, grieved at his relative's lapse into what he deemed heresy, made a pilgrimage to Rome, in token of his own devotion to the Papal See, and was rewarded with a box of precious relics from the Pope. One day after his return home with his inestimable treasure, the friars of a neighbouring convent waited on him, and telling him that they had a man possessed by the devil under their care,

on whom the ordinary exorcisms had failed to effect a cure, they besought him, in pity for the poor demoniac, to lend them his box of relics, whose virtue doubtless would compel the foul spirit to flee. The bones were given with joy. On a certain day the box, with its contents, was placed on the high altar; the demoniac was brought forward, and in presence of a vast multitude the relics were applied, and with complete success. The evil spirit departed out of the man, with the usual contortions and grimaces. The spectators shouted, "Miracle!" and Radziwill, overjoyed, lifted eyes and hands to heaven, in wonder and gratitude.[2]

In a few days thereafter his servant, smitten in conscience, came to him and confessed that on their journey from Rome he had carelessly lost the true relics, and had replaced them with common bones. This intelligence was somewhat disconcerting to Radziwill, but greatly more so to the friars, seeing it speedily led to the disclosure of the imposture. The pretended demoniac confessed that he had simply been playing a part, and the

monks likewise were constrained to acknowledge their share in the pious fraud. Great scandal arose; the clergy bewailed the day the Pope's box had crossed the Alps; and Christopher Radziwill, receiving from the relics a virtue he had not anticipated, was led to the perusal of the Scriptures, and finally embraced, with his whole family, the Protestant faith. When his great relative, Prince Radziwill, died in 1565, Christopher came forward, and to some extent supplied his loss to the Protestant cause.

The king, still pursuing a middle course, solicited from the Pope, Paul IV., a Reformation which he might have had to better effect from his Protestant clergy, if only he would have permitted them to meet and begin the work. Sigismund Augustus addressed a letter to the Pontiff at the Council of Trent, demanding the five following things: --

- 1st, the performance of mass in the Polish tongue;
- 2ndly, Communion in both kinds;

- 3rdly, the marriage of priests;
- 4thly, the abolition of annats;
- 5thly, the convocation of a National Council for the reform of abuses, and the reconciliation of the various opinions.

The effect of these demands on Paul IV. was to irritate this very haughty Pontiff; he fell into a fume, and expressed in animated terms his amazement at the arrogance of his Majesty of Poland; but gradually cooling down, he declined civilly, as might have been foreseen, demands which, though they did not amount to a very great deal, were more than Rome could safely grant.[3]

This rebuff taught the Protestants, if not the king, that from the Seven Hills no help would come - that their trust must be in themselves; and they grew bolder every day. In the Diet of Piotrkow, 1559, an attempt was made to deprive the bishops of their seats in the Senate, on the ground that their oath of obedience to the Pope was wholly irreconcilable to and subversive of their allegiance to their sovereign, and their duty to the

nation. The oath was read and commented on, and the senator who made the motion concluded his speech in support of it by saying that if the bishops kept their oath of spiritual obedience, they must necessarily violate their vow of temporal allegiance; and if they were faithful subjects of the Pope, they must necessarily be traitors to their king.[4] The motion was not carried, probably because the vague hope of a more sweeping measure of reform still kept possession of the minds of men.

The next step of the Poles was in the direction of realising that hope. A Diet met in 1563, and passed a resolution that a General Synod, in which all the religious bodies in Poland would be represented, should be assembled. The Primate of Poland, Archbishop Uchanski, who was known to be secretly inclined toward the Reformed doctrines, was favorable to the proposed Convocation. Had such a Council been convened, it might, as matters then stood, with the first nobles of the land, many of the great cities, and a large portion of the nation, all on the side of Protestantism, have had the most

decisive effects on the Kingdom of Poland and its future destinies. "It would have upset," says Krasinski, "the dominion of Rome in Poland for ever." [5] Rome saw the danger in all its extent, and sent one of her ablest diplomatists to cope with it. Cardinal Commendoni, who had given efficient aid to Queen Mary of England in 1553, in her attempted restoration of Popery, was straightway dispatched to employ his great abilities in arresting the triumph of Protestantism, and averting ruin from the Papacy in the Kingdom of Poland. The legate put forth all his dexterity and art in his important mission, and not without effect. He directed his main efforts to influence the mind of Sigismund Augustus. He drew with masterly hand a frightful picture of the revolts and seditions that were sure to follow such a Council as it was contemplated holding. The warring winds, once let loose, would never cease to rage till the vessel of the Polish State was driven on the rocks and shipwrecked. For every concession to the heretics and the blind mob, the king would have to part with as many rights of his own. His laws contemned, his throne in the dust, who then would

lift him up and give him back his crown? Had he forgotten the Colloquy of Poissy, which the King of France, then a child, had been persuaded to permit to take place? What had that disputation proved but a trumpet of revolt, which had banished peace from France, not since to return? In that unhappy country, whose inhabitants were parted by bitter feuds and contending factions, whose fields were reddened by the sword of civil war, whose throne was being continually shaken by sedition and revolt, the king might see the picture of what Poland would become should he give his consent to the meeting of a Council, where all doctrines would be brought into question, and all things reformed without reference to the canons of the Church, and the authority of the Pope. Commendoni was a skillful limner; he made the king hear the roar of the tempest which he foretold; Sigismund Augustus felt as if his throne were already rocking beneath him; the peace-loving monarch revoked the permission he had been on the point of giving; he would not permit the Council to convene.[6]

If a National Council could not meet to essay the Reformation of the Church, might it not be possible, some influential persons now asked, for the three Protestant bodies in Poland to unite in one Church? Such a union would confer new strength on Protestantism, would remove the scandal offered by the dissensions of Protestants among themselves, and would enable them in the day of battle to unite their arms against the foe, and in the hour of peace to conjoin their labors in building up their Zion. The Protestant communions in Poland were -- 1st, the Bohemian; 2ndly, the Reformed or Calvinistic; and 3rdly, the Lutheran. Between the first and second there was entire agreement in point of doctrine; only inasmuch as the first pastors of the Bohemian Church had received ordination (1467) from a Waldensian superintendent, as we have previously narrated,[7] the Bohemians had come to lay stress on this, as an order of succession peculiarly sacred. Between the second and third there was the important divergence on the subject of the Eucharist. The Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation approached more nearly to the Roman doctrine of the mass than to the Reformed

doctrine of the Lord's Supper. If change there had been since the days of Luther on the question of consubstantiation, it was in the direction of still greater rigidity and tenacity, accompanied with a growing intolerance toward the other branches of the great Protestant family, of which some melancholy proofs have come before us. How much the heart of John Alasco was set on healing these divisions, and how small a measure of success attended his efforts to do so, we have already seen.

The project was again revived. The main opposition to it came from the Lutherans. The Bohemian Church now numbered upwards of 200 congregations in Moravia and Poland,[8] but the Lutherans accused them of being heretical. Smarting from the reproach, and judging that to clear their orthodoxy would pave the way for union, the Bohemians submitted their Confession to the Protestant princes of Germany, and all the leading Reformers of Europe, including Peter Martyr and Bullinger at Zurich, and Calvin and Beza at Geneva. A unanimous verdict was returned

that the Bohemian Confession was "conformable to the doctrines of the Gospel."

This judgment silenced for a time the Lutheran attacks on the purity of the Bohemian creed; but this good understanding being once more disturbed, the Bohemian Church in 1568 sent a delegation to Wittenberg, to submit their Confession to the theological faculty of its university. Again their creed was fully approved of, and this judgment carrying great weight with the Lutherans, the attacks on the Bohemians from that time ceased, and the negotiations for union went prosperously forward.

At last the negotiations bore fruit. In 1569, the leading nobles of the three communions, having met together at the Diet of Lublin, resolved to take measures for the consummation of the union. They were the more incited to this by the hope that the king, who had so often expressed his desire to see the Protestant Churches of his realm become one, would thereafter declare himself on the side of Protestantism. It was resolved to hold a Synod or

Conference of all three Churches, and the town of Sandomir was chosen as the place of meeting. The Synod met in the beginning of April, 1570, and was attended by the Protestant grandees and nobles of Poland, and by the ministers of the Bohemian, Reformed, and Lutheran Churches. After several days discussion it was found that the assembly was of one heart and mind on all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel; and all agreement, entitled "Act of the Religious Union between the Churches of Great and Little Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Samogitia," was signed on the 14th of April, 1570.[9]

The subscribers place on the front of their famous document their unanimity in "the doctrines about God, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, Justification, and other principal points of the Christian religion." To give effect to this unanimity they "enter into a mutual and sacred obligation to defend unanimously, and according to the injunctions of the Word of God, this their covenant in the true and pure religion of Christ, against the followers of the Roman Church, the

sectaries, as well as all the enemies of the truth and Gospel."

On the vexed question of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the United Church agreed to declare that "the elements are not only elements or vain symbols, but are sufficient to believers, and impart by faith what they signify." And in order to express themselves with still greater clearness, they agreed to confess that "the substantial presence of Christ is not only signified but really represented in the Communion to those that receive it, and that the body and blood of our Lord are really distributed and given with the symbols of the thing itself; which according to the nature of Sacraments are by no means bare signs."

"But that no disputes," they add, "should originate from a difference of expressions, it has been resolved to add to the articles inserted into our Confession, the article of the Confession of the Saxon Churches relating to the Lord's Supper, which was sent in 1551 to the Council of Trent, and which we acknowledge as pious, and do

receive. Its expressions are as follows: ' Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs and testimonies of grace, as it has been said before, which remind us of the promise and of the redemption, and show that the benefits of the Gospel belong to all those that make use of these rites... In the established use of the Communion, Christ is substantially present, and the body and blood of Christ are truly given to those who receive the Communion.'" [10]

The confederating Churches further agreed to "abolish and bury in eternal oblivion all the contentions, troubles, and dissensions which have hitherto impeded the progress of the Gospel," and leaving free each Church to administer its own discipline and practice its own rites, deeming these of "little importance" provided "the foundation of our faith and salvation remain pure and unadulterated," they say: "Having mutually given each other our hands, we have made a sacred promise faithfully to maintain the peace and faith, and to promote it every day more and more for the edification of the Word of God, and carefully to avoid all occasions of dissension." [11]

There follows a long and brilliant list of palatines, nobles, superintendents, pastors, elders, and deacons belonging to all the three communions, who, forgetting the party-questions that had divided them, gathered round this one standard, and giving their hands to one another, and lifting them up to heaven, vowed henceforward to be one and to contend only against the common foe. This was one of the triumphs of Protestantism. Its spirit now gloriously prevailed over the pride of church, the rivalry of party, and the narrowness of bigotry, and in this victory gave an augury -- alas! never to be fulfilled -- of a yet greater triumph in days to come, by which this was to be completed and crowned.

Three years later (1573) a great Protestant Convocation was held at Cracow. It was presided over by John Firley, Grand Marshal of Poland, a leading member of the Calvinistic communion, and the most influential grandee of the kingdom. The regulations enacted by this Synod sufficiently show the goal at which it was anxious to arrive. It aimed

at reforming the nation in life as well as in creed. It forbade "all kinds of wickedness and luxury, accursed gluttony and inebriety." It prohibited lewd dances, games of chance, profane oaths, and night assemblages in taverns. It enjoined landowners to treat their peasants with "Christian charity and humanity," to exact of them no oppressive labor or heavy taxes, to permit no markets or fairs to be held upon their estates on Sunday, and to demand no service of their peasants on that day. A Protestant creed was but the means for creating a virtuous and Christian people.

There is no era like this, before or since, in the annals of Poland. Protestantism had reached its acme in that country. Its churches numbered upwards of 2,000. They were at peace and flourishing. Their membership included the first dignitaries of the crown and the first nobles of the land. In some parts Romanism almost entirely disappeared. Schools were planted throughout the country, and education flourished. The Scriptures were translated into the tongue of the people, the reading of them was encouraged as the most

efficient weapon against the attacks of Rome. Latin was already common, but now Greek and Hebrew began to be studied, that direct access might be had to the Divine fountains of truth and salvation. The national intellect, invigorated by Protestant truth, began to expatiate in fields that had been neglected hitherto. The printing-press, which rusts Unused where Popery dominates, was vigorously wrought, and sent forth works on science, jurisprudence, theology, and general literature. This was the Augustan era of letters in Poland. The toleration which was so freely accorded in that country drew thither crowds of refugees, whom persecution had driven from their homes, and who, carrying with them the arts and manufactures of their own lands, enriched Poland with a material prosperity which, added to the political power and literary glory that already encompassed her, raised her to a high pitch of greatness.

Footnotes:

1. Raynaldus, ad ann. 1556. Starowolski, Epitomae Synodov. -- apud Krasinski, Hist.

- Reform. Poland, vol 1., p. 305
2. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., pp. 310, 311. Bayle, art. "Radziwi11."
 3. Pietro Soave Polano, Hist. Counc. Trent, lib. 5., p. 399; Lond., 1629.
 4. "Episcopi sunt non custodes sed proditores reipublicae." (Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., p. 312.)
 5. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 232, foot-note.
 6. Vie de Commendoni, par Gratiani, Fr. Trans., p. 213 et seq. -- apud Krasinski, Slavonia, pp. 232 -- 234.
 7. See ante, bk. 3., chap. 19, p. 212.
 8. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 1., p. 368.
 9. This union is known in history as the Consensus Sandomiriensis.
 10. These articles are a compromise between the Lutheran and Calvinistic theologies, on the vexed question of the Eucharist. The Lutherans soon began loudly to complain that though their phraseology was Lutheran their sense was Calvinistic, and the union, as shown in the text, was short-lived.

11. Krasinski, Hist Reform. Poland, vol. 1., chap.

Chapter 4

Organisation of the Protestant Church of Poland

THE short-lived golden age of Poland was now waning into the silver one. But before recording the slow gathering of the shadows -- -the passing of the day into twilight, and the deepening of the twilight into night -- we must cast a momentary glance, first, at the constitution of the Polish Protestant Church as seen at this the period of her fullest development; and secondly, at certain political events, which bore with powerful effect upon the Protestant character of the nation, and sealed the fate of Poland as a free country.

In its imperfect unity we trace the absence of a master-hand in the construction of the Protestant Church of Poland. Had one great mind led in the Reformation of that country, one system of ecclesiastical government would doubtless from the first have been given to all Poland. As it was,

the organisation of its Church at the beginning, and in a sense all throughout, differed in different provinces. Other causes, besides the want of a great leader, contributed to this diversity in respect of ecclesiastical government. The nobles were allowed to give what order they pleased to the Protestant churches which they erected on their lands, but the same liberty was not extended to the inhabitants of towns, and hence very considerable diversity in the ecclesiastical arrangements. This diversity was still farther increased by the circumstance that not one, but three Confessions had gained ground in Poland -- the Bohemian, the Genevan, and the Lutheran. The necessity of a more perfect organisation soon came to be felt, and repeated attempts were made at successive Synods to unify the Church's government. A great step was taken in this direction at the Synod of Kosmin, in 1555, when a union was concluded between the Bohemian and Genevan Confessions; and a still greater advance was made in 1570, as we have narrated in the preceding chapter, when at the Synod of Sandomir the three Protestant Churches of Poland -- the Bohemian, the Genevan, and the

Lutheran -- agreed to merge all their Confessions in one creed, and combine their several organisations in one government.

But even this was only an approximation, not a full and complete attainment of the object aimed at. All Poland was not yet ruled spiritually from one ecclesiastical centre; for the three great political divisions of the country -- Great Poland, Little Poland, and Lithuania -- had each its independent ecclesiastical establishment, by which all its religious affairs were regulated. Nevertheless, at intervals, or when some matter of great moment arose, all the pastors of the kingdom came together in Synod, thus presenting a grand Convocation of all the Protestant Churches of Poland.

Despite this tri-partition in the ecclesiastical authority, one form of Church government now extended over all Poland. That form was a modified episcopacy. If any one man was entitled to be styled the Father of the Polish Protestant Church it was John Alasco, and the organisation which he gave to the Reformed Church of his

native land was not unlike that of England, of which he was a great admirer. Poland was on a great scale what the foreign Church over which John Alasco presided in London was on a small. First came the Superintendent, for Alasco preferred that term, though the more learned one of Senior Primarius was sometimes used to designate this dignitary. The Superintendent, or Senior Primarius, corresponded somewhat in rank and powers to an archbishop. He convoked Synods, presided in them, and executed their sentences; but he had no judicial authority, and was subject to the Synod, which could judge, admonish, and depose him.[1]

Over the Churches of a district a Sub-Superintendent, or Senior, presided. The Senior corresponded to a bishop. He took the place of the Superintendent in his absence; he convoked the Synods of the district, and possessed a certain limited jurisdiction, though exclusively spiritual. The other ecclesiastical functionaries were the Minister, the Deacon, and the Lecturer. The Polish Protestants eschewed the fashion and order of the Roman hierarchy, and strove to reproduce as far as

the circumstances of their times would allow, or as they themselves were able to trace it, the model exhibited in the primitive Church.

Besides the Clerical Senior each district had a Civil Senior, who was elected exclusively by the nobles and landowners. His duties about the Church were mainly of an external nature. All things appertaining to faith and doctrine were left entirely in the hands of the ministers; but the Civil Senior took cognisance of the morals of ministers, and in certain cases could forbid them the exercise of their functions till he had reported the case to the Synod, as the supreme authority of the Church. The support and general welfare of churches and schools were entrusted to the Civil Senior, Who, moreover, acted as advocate for the Church before the authorities of the country.

The supreme authority in the Polish Protestant Church was neither the Superintendent nor the Civil Senior, but the Synod. Four times every year a Local Synod, composed not of ministers only, but of all the members of the congregations, was

convened in each district. Although the members sat along with the pastors, all questions of faith and doctrine were left to be determined exclusively by the latter. Once a year a Provincial Synod was held, in which each district was represented by a Clerical Senior, two Con-Seniors, or assistants, and four Civil Seniors; thus giving a slight predominance to the lay element in the Synod. Nevertheless, ministers, although not delegated by the Local Synods, could sit and vote on equal terms with others in the Provincial Synod.

The Grand Synod of the nation, or Convocation of the Polish Church, met at no stated times. It assembled only when the emergence of some great question called for its decision. These great gatherings, of course, could take place only so long as the Union of Sandomir, which bound in one Church all the Protestant Confessions of Poland, existed, and that unhappily was only from 1570 to 1595. After the expiry of these twenty-five years those great national gatherings, which had so impressively attested the strength and grandeur of Protestantism in Poland, were seen no more. Such

in outline was the constitution and government of the Protestant Church of Poland. It wanted only two things to make it complete and perfect -- namely, one supreme court, or center of authority, with jurisdiction covering the whole country; and a permanent body or "Board," having its seat in the capital, through which the Church might take instant action when great difficulties called for united councils, or sudden dangers necessitated united arms. The meetings of the Grand Synods were intermittent and irregular, whereas their enemies never failed to maintain union among themselves, and never ceased their attacks upon the Protestant Church.

We must now turn to the course of political affairs subsequent to the death of King Sigismund Augustus, of which, however, we shall treat only so far as they grew out of Protestantism, and exerted a reflex influence upon it. The amiable; enlightened, and tolerant monarch, Sigismund Augustus, so often almost persuaded to be a Protestant, and one day, as his courtiers fondly hoped, to become one in reality, went to his grave

in 1572, without having come to any decision, and without leaving any issue.

The Protestants were naturally desirous of placing a Protestant upon the throne; but the intrigues of Cardinal Commendoni, and the jealousy of the Lutherans against the Reformed, which the Union of Sandomir had not entirely extinguished, rendered all efforts towards this effect in vain. Meanwhile Coligny, whom the Peace of St. Germain had restored to the court of Paris, and for the moment to influence, came forward with the proposal of placing a French prince upon the throne of Poland. The admiral was revolving a gigantic scheme for humbling Romanism, and its great champion, Spain. He meditated bringing together in a political and religious alliance the two great countries of Poland and France, and Protestantism once triumphant in both, an issue which to Coligny seemed to be near, the united arms of the two countries would soon put an end to the dominancy of Rome, and lay in the dust the overgrown power of Austria and Spain. Catherine de Medici, who saw in the project a new

aggrandisement to her family, warmly favored it; and Montluc, Bishop of Valence, was dispatched to Poland, furnished with ample instructions from Coligny to prosecute the election of Henry of Valois, Duke of Anjou. Montluc had hardly crossed the frontier when the St. Bartholomew was struck, and among the many victims of that dreadful act was the author of that very scheme which Montluc was on his way to advocate and, if possible, consummate. The bishop, on receiving the terrible news, thought it useless to continue his journey; but Catherine, feeling the necessity of following the line of foreign policy which had been originated by the man she had murdered, sent orders to Montluc to go forward.

The ambassador had immense difficulties to overcome in the prosecution of his mission, for the massacre had inspired universal horror, but by dint of stoutly denying the Duke of Anjou's participation in the crime, and promising that the duke would subscribe every guarantee of political and religious liberty which might be required of him, he finally carried his object. Firley, the leader

of the Protestants, drafted a list of privileges which Anjou was to grant to the Protestants of Poland, and of concessions which Charles IX. was to make to the Protestants of France; and Montluc was required to sign these, or see the rejection of his candidate. The ambassador promised for the monarch.

Henry of Valois having been chosen, four ambassadors set out from Poland with the diploma of election, which was presented to the duke on the 10th September, 1573, in Notre Dame, Paris. A Romish bishop, and member of the embassy, entered a protest, at the beginning of the ceremonial, against that clause in the oath which secured religious liberty, and which the duke was now to swear. Some confusion followed. The Protestant Zborowski, interrupting the proceedings, addressed Montluc thus:~"Had you not accepted, in the name of the duke, these conditions, we should not have elected him as our monarch." Henry feigned not to understand the subject of dispute, but Zborowski, advancing towards him, said -- "I repeat, sire, if your ambassador had not accepted

the condition securing religious liberty to us Protestants, we would not have elected you to be our king, and if you do not confirm these conditions you shall not be our king." Thereupon Henry took the oath. When he had sworn, Bishop Karnkowski, who had protested against the religious liberty promised in the oath, stepped forward, and again protested that the clause should not prejudice the authority of the Church of Rome, and he received from the king a written declaration to the effect that it would not.[2]

Although the sovereign-elect had confirmed by oath the religious liberties of Poland, the suspicions of the Protestants were not entirely allayed, and they resolved jealously to watch the proceedings at the coronation. Their distrust was not without cause. Cardinal Hosius, who had now begun to exercise vast influence on the affairs of Poland, reasoned that the oath that Henry had taken in Paris was not binding, and he sent his secretary to meet the new monarch on the road to his new dominions, and to assure him that he did not even need absolution from what he had sworn, seeing

what was unlawful was not binding, and that as soon as he should be crowned, he might proceed, the oath notwithstanding, to drive from his kingdom all religions contrary to that of Rome.[3] The bishops began to teach the same doctrine and to instruct Henry, who was approaching Poland by slow stages, that he would mount the throne as an absolute sovereign, and reign wholly unfettered and uncontrolled by either the oath of Paris or the Polish Diet. The kingdom was in dismay and alarm; the Protestants talked of annulling the election, and refusing to accept Henry as their sovereign. Poland was on the brink of civil war.

At the coronation a new treachery was attempted. Tutored by Jesuitical councillors, Henry proposed to assume the crown, but to evade the oath. The ceremonial was proceeding, intently watched by both Protestants and Romanists. The final act was about to be performed; the crown was to be placed on the head of the new sovereign; but the oath guaranteeing the Protestant liberties had not been administered to him. Firley, the Grand Marshal of Poland, and first grandee of the

kingdom, stood forth, and stopping the proceedings, declared that unless the Duke of Anjou should repeat the oath which he had sworn at Paris, he would not allow the coronation to take place. Henry was kneeling on the steps of the altar, but startled by the words, he rose up, and looking round him, seemed to hesitate. Firley, seizing the crown, said in a firm voice, "Si non jurabis, non regnabis" (If you will not swear, you shall not reign). The courtiers and spectators were mute with astonishment. The king was awed; he read in the crest-fallen countenances of his advisers that he had but one alternative the oath, or an ignominious return to France. It was too soon to go back; he took the copy of the oath which was handed to him, swore, and was crowned.

The courageous act of the Protestant grand marshal had dispelled the cloud of civil war that hung above the nation. But it was only for a moment that confidence was restored. The first act of the new sovereign had revealed him to his subjects as both treacherous and cowardly; what trust could they repose in him, and what affection

could they feel for him? Henry took into exclusive favor the Popish bishops; and, emboldened by a patronage unknown to them during former reigns, they boldly declared the designs they had long harboured, but which they had hitherto only whispered to their most trusted confidants. The great Protestant nobles were discountenanced and discredited. The king's shameless profligacies consummated the discontent and disgust of the nation. The patriotic Firley was dead -- it was believed in many quarters that he had been poisoned -- and civil war was again on the point of breaking out when, fortunately for the unhappy country, the flight of the monarch saved it from that great calamity. His brother, Charles IX., had died, and Anjou took his secret and quick departure to succeed him on the throne of France.

Footnotes:

1. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 2., p. 294.
2. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 2., pp. 15 -- 34.

3. Hosius wrote in the same terms from Rome to the Archbishop and clergy of Poland: "Que ce que le Roi avait promis a Paris n'etait qu'une feinte et dissimulation; et qu'aussitot qu'il serait couronne, il chasserait hors du royaume tout exercice de religion autre que la Romaine." (MS. of Dupuis in the Library of Richelieu at Paris -- apud Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 2., 1). 39.)

Chapter 5

Turning of the Tide of Protestantism in Poland

AFTER a year's interregnum, Stephen Bathory, a Transylvanian prince, who had married Anne Jagellon, one of the sisters of the Emperor Sigismund Augustus, was elected to the crown of Poland. His worth was so great, and his popularity so high, that although a Protestant the Roman clergy dared not oppose his election. The Protestant nobles thought that now their cause was gained; but the Romanists did not despair. Along with the delegates commissioned to announce his election to Bathory, they sent a prelate of eminent talent and learning, Solikowski by name, to conduct their intrigue of bringing the new king over to their side. The Protestant deputies, guessing Solikowski's errand, were careful to give him no opportunity of conversing with the new sovereign in private. But, eluding their vigilance, he obtained an interview by night, and succeeded in persuading

Bathory that he should never be able to maintain, himself on the throne of Poland unless he made a public profession of the Roman faith. The Protestant deputies, to their dismay, next morning beheld Stephen Bathory, in whom they had placed their hopes of triumph, devoutly kneeling at mass.[1] The new reign had opened with no auspicious omen!

Nevertheless, although a pervert, Bathory did not become a zealot. He repressed all attempts at persecution, and tried to hold the balance with tolerable impartiality between the two parties. But he sowed seeds destined to yield tempests in the future. The Jesuits, as we shall afterwards see, had already entered Poland, and as the Fathers were able to persuade the king that they were the zealous cultivators and the most efficient teachers of science and letters, Bathory, who was a patron of literature, took them under his patronage, and built colleges and seminaries for their use, endowing them with lands and heritages. Among other institutions he founded the University of Vilna, which became the chief seat of the Fathers in

Poland, and whence they spread themselves over the kingdom.[2]

It was during the reign of King Stephen that the tide began to turn in the fortunes of this great, intelligent, and free nation. The ebb first showed itself in a piece of subtle legislation which was achieved by the Roman Synod of Piotrkow, in 1577. That Synod decreed excommunication against all who held the doctrine of religious toleration [3] But toleration of all religions was one of the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and the enactment of the Synod was levelled against this law. True, they could not blot out the law of the State, nor could they compel the tribunals of the nation to enforce their own ecclesiastical edict; nevertheless their sentence, though spiritual in its form, was very decidedly temporal in both its substance and its issues, seeing excommunication carried with it many grievous civil and social inflictions. This legislation was the commencement of a stealthy policy which had for its object the recovery of that temporal jurisdiction of which, as we have seen, the Diet had stripped them.

This first encroachment being permitted to pass unchallenged, the Roman clergy ventured on other and more violent attacks on the laws of the State, and the liberties of the people. The Synods of the diocese of Warmia prohibited mixed marriages; they forbade Romanists to be sponsors at the baptism of Protestant children; they interdicted the use of books and hymns not sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority; and they declared heretics incapable of inheriting landed property. All these enactments wore a spiritual guise, and they could be enforced only by spiritual sanctions; but they were in antagonism to the law of the land, and by implication branded the laws with which they conflicted as immoral; they tended to widen the breach between the two great parties in the nation, and they disturbed the consciences of Romanists, by subjecting them to the alternative of incurring certain disagreeable consequences, or of doing what they were taught was unlawful and sinful.

Stretching their powers and prerogatives still farther, the Roman bishops now claimed payment

of their tithes from Protestant landlords, and attempted to take back the churches which had been converted from Romanist to Protestant uses. To make trial of how far the nation was disposed to yield to these demands, or the tribunals prepared to endorse them, they entered pleas at law to have the goods and possessions which they claimed as theirs adjudged to them, and in some instances the courts gave decisions in their favour. But the hierarchy had gone farther than meanwhile was prudent. These arrogant demands roused the alarm of the nobles; and the Diets of 1581 and 1582 administered a tacit rebuke to the hierarchy by annulling the judgments which had been pronounced in their favor. The bishops had learned that they must walk slowly if they would walk safely; but they had met with nothing to convince them that their course was not the right one, or that it would not succeed in the end.

Nevertheless, under the appearance of having suffered a rebuff, the hierarchy had gained not a few substantial advantages. The more extreme of their demands had been disallowed, and many

thought that; the contest between them and the civil courts was at an end, and that it had ended adversely to the spiritual authority; but the bishops knew better. They had laid the foundation of what would grow with every successive Synod, and each new edict, into a body of law, diverse from and in opposition to the law of the land, and which presenting itself to the Romanist with a higher moral sanction, would ultimately, in his eyes, deprive the civil law of all force, and transfer to itself the homage of his conscience and the obedience of his life. The coercive power wielded by this new code, which was being stealthily put in operation in the heart of the Polish State, was a power that could neither be seen nor heard; and those who were accustomed to execute their behests through the force of armies, or the majesty of tribunals, were apt to contemn it as utterly unable to cope with the power of law; nevertheless, the result as wrought out in Poland showed that this influence, apparently so weak, yet penetrating deeply into the heart and soul, had in it an omnipotence compared with which the power of the sword was but feebleness. And farther there

was this danger, perhaps not foreseen or not much taken into account in Poland at the moment, namely, that the Jesuits were busy manipulating the youth, and that whenever public opinion should be ripe for a concordat between the bishops and the Government, this spiritual code would start up into an undisguisedly temporal one, having at its service all the powers of the State, and enforcing its commands with the sword.

What was now introduced into Poland was a new and more refined policy than the Church of Rome had as yet employed in her battles with Protestantism. Hitherto she had filled her hand with the coarse weapons of material force -- the armies of the Empire and the stakes of the Inquisition. But now, appealing less to the bodily senses, and more to the faculties of the soul, she began at Trent, and continued in Poland, the plan of creating a body of legislation, the pseudo-divine sanctions of which, in many instances, received submission where the terrors of punishment would have been withstood. The sons of Loyola came first, moulding opinion'; and the bishops came after, framing canons in

conformity with that altered opinions-gathering where the others had strewed -- and noiselessly achieving victory where the swords of their soldiers would have but sustained defeat. No doubt the liberty enjoyed in Poland necessitated this alteration of the Roman tactics; but it was soon seen that it was a more effectual method than the vulgar weapons of force, and that if a revolted Christendom was to be brought back to the Papal obedience, it must be mainly, though not exclusively, by the means of this spiritual artillery.

It was under the same reign, that of Stephen Bathory, that the political influence of the Kingdom of Poland began to wane. The ebb in its national prestige was almost immediately consequent on the ebb in its Protestantism. The victorious wars which Bathory had carried on with Russia were ended, mainly through the counsels of the Jesuit Possevinus, by a peace which stripped Poland of the advantages she was entitled to expect from her victories. This was the last gleam of military success that shone upon the country. Stephen Bathory died in 1586, having reigned ten

years, not without glory, and was succeeded on the throne of Poland by Sigismund III. He was the son of John, King of Sweden, and grandson of the renowned Gustavus Vasa. Nurtured by a Romish mother, Sigismund III. had abandoned the faith of his famous ancestor, and during his long reign of well-nigh half a century, he made the grandeur of Rome his first object, and the power of Poland only his second. Under such a prince the fortunes of the nation continued to sink. He was called "the King of the Jesuits," and so far was he from being ashamed of the title, that he gloried in it, and strove to prove himself worthy of it. He surrounded himself with Jesuit councillors; honors and riches he showered almost exclusively upon Romanists, and especially upon those whom interest had converted, but argument left unconvinced. No dignity of the State and no post in the public service was to be obtained, unless the aspirant made friends of the Fathers. Their colleges and schools multiplied, their hoards and territorial domains augmented from year to year. The education of the youth, and especially the sons of the nobles, was almost wholly in their hands, and a

generation was being created brimful of that "loyalty" which Rome so highly lauds, and which makes the understandings of her subjects so obdurate and their necks so supple. The Protestants were as yet too powerful in Poland to permit of direct persecution, but the way was being prepared in the continual decrease of their numbers, and the systematic diminution of their influence; and when Sigismund III. went to his grave in 1632, the glory which had illuminated the country during the short reign of Stephen Bathory had departed, and the night was fast closing in around Poland.

Footnotes:

1. The fact that Bathory before his election to the throne of Poland was a Protestant, and not, as historians commonly assert, a Romanist, was first published by Krasinski, on the authority of a MS. history now in the Library at St. Petersburg, written by Orselski, a contemporary of the events. (Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol 2., p. 48)
2. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol. 2., p. 53.

3. Ibid., vol. 2., pp. 49, 50.

Chapter 6

The Jesuits Enter Poland Destruction of its Protestantism

THE Jesuits had been introduced into Poland, and the turning of the Protestant tide, and the begun decadence of the nation's political power, which was almost contemporaneous with the retrogression in its Protestantism, was mainly the work of the Fathers. The man who opened the door to the disciples of Loyola in that country is worthy of a longer study than we can bestow upon him. His name was Stanislaus Hosen, better known as Cardinal Hosius. He was born at Cracow in 1504, and thus in birth was nearly contemporaneous with Knox and Calvin. He was sprung of a family of German descent which had been engaged in trade, and become rich. His great natural powers had been perfected by a finished education, first in the schools of his own country, and afterwards in the Italian universities. He was unwearied in his

application to business, often dictating to several secretaries at once, and not unfrequently dispatching important matters at meals, He was at home in the controversial literature of the Reformation, and knew how to employ in his own cause the arguments of one Protestant polemic against another. He took care to inform himself of everything about the life and occupation of the leading Reformers, his contemporaries, which it was important for him to know.

His works are numerous; they are in various languages, written with equal elegance in all, and with a wonderful adaptation in their style and method to the genius and habit of thought of each of the various peoples he addressed. The one grand object of his life was the overthrow of Protestantism, and the restoration of the Roman Church to that place of power and glory from which the Reformation had cast her down. He brought the concentrated forces of a vast knowledge, a gigantic intellect, and a strong will to the execution of that task. History has not recorded, so far as we are aware, any immorality in his life.

He could boast the refined manners, liberal sentiments, and humane disposition which the love and cultivation of letters usually engender. Nevertheless the marvellous and mysterious power of that system of which he was so distinguished a champion asserted its superiority in the case of this richly endowed, highly cultivated, and noble-minded man. Instead of imparting his virtues to his Church, she transferred her vices to him. Hosius always urged on fitting occasions that no faith should be kept with heretics, and although few could better conduct an argument than himself, he disliked that tedious process with heretics, and recommended the more summary one of the lictor's axe. He saw no sin in spilling heretical blood; he received with joy the tidings of the St. Bartholomew Massacre, and writing to congratulate the Cardinal of Lorraine on the slaughter of Coligny, he thanked the Almighty for the great boon bestowed on France, and implored him to show equal mercy to Poland. His great understanding he prostrated at the feet of his Church, but for whose authority, he declared, the Scriptures would have no more weight than the

Fables of Aesop. His many acquirements and great learning were not able to emancipate him from the thrall of a gloomy asceticism; he grovelled in the observance of the most austere performances, scouring himself in the belief that to have his body streaming with blood and covered with wounds was more pleasing to the Almighty than to have his soul adorned with virtues and replenished with graces. Such was the man who, to use the words of the historian Krasinski, "deserved the eternal gratitude of Rome and the curses of his own country," by introducing the Jesuits into Poland.[1]

Returning from the Council of Trent in 1564, Hosius saw with alarm the advance which Protestantism had made in his diocese during his absence. He immediately addressed himself to the general of the society, Lainez, requesting him to send him some members of his order to aid him in doing what he despaired of accomplishing by his own single arm. A few of the Fathers were dispatched from Rome, and being joined by others from Germany, they were located in Braunsberg, a little town in the diocese of Hosius, who richly

endowed the infant establishment. For six years they made little progress, nor was it till the death of Sigismund Augustus and the accession of Stephen Bathory that they began to make their influence felt in Poland. How they ingratiated themselves with that monarch by their vast pretensions to learning we have already seen. They became great favourites with the bishops, who finding Protestantism increasing in their dioceses, looked for its repression rather from the intrigues of the Fathers than the labors of their own clergy. But the golden age of the Jesuits in Poland, to be followed by the iron age to the people, did not begin until the bigoted Sigismund III. mounted the throne. The favors of Stephen Bathory, the colleges he had founded, and the lands with which he had endowed them, were not remembered in comparison with the far higher consideration and vaster wealth to which they were admitted under his successor. Sigismund reigned, but the Jesuits governed. They stood by the fountain-head of honours, and they held the keys of all dignities and emoluments. They took care of their friends in the distribution of these good things, nor did they forget when enriching

others to enrich also themselves. Conversions were numerous; and the wanderer who had returned from the fatal path of heresy to the safe fold of the Church was taught to express his thanks in some gift or service to the order by whose instructions and prayers he had been rescued. The son of a Protestant father commonly expressed his penitence by building them a college, or bequeathing them an estate, or expelling from his lands the confessors of his father's faith, and replacing them with the adherents of the Roman creed. Thus all things were prospering to their wish. Every day new doors were opening to them. Their missions and schools were springing up in all corners of the land. They entered all houses, from the baron's downward; they sat at all tables, and listened to all conversations. In all assemblies, for whatever purpose convened, whether met to mourn or to make merry, to transact business or to seek amusement, there were the Jesuits. They were present at baptisms, at marriages, at funerals, and at fairs. While their learned men taught the young nobles in the universities, they had their itinerant orators, who visited villages, frequented markets,

and erecting their stage in public exhibited scenic representations of Bible histories, or of the combats, martyrdoms, and canonisations of the saints. These wandering apostles were furnished, moreover, with store of relics and wonder-working charms, and by these as well as by pompous processions, they edified and awed the crowds that gathered round them. They strenuously and systematically labored to destroy the influence of Protestant ministers. They strove; to make them odious, sometimes by malevolent whisperings, and at other times by open accusations. The most blameless life and the most venerated character afforded no protection against Jesuit calumny. Volanus, whose ninety years bore witness to his abstemious life, they called a drunkard. Sdrowski, who had incurred their anger by a work written against them, and whose learning was not excelled by the most erudite of their order, they accused of theft, and of having once acted the part of a hangman. Adding ridicule to calumny, they strove in every way to hold up Protestant sermons and assemblies to laughter. If a Synod convened, there was sure to appear, in no long time, a letter from

the devil, addressed to the members of court, thanking them for their zeal, and instructing them, in familiar and loving phrase, how to do their work and his. Did a minister marry, straightway he was complimented with an epithalamium from the ready pen of some Jesuit scribe. Did a Protestant pastor die, before a few days had passed by, the leading members of his flock were favored with letters from their deceased minister, duly dated from Pandemonium. These effusions were composed generally in doggerel verse, but they were barbed with a venomous wit and a coarse humor. The multitude read, laughed, and believed. The calumnies, it is true, were refuted by those at whom they were levelled; but that signified little, the falsehood was repeated again and again, till at last, by dint of perseverance and audacity, the Protestants and their worship were brought into general hatred and contempt.[2]

The defection of the sons of Radziwill, the zealous Reformer of whom we have previously made mention, was a great blow to the Protestantism of Poland. That family became the

chief support, after the crown, of the Papal reaction in the Polish dominions. Not only were their influence and wealth freely employed for the spread of the Jesuits, but all the Protestant churches and schools which their father had built on his estates were made over to the Church of Rome. The example of the Radziwills was followed by many of the Lithuanian nobles, who returned within the Roman pale, bringing with them not only the edifices on their lands formerly used in the Protestant service, but their tenants also, and expelling those who refused to conform.

By this time the populace had been sufficiently leavened with the spirit and principles of the Jesuits to be made their tool. Mob violence is commonly the first form that persecution assumes. It was so in Poland. The caves whence these popular tempests issued were the Jesuit colleges. The students inflamed the passions of the multitude, and the public peace was broken by tumult and outrage. Protestant worshipping assemblies began to be assailed and dispersed, Protestant churches to be wrecked, and Protestant

libraries to be given to the flames. The churches of Cracow, of Vilna, and other towns were pillaged. Protestant cemeteries were violated, their monuments and tablets destroyed, the dead exhumed, and their remains scattered about. It was not possible at times to carry the Protestant dead to their graves. In June, 1578, the funeral procession of a Protestant lady was attacked in the streets of Cracow by the pupils of All-hallows College. Stones were thrown, the attendants were driven away, the body was torn from the coffin, and after being dragged through the streets it was thrown into the Vistula. Rarely indeed did the authorities interfere; and when it did happen that punishment followed these misdeeds, the infliction fell on the wretched tools, and the guiltier instigators and ringleaders were suffered to escape.[3]

While the Jesuits were smiting the Protestant ministers and members with the arm of the mob, they were bowing the knee in adulation and flattery before the Protestant nobles and gentry. In the saloons of the great, the same men who sowed from their chairs the principles of sedition and

tumult, or vented in doggerel rhyme the odious calumny, were transformed into paragons of mildness and inoffensiveness. Oh, how they loved order, abominated coarseness, and anathematised all uncharitableness and violence! Having gained access into Protestant families of rank by their winning manners, their showy accomplishments, and sometimes by important services, they strove by every means -- by argument, by wit, by insinuation -- to convert them to the Roman faith; if they failed to pervert the entire family they generally succeeded with one or more of its members. Thus they established a foothold in the household, and had fatally broken the peace and confidence of the family. The anguish of the perverts for their parents, doomed as they believed to perdition, often so affected these parents as to induce them to follow their children into the Roman fold. Rome, as is well known, has made more victories by touching the heart than by convincing the reason.

But the main arm with which the Jesuits operated in Poland was the school. They had

among them a few men of good talent and great erudition. At the beginning they were at pains to teach well, and to send forth from their seminaries accomplished Latin scholars, that so they might establish a reputation for efficient teaching, and spread their educational institutions over the kingdom. They were kind to their pupils, they gave their instructions without exacting any fee; and they were thus able to compete at great advantage with the Protestant schools, and not unfrequently did they succeed in extinguishing their rivals, and drafting the scholars into their own seminaries. Not only so: many Protestant parents, attracted by the high repute of the Jesuit schools, and the brilliant Latin scholars whom they sent forth from time to time, sent their sons to be educated in the institutions of the Fathers.

But the national mind did not grow, nor did the national literature flourish. This was the more remarkable from contrast with the brilliance of the era that had preceded the educational efforts of the Jesuits. The half-century during which the Protestant influence was the predominating one

was "the Augustan age of Polish literature;" the half-century that followed, dating from the close of the sixteenth century, showed a marked and most melancholy decadence in every department of mental exertion. It was but too obvious that decrepitude had smitten the national intellect. The press sent forth scarcely a single work of merit; capable men were disappearing from professional life; Poland ceased to have statesmen fitted to counsel in the cabinet, or soldiers able to lead in the field. The sciences were neglected and the arts languished; and even the very language was becoming corrupt and feeble; its elegance and fire were sinking in the ashes of formalism and barbarism. Nor is it difficult to account for this. Without freedom there can be no vigour; but the Jesuits dared not leave the mind of their pupils at liberty. That the intellect should make full proof of its powers by ranging freely over all subjects, and investigating and discussing unfettered all questions, was what the Jesuits could not allow, well knowing that such freedom would overthrow their own authority. They led about the mind in chains as men do wild beasts, of whom they fear

that should they slip their fetters, they would turn and rend them. The art they studied was not how to educate, but how not to educate. They intrigued to shut up the Protestant schools, and when they had succeeded, they collected the youth into their own, that they might keep them out of the way of that most dangerous of all things, knowledge. They taught them words, not things. They shut the page of history, they barred the avenues of science and philosophy, and they drilled their pupils exclusively in the subtleties of a scholastic theology. Is it wonderful that the eye kept perpetually poring on such objects should at last lose its power of vision; that the intellect confined to food like this should pine and die; and that the foot-prints of Poland ceased to be visible in the fields of literature, in the world of commerce, and on the arena of politics? The men who had taken in hand to educate the nation, taught it to forget all that other men strive to remember, and to remember all that other men strive to forget; in short, the education given to Poland by the Jesuits was a most ingenious and successful plan of teaching them not how to think right, but how to

think wrong; not how to reason out truth, but how to reason out falsehood; not how to cast away prejudice, break the shackles of authority, and rise to the independence and noble freedom of a rational being, but how to cleave to error, hug one's fetters, hoot at the light, and yet to be all the while filled with a proud conceit that this darkness is not darkness, but light; and this folly not folly, but wisdom. Thus metamorphosed this once noble nation came forth from the schools of the Jesuits, the light of their eye quenched, and the strength of their arm dried up, to find that they were no longer able to keep their place in the struggles of the world. They were put aside, they were split up, they were trampled down, and at last they perished as a nation; and yet their remains were not put into the sepulcher, but were left lying on the face of Europe, a melancholy monument of what nations become when they take the Jesuit for their schoolmaster.

This estimate of Jesuit teaching is not more severe than that which Popish authors themselves have expressed. Their system was admirably

described by Broscius, a zealous Roman Catholic clergyman, professor in the University of Cracow, and one of the most learned men of his time, in a work published originally in Polish, in the beginning of the seventeenth century. He says: "The Jesuits teach children the grammar of Alvar,[4] which it is very difficult to understand and to learn; and much time is spent at it. This they do for many reasons: first, that by keeping the child a long time in the school they may receive in gifts from the parents of the children, whom they pretend gratuitously to educate, much more than they would have got had there been a regular payment; second, that by keeping the children a long while in the school they may become well acquainted with their minds; third, that they may train the boy for their own plans, and for their own purposes; fourth, that in case the friends of the boy wish to have him from them, they may have a pretense for keeping him, saying, give him time at least to learn grammar, which is the foundation of every other knowledge; fifth, they want to keep boys at school till the age of manhood, that they may engage for their order those who show most

talent or expect large inheritances; but when an individual neither possesses talents nor has any expectations, they will not retain him." [5]

Sigismund III., in whose reign the Jesuits had become firmly rooted in Poland, died in 1632, and was succeeded by his eldest son Vladislav IV. Vladislav hated the disciples of Loyola as much as his father had loved and courted them, and he strove to the utmost of his power to counteract the evil effects of his father's partiality for the order. He restrained the persecution by mob riots; he was able, in some instances, to visit with punishment the ringleaders in the burning down of Protestant churches and schools; but that spirit of intolerance and bigotry which was now diffused throughout the nation, and in which, with few exceptions, noble and peasant shared alike, he could not lay; and when he went to his grave, those bitter hatreds and evil passions which had been engendered during his father's long occupancy of the throne, and only slightly repressed during his own short reign, broke out afresh in all their violence.

Vladislav was succeeded by his brother John Casimir. Casimir was a member of the Society of Jesus, and had attained the dignity of the Roman purple; but when his brother's death opened his way to the throne, the Pope relieved him from his vows as a Jesuit. The heart of the Jesuit remained within him, though his vow to the order had been dissolved. Nevertheless, it is but justice to say that Casimir was less bigoted, and less the tool of Rome, than his father Sigismund had been. Still it was vain to hope that under such a monarch the prospects of the Protestants would be materially improved, or the tide of Popish reaction stemmed. Scarcely had this disciple of Loyola ascended the throne than those political tempests began, which continued at short intervals to burst over Poland, till at length the nation was destroyed. The first calamity that befell the unhappy country was a terrible revolt of the Cossacks of the Ukraine. The insurgent Cossacks were joined by crowds of peasants belonging to the Greek Church, whose passions had been roused by a recent attempt of the Polish bishops to compel them to enter the Communion of Rome. Poland now began to feel

what it was to have her soul chilled and her bonds loosened by the touch of the Jesuit. If the insurrection did not end in the dethronement of the monarch, it was owing not to the valor of his troops, or the patriotism of his nobles, but to the compassion or remorse of the rebels, who stopped short in their victorious career when the king was in their power, and the nation had been brought to the brink of ruin.

The cloud which had threatened the kingdom with destruction rolled away to the half-civilised regions whence it had so suddenly issued; but hardly was it gone when it was again seen to gather, and to advance against the unhappy kingdom. The perfidy of the Romish bishops had brought this second calamity upon Poland. The Archbishop of Kioff, Metropolitan of the Greek Church of Poland, had acted as mediator between the rebellious Cossacks and the king, and mainly through the archbishop's friendly offices had that peace been effected, which rescued from imminent peril the throne and life of Casimir. One of the conditions of the Pacification was that the

archbishop should have a seat in the Senate; but when the day came, and the Eastern prelate entered the hall to take his place among the senators, the Roman Catholic bishops rose in a body and left the Senate-house, saying that they never would sit with a schismatic. The Archbishop of Kioff had lifted Casimir's throne out of the dust, and now he had his services repaid with insult.

The warlike Cossacks held themselves affronted in the indignity done their spiritual chief; and hence the second invasion of the kingdom. This time the insurgents were defeated, but that only brought greater evils upon the country. The Cossacks threw themselves into the arms of the Czar of Muscovy. He espoused their quarrel, feeling, doubtless, that his honor also was involved in the disgrace put upon a high dignitary of his Church, and he descended on Poland with an immense army. At the same time, Charles Gustavus of Sweden, taking advantage of the discontent which prevailed against the Polish monarch Casimir, entered the kingdom with a chosen body of troops; and such were his own

talents as a leader, and such the discipline and valor of his army, that in a short time the principal part of Poland was in his possession. Casimir had, meanwhile, sought refuge in Silesia. The crown was offered to the valorous and magnanimous Charles Gustavus, the nobles only craving that before assuming it he should permit a Diet to assemble and formally vote it to him.

Had Gustavus ascended the throne of Poland, it is probable that the Jesuits would have been driven out, that the Protestant spirit would have been reinvigorated, and that Poland, built up into a powerful kingdom, would have proved a protecting wall to the south and west of Europe against the barbaric masses of the north; but this hope, with all that it implied, was dispelled by the reply of Charles Gustavus. "It did not need," he said, "that the Diet should elect him king, seeing he was already master of the country by his sword." The self-love of the Poles was wounded; the war was renewed; and, after a great struggle, a peace was concluded in 1660, under the joint mediation and guarantee of England, France, and Holland. John

Casimir returned to resume his reign over a country bleeding from the swords of two armies. The Cossacks had exercised an indiscriminate vengeance: the Popish cathedral and the Protestant church had alike been given to the flames, and Protestants and Papists had been equal sufferers in the calamities of the war.

The first act of the monarch, after his return, was to place his kingdom under the special protection of the "Blessed Virgin." To make himself and his dominions the more worthy of so august a suzerainty, he registered on the occasion two vows, both well-pleasing, as he judged, to his celestial patroness. Casimir promised in the first to redress the grievances of the lower orders, and in the second to convert the heretics -- in other words, to persecute the Protestants. The first vow it was not even attempted to fulfill. All the efforts of the sovereign, therefore, were given to the second.

But the shield of England and Holland was at that time extended over the Protestants of Poland, who were still numerous, and had amongst them

some influential families; the monarch's efforts were, in consequence, restricted meanwhile to the conversion of the Socinians, who were numerous in his kingdom. They were offered the alternative of return to the Roman Church or exile. They seriously proposed to meet the prelates of the Roman hierarchy in conference, and convince them that there was no fundamental difference between their tenets and the dogmas of the Roman Church.[6] The conference was declined, and the Socinians, with great hardship and loss, were driven out of the kingdom. But the persecution did not stop there. England, with Charles II. on her throne, grew cold in the cause of the Polish Protestants. In the treaty of the peace of 1660, the rights of all religious Confessions in Poland had been secured; but. the guaranteeing Powers soon ceased to enforce the treaty, the Polish Government paid but small respect to it, persecution in the form of mob violence was still continued; and when the reign of John Casimir, which had been fatal to the Protestants throughout, came to an end, it was found that their ranks were broken up, that all the great families who had belonged to their

communion were extinct or had passed into the Church of Rome, that their sanctuaries were mostly in ashes, their congregations all dispersed, and their cause hopeless.[7]

There followed a succession of reigns which only furnished evidence how weak the throne had become, and how powerful the Jesuits and the Roman hierarchy had grown. Religious equality was still the law of Poland, and each new sovereign swore, at his coronation, to maintain the rights of the anti-Romanists, but the transaction was deemed a mere fiction, and the king, however much disposed, had not the power to fulfil his oath. The Jesuits and the bishops were in this matter above the law, and the sovereign's tribunals could not enforce their own edicts. 'What the law called rights the clergy stigmatised as abuses, and demanded that they should be abolished. In 1732 a law was passed excluding from all public offices those who were not of the communion of the Church of Rome.[8]

The public service was thus deprived of

whatever activity and enlightenment of mind yet existed in Poland. The country had no need of this additional stimulus: it was already pursuing fast enough the road to ruin. For a century, one disaster after another had devastated its soil and people. Its limits had been curtailed by the loss of several provinces; its population had been diminished by the emigration of thousands of Protestants; its resources had been drained by its efforts to quell revolt within and ward off invasion from without; its intelligence had been obscured, and well-nigh extinguished, by those who claimed the exclusive right to instruct its youth; for in that land it was a greater misfortune to be educated than to grow up untaught. Overspread by torpor, Poland gave no signs of life save such as indicate paralysis. Placed under foreign tutelage, and sunk in dependence and helplessness, if she was cared for by her powerful protectors, it was as men care for a once noble palace which they have no thought of rebuilding, but from whose fallen masses they hope to extract a column or a topstone that may help to enlarge and embellish their own dwelling.

Justice requires that we should state, before dismissing this part of our subject, with its many solemn lessons, that though the fall of Protestantism in Poland, and the consequent ruin of the Polish State, was mainly the work of the Jesuits, other causes co-operated, though ill a less degree. The Protestant body in Poland, from the first, was parted into three Confessions: the Genevan in Lithuania, the Bohemian in Great Poland, and the Lutheran in those towns that were inhabited by a population of German descent. This was a source of weakness, and this weakness was aggravated by the ill-will borne by the Lutheran Protestants to the adherents of the other two Confessions. The evil was cured, it was thought, by the Union of Sandomir; but Lutheran exclusiveness and intolerance, after a few years, again broke up the united Church, and deprived the Protestant cause of the strength which a common center always gives. The short lives of John Alasco and Prince Radziwill are also to be reckoned among the causes which contributed to the failure of the Reform movement in Poland. Had their labors been prolonged, a deeper seat would have been given to

Protestant truth in the general population, and the throne might have been gained to the Reformation. The Christian chivalry and patriotism with which the great nobles placed themselves at the head of the movement are worthy of all praise, but the people must ever be the mainstay of a religious Reformation, and the great landowners in Poland did not, we fear, take this fact sufficiently into account, or bestow the requisite pains in imbuing their tenantry with great Scriptural principles: and hence the comparative ease with which the people were again transferred into the Roman fold. But an influence yet more hostile to the triumph of Protestantism in Poland was the rise and rapid diffusion of Socinian views. These sprang up in the bosom of the Genevan Confession, and inflicted a blight on the powerful Protestant Churches of Lithuania.

That blight very soon overspread the whole land; and the green tree of Protestantism began to be touched with the sere of decay. The Socinian was followed, as we have seen, by the Jesuit. A yet deeper desolation gathered on his track. Decay

became rottenness, and blight deepened into death; but Protestantism did not perish alone. The throne, the country, the people, all went down with it in a catastrophe so awful that no one could have effected it but the Jesuit.

Footnotes:

1. See his Life by Rescius (Reszka), Rome, 1587. Numerous editions have been published of his works; the best is that of Cologne, 1584, containing his letters to many of the more eminent of his contemporaries.
2. Lukaszewicz (a Popish author), History of the Helvetian Churches of Lithuania, vol. 1., pp. 47, 85. and vol. 2., p. 192; Posen, 1842, 1843 - - apud Krasinski, Slavonia,..... pp. 289, 294.
3. Albert Wengiersi
4. A Spanish Jesuit who compiled a grammar which the Jesuits used in the schools of Poland.
5. Dialogue of a Landowner with a Parish Priest. The work, published about 1620, excited the violent anger of the Jesuits; but being unable

to wreak their vengeance on the author, the printer, at their instigation, was publicly flogged, and afterwards banished. (See Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 296.)

6. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 333.
7. Krasinski, Hist. Reform. Poland, vol 2., chap. 12.
8. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 356.

Chapter 7

Bohemia Entrance of Reformation

IN resuming the story of Bohemia we re-enter a tragic field. Our rehearsal of its conflicts and sufferings will in one sense be a sorrowful, in another a truly triumphant task. What we are about to witness is not the victorious march of a nation out of bondage, with banners unfurled, and singing the song of a recovered Gospel; on the contrary, it is a crowd of sufferers and martyrs that is to pass before us; and when the long procession begins to draw to an end, we shall have to confess that these are but a few of that great army of confessors who in this land gave their lives for the truth. Where are the rest, and why are not their deaths here recorded? They still abide under that darkness with which their martyrdoms were on purpose covered, and which as yet has been only partially dispelled. Their names and sufferings are the locked up in the imperial archives of Vienna, in the archiepiscopal

archives of Prague, in the libraries of Leitmeritz, Koniggratz, Wittingau, and other places. For a full revelation we must wait the coming of that day when, in the emphatic language of Scripture,

"The earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."(Isaiah 26:21.) [1]

In a former book [2] we brought down the history of the Bohemian Church [3] a century beyond the stake of Huss. Speaking from the midst of the flames, as we have already seen, the martyr said, "A hundred years and there will arise a swan whose singing you shall not be able to silence." [4] The century had revolved, and Luther, with a voice that was rolling from east to west of Christendom, loud as the thunder but melodious as the music of heaven, was preaching the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We resume our history of the Bohemian Church at the point where we broke it off.

Though fire and sword had been wasting the Bohemian confessors during the greater part of the

century, there were about 200 of their congregations in existence when the Reformation broke. Imperfect as was their knowledge of Divine truth, their presence on the soil of Bohemia helped powerfully toward the reception of the doctrines of Luther in that country. Many hailed his appearance as sent to resume the work of their martyred countryman, and recognised in his preaching the "song" for which Huss had bidden them wait. As early as the year 1519, Matthias, a hermit, arriving at Prague, preached to great crowds, which assembled round him in the streets and market-place, though he mingled with the doctrines of the Reformation. certain opinions of his own. The Calixtines, who were now Romanists in all save the Eucharistic rite, which they received in both kinds, said, "It were better to have our pastors ordained at Wittemberg than at Rome." Many Bohemian youths were setting out to sit at Luther's feet, and those who were debarred the journey, and could not benefit by the living voice of the great doctor, eagerly possessed themselves, most commonly by way of Nuremberg, of his tracts and books; and those accounted themselves happiest of all who

could secure a Bible, for then they could drink of the Water of Life at its fountainhead. In January, 1523, we find the Estates of Bohemia and Moravia assembling at Prague, and having summoned several orthodox pastors to assist at their deliberations, they promulgated twenty articles -- "the forerunners of the Reformation," as Comenius calls them -- of which the following was one: "If any man shall teach the Gospel without the additions of men, he shall neither be reprov'd nor condemned for a heretic." [5] Thus from the banks of the Moldau was coming an echo to the voice at Wittemberg.

"False brethren" were the first to raise the cry of heresy against John Huss, and also the most zealous in dragging him to the stake. So was it again. A curate, newly returned from Wittemberg, where he had daily taken his place in the crowd of students of all nations who assembled around the chair of Luther, was the first in Prague to call for the punishment of the disciples of that very doctrine which he professed to have embraced. His name was Gallus Zahera, Calixtine pastor in the

Church of Laeta Curia, Old Prague. Zahera joined himself to John Passek, Burgomaster of Prague, "a deceitful, cruel, and superstitious man," who headed a powerful faction in the Council, which had for its object to crush the new opinions. The Papal legate had just arrived in Bohemia, and he wrote in bland terms to Zahera, holding out the prospect of a union between Rome and the Calixtines. The Calixtine pastor, forgetting all he had learned at Wittemberg, instantly replied that he had "no dearer wish than to be found constant in the body of the Church by the unity of the faith;" and he went on to speak of Bohemia in a style that must have done credit, in the eyes of the legate, at once to his rhetoric and his orthodoxy.

"For truly," says he, "our Bohemia, supporting itself on the most sure foundation of the most sure rock of the Catholic faith, has sustained the fury and broken the force of all those waves of error wherewith the neighboring countries of Germany have been shaken, and as a beacon placed in the midst of a tempestuous sea, it has held forth a dear light to every voyager, and shown him a safe

harbor into which he may retreat from shipwreck; " and he concluded by promising to send forthwith deputies to expedite the business of a union between the Roman and Calixtine Churches.[6] When asked how he could thus oppose a faith he had lately so zealously professed, Zahera replied that he had placed himself at the feet of Luther that he might be the better able to confute him: "An excuse," observes Comerflus, "that might have become the mouth of Judas."

Zahera and Passek were not the men to stop at half-measures. To pave the way for a union with the Roman Church they framed a set of articles, which, having obtained the consent of the king, they required the clergy and citizens to subscribe. Those who refused were to be banished from Prague. Six pastors declined the test, and were driven from the city. The pastors were followed into exile by sixty-five of the leading citizens, including the Chancellor of Prague and the former burgomaster. A pretext being sought for severer measures, the malicious invention was spread abroad that the Lutherans had conspired to

massacre all the Calixtines, and three of the citizens were put to the rack to extort from them a confession of a conspiracy which had never existed. They bore the torment [7] rather than witness to a falsehood. An agreement was next concluded by the influence of Zahera and Passek, that no Lutheran should be taken into a workshop, or admitted to citizenship. If one owed a debt, and was unwilling to pay it, he had only to say the other was a Lutheran, and the banishment of the creditor gave him riddance from his importunities.[8]

Branding on the forehead, and other marks of ignominy, were now added to exile. One day Louis Victor, a disciple of the Gospel, happened to be among the hearers of a certain Barbarite who was entertaining his audience with ribald stories. At the close of his sermon Louis addressed the monk, saying to him that it were "better to instruct the people out of the Gospel than to detain them with such fables." Straightway the preacher raised such a clamor that the excited crowd laid hold on the too courageous Lutheran, and haled him to prison.

Next day the city sergeant conducted him out of Prague. A certain cutler, in whose possession a little book on the Sacrament had been found, was scourged in the market-place. The same punishment was inflicted upon John Kalentz, with the addition of being branded on the forehead, because it was said that though a layman he had administered the Eucharist to himself and his family. John Lapatsky, who had returned from banishment, under the impression that the king had published an amnesty to the exiles, was apprehended, thrown into prison, and murdered.[9]

The tragic fate of Nicolas Wrzetenarz deserves a more circumstantial detail. Wrzetenarz was a learned man, well stricken in years. He was accused of Picardism, a name by which Protestant sentiments were at times designated. He was summoned to answer before the Senate. When the old man appeared, Zahera, who presided on the tribunal, asked him what he believed concerning the Sacrament of the altar. "I believe," he replied, "what the Evangelists and St. Paul teach me to believe." "Do you believe," asked the other, "that

Christ is present in it, having flesh and blood?" "I believe," replied Wrzetenarz, "that when a pious minister of God's Word declares to a faithful congregation the benefits which are received by the death of Christ, the bread and wine are made to them the Supper of the Lord, wherein they are made partakers of the body and blood of Christ, and the benefits received by his death." After a few more questions touching the mass, praying to the saints, and similar matters, he was condemned as a heretic to the fire. His hostess, Clara, a widow of threescore years, whom he had instructed in the truth, and who refused to deny the faith she had received into her heart, was condemned to be burned along with him.

They were led out to die. Being come to the place of execution they were commanded to adore the sign of the cross, which had been elevated in the east. They refused, saying, "The law of God permits us not to worship the likeness of anything either in heaven or in earth; we will worship only the living God, Lord of heaven and earth, who inhabiteth alike the south, the west, the north, the

east; " and turning their backs upon the crucifix, and prostrating themselves toward the west, with their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, they invoked with great ardor the name of Christ.

Having taken leave of their children, Nicolas, with great cheerfulness, mounted the pile, and standing on the faggots, repeated the Articles of the Creed, and having finished, looked up to heaven and prayed, saying with a loud voice, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who was born of a pure Virgin, and didst vouchsafe to undergo the shameful death of the cross for me a vile sinner, thee alone do I worship -- to thee I commend my soul. Be merciful unto me, and blot out all mine iniquities." He then repeated in Latin the Psalm, "In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust."

Meanwhile the executioner having brought forward Clara, and laid her on the pile, now tied down both of them upon the wood, and heaping over them the books that had been found in their house, he lighted the faggots, and soon the martyrs were enveloped in the flames. So died this

venerable scholar and aged matron at Prague, on the 19th December, 1526. [10]

In the following year Martha von Porzicz was burned. She was a woman heroic beyond even the heroism of her sex. Interrogated by the doctors of the university as well as by the councillors, she answered intrepidly, giving a reason of the faith she had embraced, and upbraiding the Hussites themselves for their stupid adulation of the Pope. The presiding judge hinted that it was time she was getting ready her garment for the fire. "My petticoat and cloak are both ready," she replied; "you may order me to be led away when you please." [11] She was straightway sentenced to the fire.

The town-crier walked before her, proclaiming that she was to die for blaspheming the holy Sacrament. Raising her voice to be heard by the crowd she said, "It is not so; I am condemned because I will not confess to please the priests that Christ, with his bones, hairs, sinews, and veins, is contained in the Sacrament." [12] And raising her

voice yet higher, she warned the people not to believe the priests, who had abandoned themselves to hypocrisy and every vice. Being come to the place where she was to die, they importuned her to adore the crucifix. Turning her back upon it, and elevating her eyes to heaven, "It is there," she said, "that our God dwells: thither must we direct our looks." She now made haste to mount the pile, and endured the torment of the flames with invincible courage. She was burned on the 4th of December, 1527.

On the 28th of August of the following year, two German artificers -- one a potter, the other a girdler -- accused of Lutheranism by the monks, were condemned by the judges of Prague to be burned. As they walked to the stake, they talked so sweetly together, reciting passages from Scripture, that tears flowed from the eyes of many of the spectators. Being come to the pile, they bravely encouraged one another. "Since our Lord Jesus Christ," said the girdler, "hath for us suffered so grievous things, let us arm ourselves to suffer this death, and let us rejoice that we have found so

great favor with him as to be accounted worthy to die for his Gospel;" to whom the potter made answer, "I, truly, on my marriage-day was not so glad of heart as I am at this moment." Having ascended the pyre, they prayed with a clear voice, "Lord Jesus, who in thy sufferings didst pray for thine enemies, we also pray, forgive the king, and the men of Prague, and the clergy, for they know not what they do, and their hands are full of blood." And then addressing the people, they said, "Dearly beloved, pray for your king, that God would give him the knowledge of the truth, for he is misled by the bishops and clergy." "Having ended this most penitent exhortation," says the chronicler, "they therewith ended their lives."

After this the fury of the, persecution for a little while subsided. The knot of cruel and bloodthirsty men who had urged it on was broken up. One of the band fell into debt, and hanged himself in despair. Zahera was caught in a political intrigue, into which his ambitious spirit had drawn him, and, being banished, ended his life miserably in Franconia. The cruel burgomaster, Passek, was

about the same time sent into perpetual exile, after he had in vain thrown himself at the king's feet for mercy. Ferdinand, who had now ascended the throne, changed the Council of Prague, and gave the exiles liberty to return. The year 1530 was to them a time of restitution; their churches multiplied; they corresponded with their brethren in Germany and Switzerland, and were thereby strengthened against those days of yet greater trial that awaited them.[13]

These days came in 1547. Charles V., having overcome the German Protestants in the battle of Muhlberg, sent his brother, Ferdinand I., with an army of Germans and Hungarians to chastise the Bohemians for refusing to assist him in the war just ended. Ferdinand entered Prague like a city taken by siege. The magistrates and chief barons he imprisoned; some he beheaded, others he scourged and sent into exile, while others, impelled by terror, fled from the city. "See," observed some, "what calamities the Lutherans have brought upon us." The Bohemian Protestants were accused of disloyalty, and Ferdinand, opening his ear to these

malicious charges, issued an order for the shutting up of all their churches. In the five districts inhabited mainly by the "Brethren," all who refused to enter the Church of Rome, or at least meet her more than half-way by joining the Calixtines, were driven away, and their landlords, on various pretexts, were arrested.

This calamity fell upon them like a thunder-bolt. Not a few, yielding to the violence of the persecution, fell back into Rome; but the great body, unalterably fixed on maintaining the faith for which Huss had died, chose rather to leave the soil of Bohemia for ever than apostatise. In a previous chapter we have recorded the march of these exiles, in three divisions, to their new settlements in Prussia, and the halt they made on their journey at Posen, where they kindled the light of truth in the midst of a population sunk in darkness, and laid the foundations of that prosperity which their Church at a subsequent period enjoyed in Poland.

The untilled fields and empty dwellings of the expatriated Bohemians awakened no doubts in the

king's mind as to the expediency of the course he was pursuing. Instead of pausing, there came a third edict from Ferdinand, commanding the arrest and imprisonment of the pastors. All except three saved themselves by a speedy flight. The greater part escaped to Moravia; but many remained near the frontier, lying hid in woods and caves, and venturing forth at night to visit their former flocks and to dispense the Sacrament in private houses, and so to keep the sacred flame from going out in Bohemia.

The three ministers who failed to make their escape were John Augusta, James Bilke, and George Israel, all men of note. Augusta had learned his theology at the feet of Luther. Courageous and eloquent, he was the terror of the Calixtines, whom he had often vanquished in debate, and "they rejoiced," says Comenins, "when they learned his arrest, as the Philistines did when Samson was delivered bound into their hands." He and his colleague Bilke were thrown into a deep dungeon in the Castle of Prague, and, being accused of conspiring to dispose Ferdinand, and place John,

Electors of Saxony, on the throne of Bohemia, they were put to the torture, but without eliciting anything which their persecutors could construe into treason. Seventeen solitary and sorrowful years passed over them in prison. Nor was it till the death of Ferdinand, in 1564, opened their prison doors that they were restored to liberty. George Israel, by a marvellous providence, escaped from the dungeon of the castle, and fleeing into Prussia, he afterwards preached with great success the Gospel in Poland, where he established not fewer than twenty churches.[14]

Many of the nobles shared with the ministers in these sufferings. John Prostiborsky, a man of great learning, beautiful life, and heroic spirit, was put to a cruel death. On the rack he bit out his tongue and cast it at his tormentors, that he might not, as he afterwards declared in writing, be led by the torture falsely to accuse either himself or his brethren. He cited the king and his councillors to answer for their tyranny at the tribunal of God. Ferdinand, desirous if possible to save his life, sent him a physician; but he sank under his tortures, and died

in prison.[15]

Finding that, in spite of the banishment of pastors, and the execution of nobles, Protestantism was still extending, Ferdinand called the Jesuits to his aid. The first to arrive was Wenzel Sturm, who had been trained by Ignatius Loyola himself. Sturm was learned, courteous, adroit, and soon made himself popular in Prague, where he labored, with a success equal to his zeal, to revive the decaying cause of Rome. He was soon joined by a yet more celebrated member of the order, Canisius, and a large and sumptuous edifice having been assigned them as a college, they began to train priests who might be able to take their place in the pulpit as well as at the altar; "for at that time," says Pessina, a Romish writer, "there were so few orthodox priests that, had it not been for the Jesuits, the Catholic religion would have been suppressed in Bohemia." [16] The Jesuits grew powerful in Prague. They eschewed public disputations; they affected great zeal for the instruction of youth in the sciences; and their fame for learning drew crowds of pupils around them. When they had

filled all their existing schools, they erected others; and thus their seminaries rapidly multiplied, "so that the Catholic verity," in the words of the author last quoted, "which in Bohemia was on the point of breathing its last, appeared to revive again, and rise publicly."

Toward the close of his reign, Ferdinand became somewhat less zealous in the cause of Rome. Having succeeded to the imperial crown on the abdication of his brother, Charles V., he had wider interests to care for, and less time, as well as less inclination, to concentrate his attention on Bohemia. It is even said that before his death he expressed his sincere regret for his acts of oppression against his Bohemian subjects; and to do the monarch justice, these severities were the outcome, not of a naturally cruel disposition, but rather of his Spanish education, which had been conducted under the superintendence of the stern Cardinal Ximenes.[17]

Under his son and successor, Maximilian II., the sword of persecution was sheathed. This prince

had for his instructor John Fauser, a man of decided piety, and a lover of the Protestant doctrine, the principles of which he took care to instil into the mind of his royal pupil. For this Fauser had nearly paid the penalty of his life. One day Ferdinand, in a fit of rage, burst into his chamber, and seizing him by the throat, and putting a drawn sword to his breast, upbraided him for seducing his son from the true faith.

The king forbore, however, from murdering him, and was content with commanding his son no further to receive his instructions. Maximilian was equally fortunate in his physician, Crato. He also loved the Gospel, and, enjoying the friendship of the monarch, he was able at times to do service to the "Brethren." Under this gentle and upright prince the Bohemian Protestants were accorded full liberty, and their Churches flourished. The historian Thaurus relates a striking incident that occurred in the third year of his reign. The enemies of the Bohemians, having concocted a new plot, sent the Chancellor of Bohemia, Joachim Neuhaus, to Vienna, to persuade the emperor to renew the

old edicts against the Protestants. The artful insinuations of the chancellor prevailed over the easy temper of the monarch, and Maximilian, although with great distress of mind, put his hand to the hostile mandate. "But," says the old chronicler, "God had a watchful eye over his own, and would not permit so good and innocent a prince to have a hand in blood, or be burdened with the cries of the oppressed." [18] Joachim, overjoyed, set out on his journey homeward, the fatal missives that were to lay waste the Bohemian Church carefully deposited in his chest. He was crossing the bridge of the Danube when the oxen broke loose from his carriage, and the bridge breaking at the same instant, the chancellor and his suite were precipitated into the river. Six knights struck out and swam ashore; the rest of the attendants were drowned. The chancellor was seized hold of by his gold chain as he was floating on the current of the Danube, and was kept partially above water till some fishermen, who were near the scene of the accident, had time to come to the rescue. He was drawn from the water into their boat, but found to be dead. The box

containing the letters patent sank in the deep floods of the Danube, and was never seen more -- nor, indeed, was it ever sought for. Thaurus says that this catastrophe happened on the fourth of the Ides of December, 1565.

In Maximilian's reign, a measure was passed that helped to consolidate the Protestantism of Bohemia. In 1575, the king assembled a Parliament at Prague, which enacted that all the Churches in the kingdom which received the Sacrament under both kinds -- that is, the Utraquists or Calixtines, the Bohemian Brethren, the Lutherans, and the Calvinists or Picardines -- were at liberty to draw up a common Confession of their faith, and unite into one Church. In spite of the efforts of the Jesuits, the leading pastors of the four communions consulted together and, animated by a spirit of moderation and wisdom, they compiled a common creed, in the Bohemian language, which, although never rendered into Latin, nor printed till 1619, and therefore not to be found in the "Harmony of Confessions," was ratified by the king, who promised his protection to the subscribers, had this

Confession been universally signed, it would have been a bulwark of strength to the Bohemian Protestants.[19]

The reign of the Emperor Maximilian came all too soon to an end. He died in 1576, leaving a name dear to the Protestants and venerated by all parties.

Entirely different in disposition and character was his son, the Emperor Rudolph II., by whom he was succeeded. Educated at the court of his cousin Philip II., Rudolph brought back to his native dominions the gloomy superstitions and the tyrannical maxims that prevailed in the Escorial. Nevertheless, the Bohemian Churches were left in peace. Their sleepless foes were ever and anon intriguing to procure some new and hostile edict from the king; but Rudolph was too much engrossed in the study of astrology and alchemy to pursue steadily any one line of policy, and so these edicts slept. His brother Matthias was threatening his throne; this made it necessary to conciliate all classes of his subjects; hence originated the famous

Majestats-Brief, one object of which was to empower the Protestants in Bohemia to open churches and schools wherever they pleased. This "Royal Charter," moreover, made over to them [20] the University of Prague, and permitted them to appoint a public administrator of their affairs. It was in virtue of this last very important concession that the Protestant Church of Bohemia now attained more nearly than ever, before or since, to a perfect union and a settled government.

Footnotes:

1. Isaiah 26:21
2. See ante, vol. 1., bk. 3
3. We have in the same place narrated the origin of the "United Brethren," their election by lot of three men who were afterwards ordained by Stephen, associated with whom, in the laying on of hands, were other Waldensian pastors. Comenius, who relates the transaction, terms Stephen a chief man or bishop among the Waldenses. He afterwards suffered martyrdom for the faith.

4. See ante, vol. 1, bk. 3., chap. 7, p. 162.
5. Comenius, *Historia Persecutionum Ecclesia Bohemica*, cap. 28, p. 98; Lugd Batav., 1647.
6. *Ibid.*, cap. 28, p. 29.
7. "Placide expirarunt." (Comenius, cap. 30, p. 109.)
8. Comenius, cap. 29, p. 102.
9. *Ibid.*, cap. 29, p. 105.
10. Comenius, cap. 30, pp. 105, 106.
11. "Parata mihi sunt et indusium et pallium, quando lubet duci jubete." (Comenius, p. 107.)
12. "Cum ossibus, capillis, nervis et venis in Sacramento contineri." (Comenius, p. 108.)
13. Comenius, p. 110. *The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia* (from the German), vol. 1., pp. 66, 67; Lond., 1845.
14. Comenius, cap. 36.
15. Comenius, cap. 37.
16. *Reform. and Anti-Reform. in Bohem.*, vol. 1., p. 75.
17. Krasinski, *Slavonia*, p. 145.
18. Comenius, cap. 39, pp. 126, 127.
19. Comenius, cap. 39. *Reform. and Anti-Reform. in Bohem.*, vol. 1., pp. 105, 107.

20. Krasinski, Slavonia, pp. 145, 146.

Chapter 8

Overthrow of Protestantism in Bohemia

THE Protestant Church of Bohemia, now in her most flourishing condition, deserves some attention. That Church was composed of the three following bodies: the Calixtines, the United Brethren, and the Protestants that is, the Lutheran and Calvinist communions. These three formed one Church under the Bohemian Confession -- to which reference has been made in the previous chapter. A Consistory, or Table of Government, was constituted, consisting of twelve ministers chosen in the following manner: three were selected from the Calixtines, three from the United Brethren, and three from the Lutheran and Calvinistic communions, to whom were added three professors from the university. These twelve men were to manage the affairs of their Church in all Bohemia. The Consistory thus constituted was entirely independent of the archiepiscopal chair in Prague.

It was even provided in the Royal Charter that the Consistory should "direct, constitute, or reform anything among their Churches without hindrance or interference of his Imperial Majesty." In case they were unable to determine any matter among themselves, they were at liberty to advise with his Majesty's councillors of state, and with the judges, or with the Diet, the Protestant members of which were exclusively to have the power of deliberating on and determining the matter so referred, "without hindrance, either from their Majesties the future Kings of Bohemia, or the party sub una " -- that is, the Romanist members of the Diet.[1]

From among these twelve ministers, one was to be chosen to fill the office of administrator. He was chief in the Consistory, and the rest sat with him as assessors. The duty of this body was to determine in all matters appertaining to the doctrine and worship of the Church -- the dispensation of Sacraments, the ordination of ministers, the inspection of the clergy, the administration of discipline, to which was added the care of widows

and orphans. There was, moreover, a body of laymen, termed Defenders, who were charged with the financial and secular affairs of the Church.

Still further to strengthen the Protestant Church of Bohemia, and to secure the peace of the kingdom, a treaty was concluded between the Romanists and Protestants, in which these two parties bound themselves to mutual concord, and agreed to certain rules which were to regulate their relations to one another as regarded the possession of churches, the right of burial in the public cemeteries, and similar matters. This agreement was entered upon the registers of the kingdom; it was sworn to by the Emperor Rudolph and his councillors; it was laid up among the other solemn charters of the nation, and a protest taken that if hereafter any one should attempt to disturb this arrangement, or abridge the liberty conceded in it, he should be held to be a disturber of the peace of the kingdom, and punished accordingly.[2]

Thus did the whole nation unite in closing the doors of the Temple of Janus, in token that now

there was peace throughout the whole realm of Bohemia. Another most significant and fitting act signalized this happy time. The Bethlehem Chapel--the scene of the ministry of John Huss -- the spot where that day had dawned which seemed now to have reached its noon -- was handed over to the Protestants as a public recognition that they were the true offspring of the great Reformer and martyr. Bohemia may be said to be now Protestant. "Religion flourished throughout the whole kingdom," says Comenius, "so that there was scarcely one among a hundred who did not profess the Reformed doctrine." The land was glad; and the people's joy found vent in such unsophisticated couplets as the following, which might be read upon the doors of the churches: --

"Oped are the temples; joys Bohemia's lion:
What Max protected, Rudolph does
maintain." [3]

But even in the hour of triumph there were some who felt anxiety for the future. They already saw ominous symptoms that the tranquillity would

not be lasting. The great security which the Church now enjoyed had brought with it a relaxation of morals, and a decay of piety. "Alas!" said the more thoughtful, "we shall yet feel the mailed hand of some Ferdinand." It was a true presage; the little cloud was even now appearing on the horizon that was rapidly to blacken into the tempest.

The Archduke Matthias renewed his claims upon the crown of Bohemia, and supporting them by arms, he ultimately deposed his brother Rudolph, and seated himself upon his throne. Matthias was old and had no son, and he bethought him of adopting his cousin Ferdinand, Duke of Styria, who had been educated in a bigoted attachment to the Roman faith. Him Matthias persuaded the Bohemians to crown as their king. They knew something of the man whom they were calling to reign over them, but they relied on the feeble security of his promise not to interfere in religious matters while Matthias lived. It soon became apparent that Ferdinand had sworn to the Bohemians with the mouth, and to the Pope with the heart. Their old enemies no longer hung their

heads, but began to walk about with front erect, and eyes that presaged victory. The principal measures brought to bear against the Protestants were the work of the college of the Jesuits and the cathedral. The partisans of Ferdinand openly declared that the Royal Charter, having been extorted from the monarch, was null and void; that although Matthias was too weak to tear in pieces that rag of old parchment, the pious Ferdinand would make short work with this bond.

By little and little the persecution was initiated. The Protestants were forbidden to print a single line except with the approbation of the chancellor, while their opponents were circulating without let or hindrance, far and near, pamphlets filled with the most slanderous accusations. The pastors were asked to produce the original titles of the churches in their possession; in short, the device painted upon the triumphal arch, which the Jesuits had erected at Olmutz in honor of Ferdinand - namely, the Bohemian lion and the Moravian eagle chained to Austria, and underneath a sleeping hare with open eyes, and the words "I am used to it"[4] --

expressed the consummate craft with which the Jesuits had worked, and the criminal drowsiness into which the Bohemians had permitted themselves to fall.[5]

No method was left unattempted against the Protestants. It was sought by secret intrigue to invade their rights, and by open injury to sting them into insurrection. At last, in 1618, they rushed to arms. A few of the principal barons having met to consult on the steps to be taken in this crisis of their affairs, a sudden mandate arrived forbidding their meeting under pain of death. This flagrant violation of the Royal Charter, following on the destruction of several of their churches, irritated the Reformed party beyond endurance. Their anger was still more inflamed by the reflection that these bolts came not from Vienna, but from the Castle of Prague, where they had been forged by the junto whose head-quarters were at the Hardschin. Assembling an armed force the Protestants crossed the Moldau, climbed the narrow street, and presented themselves before the Palace of Hardschin, that crowns the height on which New

Prague is built. They marched right into the council-chamber, and seizing on Slarata, Martinitz, and Secretary Fabricius, whom they believed to be the chief authors of their troubles, they threw them headlong out of the window. Falling on a heap of soft earth, sprinkled over with torn papers, the councilors sustained no harm. "They have been saved by miracle," said their friends. "No," replied the Protestants, "they have been spared to be a scourge to Bohemia." Tiffs deed was followed by one less violent, but more wise - the expulsion of the Jesuits, who were forbidden under pain of death to return.[6]

The issue was war; but the death of Matthias, which happened at this moment, delayed for a little while its outbreak. The Bohemian States met to deliberate whether they should continue to own Ferdinand after his flagrant violation of the Majestats-Brief. They voted him no longer their sovereign. The imperial electors were then sitting at Frankfort-on-the-Maine to choose a new emperor. The Bohemians sent an ambassador thither to say that they had deposed Ferdinand, and

to beg the electors not to recognize him as King of Bohemia by admitting him to a seat in the electoral college. Not only did the electors admit Ferdinand as still sovereign of Bohemia, but they conferred upon him the vacant diadem.

The Bohemians saw that they were in an evil case. The bigoted Ferdinand, whom they had made more their enemy than ever by repudiating him as their king, was now the head of the "Holy Roman Empire."

The Bohemians had gone too far to retreat. They could not prevent the electors conferring the imperial diadem upon Ferdinand, but they were resolved that he should never wear the crown of Bohemia. They chose Frederick, Elector-Palatine, as their sovereign. He was a Calvinist, son-in-law of James I. of England; and five days after his arrival in Prague, he and his consort were crowned with very great pomp, and took possession of the palace.

Scarcely had the bells ceased to ring, and the

cannon to thunder, by which the coronation was celebrated, when the nation and the new monarch were called to look in the face the awful struggle they had invited. Ferdinand, raising a mighty army, was already on his march to chastise Bohemia. On the road to Prague he took several towns inhabited by Protestants, and put the citizens to the sword. Advancing to the capital he encamped on the White Hill, and there a decisive battle was fought on the 8th of November, 1620. [7] The Protestant army was completely beaten; the king, whom the unwelcome tidings interrupted at his dinner, fled; and Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia lay prostrated at the feet of the conqueror. The generals of Ferdinand entered Prague, "the conqueror promising to keep articles," says the chronicler, "but afterwards performing them according to the manner of the Council at Constance."

The ravages committed by the soldiery were most frightful. Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia were devastated. Villages were set on fire, cities were pillaged, churches, schools, and dwellings pulled down; the inhabitants were slaughtered, matrons

and maidens violated; neither the child in its cradle nor the corpse in its grave was spared. Prague was given as a spoil, and the soldiers boasted that they had gathered some millions from the Protestants; nor, large as the sum is, is it an unlikely one, seeing that all the valuables in the country had been collected for security into the capital.

But by far the most melancholy result of this battle was the overthrow, as sudden as it was complete, of the Protestantism of Bohemia. The position of the two parties was after this completely reversed; the Romanists were now the masters; and the decree went forth to blot out utterly Protestant Bohemia. Not by the sword, the halter, and the wheel in the first instance. The Jesuits were recalled, and the work was committed to them, and so skillfully did they conduct it that Bohemia, which had been almost entirely Protestant when Ferdinand II ascended the throne, was at the close of his reign almost as entirely Popish. No nation, perhaps, ever underwent so great a change in the short term of fifteen years as Bohemia.

Instead of setting up the scaffold at once, the conquerors published an amnesty to all who should lay down their arms. The proclamation was as welcome as it was unexpected, and many were caught, who otherwise would have saved their lives by flight. Some came out of their hiding places in the neighborhood, and some returned from distant countries. For three months the talk was only of peace. It was the sweet piping of the fowler till the birds were snared. At length came the doleful 20th of February, 1621.

On that evening fifty chiefs of the Bohemian nation were seized and thrown into prison. The capture was made at the supper-hour. The time was chosen as the likeliest for finding every one at home. The city captains entered the house, a wagon waited at the door, and the prisoners were ordered to enter it, and were driven off to the Tower of Prague, or the prisons of the magistrate. The thing was done stealthily and swiftly; the silence of the night was not broken, and Prague knew not the blow that had fallen upon it.

The men now swept off to prison were the persons of deepest piety and highest intelligence in the land. In short, they were the flower of the Bohemian nation.[8] They had passed their youth in the study of useful arts, or in the practice of arms, or in foreign travel. Their manhood had been devoted to the service of their country. They had been councilors of state, ambassadors, judges, or professors in the university. It was the wisdom, the experience, and the courage which they had brought to the defense of their nation's liberty, and the promotion of its Reformation, especially in the recent times of trouble, which had drawn upon them the displeasure of the emperor. The majority were nobles and barons, and all of them were venerable by age.

On the Clay after the transaction we have recorded, writs were issued summoning all now absent from the kingdom to appear within six weeks. When the period expired they were again summoned by a herald, but no one appearing, they were proclaimed traitors, and their heads were

declared forfeit to the law, and their estates to the king. Their execution was gone through in their absence by the nailing of their names to the gallows. On the day following sentence was passed on the heirs of all who had fallen in the insurrection, and their properties passed over to the royal exchequer.[9]

In prison the patriots were strenuously urged to beg pardon and sue for life. But, conscious of no crime, they refused to compromise the glory of their cause by doing anything that might be construed into a confession of guilt. Despairing of their submission, their enemies proceeded with their trial in May. Count Schlik, while undergoing his examination, became wearied out with the importunities of his judges and inquisitors, who tried to make him confess what had never existed. He tore open his vest, and laying bare his breast, exclaimed, "Tear this body in pieces, and examine my heart; nothing shall you find but what we have already declared in our Apology. The love of liberty and religion alone constrained us to draw the sword; but seeing God has permitted the

emperor's sword to conquer, and has delivered us into your hands, His will be done." Budowa and Otto Losz, two of his co-patriots, expressed themselves to the same effect, adding, "Defeat has made our cause none the worse, and victory has made yours none the better." [10]

On Saturday, the 19th of June, the judges assembled in the Palace of Hardschin, and the prisoners, brought before them one by one, heard each his sentence. The majority were doomed to die, some were consigned to perpetual imprisonment, and others were sent into exile. Ferdinand, that he might have an opportunity of appearing more clement and gracious than his judges, ordered the sentences to be sent to Vienna, where some of them were mitigated in their details by the royal pen. We take an instance: Joachim Andreas Schlik, whose courageous reply to his examiners we have already quoted, was to have had his hand cut off, then to have been beheaded and quartered, and his limbs exposed on a stake at a cross-road; but this sentence was changed by Ferdinand to beheading, and the affixing of his

head and hand to the tower of the Bridge of Prague. The sentences of nearly all the rest were similarly dealt with by the merciful monarch.

The condemned were told that they were to die within two days, that is, on the 21st of June. This intimation was made to them that they might have a Jesuit, or a Capuchin, or a clergyman of the Augsburg Confession, to prepare them for death. They were now led back to prison: the noblemen were conducted to the Castle of Prague, and the citizens to the prisons of the printer. Some "fellows of the baser sort," suborned for the purpose, insulted them as they were being led through the streets, crying out, "Why don't you now sing, 'The Lord reigneth'?" The ninety-ninth Psalm was a favorite ode of the Bohemians, wherewith they had been wont to kindle their devotion in the sanctuary, and their courage on the battlefield.

Scarcely had they reentered their prisons when a flock [11] of Jesuits and Capuchin monks, not waiting till they were called, gathered round them, and began to earnestly beseech them to change

their religion, holding out the hope that even yet their lives might be spared. Not wishing that hours so precious as the few that now remained to them should be wasted, they gave the intruders plainly to understand that they were but losing their pains, whereupon the good Fathers withdrew, loudly bewailing their obstinacy, and calling heaven and earth to witness that they were guiltless of the blood of men who had put away from them the grace of God. The Protestant ministers were next introduced. The barons and nobles in the tower were attended by the minister of St. Nicholas, Rosacius by name. The citizens in the prisons of Old Prague were waited on by Werbenius and Jakessius, and those in New Prague by Clement and Hertwiz. The whole time till the hour of execution was spent in religious exercises, in sweet converse, in earnest prayers, and in the singing of psalms. "Lastly," says the chronicler of the persecutions of the Bohemian Church, "they did prepare the holy martyrs by the administration of the Lord's Supper for the future agony."

On the evening of Sunday, as the prisoners shut

up in Old Prague were conversing with their pastor Werbenius, the chief gaoler entered and announced the hour of supper. They looked at each other, and all declared that they desired to eat no more on earth. Nevertheless, that their bodies might not be faint when they should be led out to execution, they agreed to sit down at table and partake of something. One laid the cloth, another the plates, a third brought water to wash, a fourth said grace, and a fifth observed that this was their last meal on earth, and that tomorrow they should sit down and sup with Christ in heaven. The remark was overheard by the Prefect of Old Prague. On going out to his friends he observed jeeringly, "What think ye? These men believe that Christ keeps cooks to regale them in heaven!" On these words being told to Jakessius, the minister, he replied that "Jesus too had a troublesome spectator at his last supper, Judas Iscariot."

Meanwhile they were told that the barons and noblemen were passing from the tower to the courthouse, near to the market-place, where the scaffold on which they were to die had already

been erected. They hastened to the windows, and began to sing in a loud voice the forty-fourth Psalm to cheer their fellow-martyrs: "Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; ... Rise, Lord, cast us not off for ever." A great crowd, struck with consternation at seeing their greatest and most venerated men led to death, followed them with sighs and tears.

This night was spent as the preceding one had been, in prayers and psalms. They exhorted one another to be of good courage, saying that as the glory of going first in the path of martyrdom had been awarded them, it behooved them to leave an example of constancy to their posterity, and of courage to the world, by showing it that they did not fear to die. They then joined in singing the eighty-sixth Psalm. When it was ended, John Kutnauer turned the last stanza into a prayer, earnestly beseeching God that he would "show some token which might at once strengthen them and convince their enemies." Then turning to his companions, and speaking to them with great fervor of spirit, he said, "Be of good cheer, for God

hath heard us even in this, and tomorrow he will bear witness by some visible sign that we are the martyrs of righteousness." But Pastor Werbenius, when he heard this protestation, bade them be content to have as sufficient token from God, even this, "that that death which was bitter to the world he made sweet to them."

When the day had broken they washed and changed their clothes, putting on clean apparel as if they were going to a wedding, and so fitting their doublets, and even their frills, that they might not need to re-arrange their dress on the scaffold. All the while John Kutnauer was praying fervently that some token might be vouchsafed them as a testimony of their innocence. In a little the sun rose, and the broad stream of the Moldau, as it rolled between the two Pragues, and the roofs and steeples on either side, began to glow in the light. But soon all eyes were turned upwards. A bow of dazzling brilliance was seen spanning the heavens.[12] There was not a cloud in the sky, no rain had fallen for two days, yet there was this bow of marvelous brightness hung in the clear air. The

soldiers and townspeople rushed into the street to gaze at the strange phenomenon. The martyrs, who beheld it from their windows, called to mind the bow which greeted the eyes of Noah when he came forth from the Ark. It was the ancient token of a faithfulness more steadfast than the pillars of earth;[13] and their feelings in witnessing it were doubtless akin to those with which the second great father of the human family beheld it for the first time in the young skies of the post-diluvian world.

The bow soon ceased to be seen, and the loud discharge of a cannon told them that the hour of execution hail arrived. The martyrs arose, and embracing, they bade each other be of good cheer, as did also the ministers present, who exhorted them not to faint now when about to receive the crown. The scaffold had been erected hard by in the great square or market-place, and several squadrons of cavalry and some companies of foot were now seen taking up their position around it. The imperial judges and senators next came forward and took their seats on a theater, whence they could command a full view of the scaffold.

Under a canopy of state sat Lichtenstein, the Governor of Prague. "Vast numbers of spectators," says Comenius, "crowded the market-place, the streets, and all the houses."

The martyrs were called to go forth and die one after the other. When one had offered his life the city officers returned and summoned the next. As if called to a banquet they rose with alacrity, and with faces on which shone a serene cheerfulness they walked to the bloody stage. All of them submitted with undaunted courage to the stroke of the headsman. Rosacius, who was with them all the while, noted down their words, and he tells us that when one was called to go to the scaffold he would address the rest as follows: "Most beloved friends, farewell. God give you the comfort of his Spirit, patience, and courage, that what before you confessed with the heart, the mouth, and the hand, you may now seal by your glorious death. Behold I go before you, that I may see the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ! You will follow, that we may together behold the face of our Father. This hour ends our sorrow, and begins our everlasting joy." To whom

those who remained behind would make answer and say, "May God, to whom you go, prosper your journey, and grant you a happy passage from this vale of misery into the heavenly country. May the Lord Jesus send his angels to meet thee. Go, brother, before us to our Father's house; we follow thee. Presently we shall reassemble in that heavenly glory of which we are confident through him in whom we have believed." [14]

The beaming faces and meek yet courageous utterances of these men on the scaffold, exhibited to the spectators a more certain token of the goodness of their cause than the bow which had attracted their wondering gaze in the morning. Many of the senators, as well as the soldiers who guarded the execution, were moved to tears; nor could the crowd have withheld the same tribute, had not the incessant beating of drums, and the loud blaring of trumpets, drowned the words spoken on the scaffold.

But these words were noted down by their pastors, who accompanied them to the block, and

as the heroism of the scaffold is a spectacle more sublime, and one that will better repay an attentive study, than the heroism of the battlefield, we shall permit these martyr-patriots to pass before us one by one. The clamor that drowned their dying words has long since been hushed; and the voices of the scaffold of Prague, rising clear and loud above the momentary noise, have traveled down the years to us.

Footnotes:

1. Reform. and Anti-Reform. in Bohem., vol. 1., p. 187.
2. Comenius, cap. 40. Reform. and Anti-Reform. In Bohem., vol. 1., p. 193 et seq.
3. Comenius, cap. 40, pp. 134-136.
4. "Adsuevi." (Comenius.)
5. Comenius, cap. 42. Krasinski, Slavonia, p. 146.
6. Balbin assures us that some Jesuits, despite the order to withdraw, remained in Prague disguised as coal-fire men. (Reform. and Anti-Reform. in Bohem., vol. 1., p. 336.)

7. Comenius, cap. 44, p. 154.
8. "Lumina et columina patriae." (Comenius, cap. 59.)
9. Comenius, pp. 209-211. Reform. and Anti-Reform. In Bohem., pp. 287- 290.
10. Comenius, pp. 211, 212.
11. "Ut muscae advolabant." (Comenius.)
12. "Nuntiatur formosissimus caelum cinxisse arcus." (Comenius.)
13. Comenius, pp. 223, 224.
14. Comenius, p. 225.

Chapter 9

An Army of Martyrs

JOACHIM ANDREAS SCHLIK, Count of Passau, and chief justice under Frederick, comes first in the glorious host that is to march past us. He was descended of an ancient and illustrious family. A man of magnanimous spirit, and excellent piety, he united an admirable modesty with great business capacity. When he heard his sentence, giving his body to be quartered, and his limbs to be exposed at a cross-road, he said, "The loss of a sepulchre is a small matter." On hearing the gun in the morning fired to announce the executions, "This," said he, "is the signal; let me go first."

He walked to the scaffold, dressed in a robe of black silk, holding a prayer-book in his hands, and attended by four German clergymen.[1] He mounted the scaffold, and then marking the great brightness of the sun, he broke out, "Christ, thou Sun of righteousness, grant that through the darkness of death I may pass into the eternal light."

He paced to and fro a little while upon the scaffold, evidently meditating, but with a serene and dignified countenance, so that the judges could scarce refrain from weeping. Having prayed, his page assisted him to undress, and then he kneeled down on a black cloth laid there for the purpose, and which was removed after each execution, that the next to die might not see the blood of the victim who had preceded him. While engaged in silent prayer, the executioner struck, and the head of Bohemia's greatest son rolled on the scaffold. His right hand was then struck off and, together with his head, 'was fixed on a spear, and set up on the tower of the Bridge of Prague. His body, untouched by the executioner, was wrapped in a cloth, and carried from the scaffold by four men in black masks.

Scarcely inferior in weight of character, and superior in the variety of his mental accomplishments to Count Schlik, was the second who was called to die -- Wenceslaus, Baron of Budown. He was a man of incomparable talents and great learning, which he had further improved

by travelling through all the kingdoms of Western and Southern Europe. He had filled the highest offices of the State under several monarchs. Protestant writers speak of him as "the glory of his country, and the bright shining star of the Church, and as rather the father than the lord of his dependents." The Romanist historian, Pelzel, equally extols his uprightness of character and his renown in learning. When urged in prison to beg the clemency of Ferdinand, he replied, "I will rather die than see the ruin of my country."

When one told him that it was rumored of him that he had died of grief, he exclaimed, "Died of grief ! I never experienced such happiness as now. See here," said he, pointing to his Bible, "this is my paradise; never did it regale me with such store of delicious fruits as now. Here I daily stray, eating the manna of heaven, and drinking the water of life." On the third day before receiving his sentence he dreamed that he was walking in a pleasant meadow, and musing on the issue that might be awaiting his affairs, when lo! one came to him, and gave him a book, which when he had opened, he

found the leaves were of silk, white as snow, with nothing written upon them save the fifth verse of the thirty-seventh Psalm:

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." While he was pondering over these words there came yet another, carrying a white robe, which he cast over him. When he awoke in the morning he told his dream to his servant. Some days after, when he mounted the scaffold, "Now," said he, "I attire myself in the white robe of my Savior's righteousness."

Early on the morning of his execution there came two Jesuits to him, who, complimenting him on his great learning, said that they desired to do him a work of mercy by gaining his soul. "Would," he said, "you were as sure of your salvation as I am of mine, through the blood of the Lamb." "Good, my lord," said they, "but do not presume too much; for doth not the Scripture say, 'No man knoweth whether he deserves grace or wrath'?"

"Where find you that written?" he asked; "here

is the Bible, show me the words." "If I be not deceived," said one of them, "in the Epistle of Paul to Timothy." "You would teach me the way of salvation," said the baron somewhat angrily, "thou who knowest thy Bible so in. But that the believer may be sure of his salvation is proved by the words of St. Paul, 'I know whom I have believed,' and also, 'there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'" "But," rejoined the Jesuit, "Paul says this of himself, not of others." "Thou art mistaken," said Budowa, "for it continues, 'not for me only, but for all them who love his appearing.' Depart, and leave me in peace."

He ascended the scaffold with undaunted look, and stroking his long white beard -- for he was a man of seventy -- he said, "Behold! my gray hairs, what honor awaits you; this day you shall be crowned with martyrdom." After this he directed his speech to God, praying for the Church, for his country, for his enemies, and having commended his soul to Christ he yielded his head to the executioner's sword. That head was exposed by the side of that of his fellow patriot and martyr, Schlik,

on the tower of the Bridge of Prague.

The third who was called to ascend the scaffold was Christopher Harant, descended from the ancient and noble family of the Harants of Polzicz and Bezdruzicz. He had traveled in Europe, Asia, and Africa, visiting Jerusalem and Egypt, and publishing in his native tongue his travels in these various lands. He cultivated the sciences, wrote Greek and Latin verses, and had filled high office under several emperors. Neither his many accomplishments nor his great services could redeem his life from the block. When called to die he said, "I have traveled in many countries, and among many barbarous nations, I have undergone dangers manifold by land and sea, and now I suffer, though innocent, in my own country, and by the hands of those for whose good both my ancestors and myself have spent our fortunes and our lives. Father, forgive them." When he went forth, he prayed, "In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; let me not be confounded."

When he stepped upon the scaffold he lifted up

his eyes, and said, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." Taking off his doublet, he stepped upon the fatal doth, and kneeling down, again prayed. The executioner from some cause delaying to strike, he again broke out into supplication, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me, and receive my spirit." The sword now fell, and his prayer and life ended together.[2]

The fourth to offer up his life was Gaspar, Baron Kaplirz of Sulowitz, a knight of eighty-six years of age. He had faithfully served four emperors. Before going to the scaffold he called for Rosacius, and said, "How often have I entreated that God would be pleased to take me out of this life, but instead of granting my wish, he has reserved me as a sacrifice for himself. Let God's will be done." "Yesterday," said he, continuing his speech, "I was told that if I would petition Prince Lichtenstein for pardon my life would be spared. I never offended the prince: I will desire pardon of Him against whom I have committed many sins. I have lived long enough. When I cannot distinguish the taste of meats, or relish the sweetness of drinks;

when it is tedious to sit long, and irksome to lie; when I cannot walk unless I lean on a staff, or be assisted by others, what profit would such a life be to me? God forbid that I should be pulled from this holy company of martyrs."

On the day of execution, when the minister who was to attend him to the scaffold came to him, he said, "I laid this miserable body on a bed, but what sleep could so old a man have? Yet I did sleep, and saw two angels coming to me, who wiped my face with fine linen, and bade me make ready to go along with them. But I trust in my God that I have these angels present with me, not by a dream, but in truth, who minister to me while I live, and shall carry my soul from the scaffold to the bosom of Abraham. For although I am a sinner, yet am I purged by the blood of my Redeemer, who was made a propitiation for our sins."

Having put on his usual attire, he made a robe of the finest linen be thrown over him, covering his entire person. "Behold, I put on my wedding garment," he said. Being called, he arose, put on a

velvet cloak, bade adieu to all, and went forth at a slow pace by reason of his great age. Fearing lest in mounting the scaffold he should fall, and his enemies flout him, he craved permission of the minister to lean upon him when ascending the steps. Being come to the fatal spot, he had much ado to kneel down, and his head hung so low that the executioner feared to do his office. "My lord," said Pastor Rosacius, "as you have commended your soul to Christ, do you now lift up yourself toward heaven." he raised himself up, saying, "Lord Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The executioner now gave his stroke, his gray head sank, and his body lay prostrate on the scaffold.[3]

The fifth to fall beneath the executioner's sword was Procopius Dworschezky, of Olbramowitz On receiving his sentence he said, "If the emperor promises himself anything when my head is off, let it be so." On passing before the judges he said, "Tell the emperor, as I now stand at his tribunal, the day comes when he shall stand before the judgment-seat of God." He was proceeding in his address, when the drums beat and drowned his

words. When he had undressed for the executioner, he took out his purse containing a Hungarian ducat, and gave it to the minister who attended him, saying, "Behold my last riches! these are unprofitable to me, I resign them to you." A gold medal of Frederick's coronation, that hung round his neck, he gave to a bystander, saying, "When my dear King Frederick shall sit again upon his throne, give it to him, and tell him that I wore it on my breast till the day of my death." He kneeled down, and the sword falling as he was praying, his spirit ascended with his last words to God.[4]

Otto Losz, Lord of Komarow, came next. A man of great parts, he had traveled much, and discharged many important offices. When he received his sentence he said, "I have seen barbarous nations, but what cruelty is this! Well, let them send one part of me to Rome, another to Spain, another to Turkey, and throw the fourth into the sea, yet will my Redeemer bring my body together, and cause me to see him with these eyes, praise him with this mouth, and love him with this heart." When Rosacius entered to tell him that he

was called to the scaffold, "he rose hastily out of his seat," says Comenius, "like one in an ecstasy, saying, 'O, how I rejoice to see you, that I may tell you what has happened to me! As I sat here grieving that I had not one of my own communion [the United Brethren] to dispense the Eucharist to me, I fell asleep, and behold my Savior appeared unto me, and said, 'I purify thee with my blood,' and then infused a drop of his blood into my heart; at the feeling of this I awaked, and leaped for joy: now I understand what that is, Believe, and thou hast eaten. I fear death no longer."

As he went on his way to the scaffold, Rosacius said to him, "That Jesus who appeared to you in your sleep, will now appear to you in his glory." "Yes," replied the martyr, "he will meet me with his angels, and conduct me into the banqueting-chamber of an everlasting marriage." Being come to the scaffold, he fell on his face, and prayed in silence. Then rising up, he yielded himself to the executioner.

He was followed on the scaffold by Dionysius

Czernin, of Chudenitz. This sufferer was a Romanist, but his counsels not pleasing the Jesuits, he fell under the suspicion of heresy; and it is probable that the Fathers were not sorry to see him condemned, for his death served as a pretext for affirming that these executions were for political, not religious causes.

When the other prisoners were declaring their faith, Czernin protested that this was his faith also, and that in this faith did he die. When the others received the Lord's Supper, he stood by dissolved in tears, praying most fervently, he was offered the Eucharistic cup; but smiting on his breast, and sighing deeply, he said, "I rest in that grace which hath come unto me." He was led to the scaffold by a canon and a Jesuit, but gave small heed to their exhortations. Declining the "kiss of peace," and turning his back upon the crucifix, he fell on his face, and prayed softly. Then raising himself, and looking up into the heavens, he said, "They can kill the body, they cannot kill the soul; that, O Lord Jesus, I commend to thee," and died.

There followed other noblemen, whose behavior on the scaffold was equally courageous, and whose dying words were equally impressive, but to record them all would unnecessarily prolong our narration. We take a few examples from among the citizens whose blood was mingled with that of the nobles in defense of the religion and liberty of their native land. Valentine Kochan, a learned man, a Governor of the University, and Secretary of Prague, protested, when Ferdinand II was thrust upon them, that no king should be elected without the consent of Moravia and Silesia. This caused him to be marked out for vengeance. In his last hours he bewailed the divisions that had prevailed among the Protestants of Bohemia, and which had opened a door for their calamities. "O!" said he, "if all the States had employed more thought and diligence in maintaining union; if there had not been so much hatred on both sides; if one had not sought preference before another, and had not given way to mutual suspicions; moreover, if the clergy and the laity had assisted each other with counsel and action, in love, unity, and peace, we should never have been thus far misled." [5] On the

scaffold he sang the last verse of the sixteenth: Psalm: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;" and then yielded his head to the executioner.

Tobias Steffek was a man of equal modesty and piety. He had been chosen to fill important trusts by his fellow-citizens. "Many a cup of blessing," said he, "have I received from the hand of the Lord, and shall I not accept this cup of affliction? I am going by a narrow path to the heavenly kingdom." His time in prison was mostly passed in sighs and tears. When called to go to the scaffold, he looked up with eyes suffused with weeping, yet with the hope shining through his tears that the same stroke that should sever his head from his body would wipe them away for ever. In this hope he died.

John Jessenius, professor of medicine, and Chancellor of the University of Prague, was the next whose blood was spilt. He was famed for his medical skill all over Europe. He was the intimate friend of the illustrious Tycho Brahe, and

Physician in Ordinary to two emperors -- Rudolph and Matthias. He it was, it is said, who introduced the study of anatomy into Prague. Being a man of eloquent address, he was employed on an important embassy to Hungary, and this made him a marked object of the vengeance of Ferdinand II.

His sentence was a cruel one. He was first to have his tongue cut out, then he was to be beheaded, and afterwards quartered. His head was to be affixed to the Bridge-tower, and his limbs were to be exposed on stakes in the four quarters of Plague. On hearing this sentence, he said, "You use us too cruelly; but know that there will not be wanting some who will take down the heads you thus ignominiously expose, and lay them in the grave." [6]

The Jesuits evinced a most lively desire to bring this learned man over to their side. Jessenius listened as they enlarged on the efficacy of good works. "Alas!" replied he, "my time is so short that I fear I shall not be able to lay up such a stock of merits as will suffice for my salvation." The

Fathers, thinking the victory as good as won, exclaimed, "My dear Jessenius, though you should die this very moment, we promise you that you shall go straight to heaven." "Is it so?" replied the confessor; "then where is your Purgatory for those who are not able to fill up the number of their good deeds here?" Finding themselves but befooled, they departed from him.

On mounting the scaffold, the executioner approached him, and demanded his tongue. He at once gave it -- that tongue which had pleaded the cause of his country before princes and States. It was drawn out with a pair of tongs. He then dropped on his knees, his hands tied behind his back, and began to pray, "not speaking, but stuttering," says Comenius. His head was struck off, and affixed to the Bridge-tower, and his body was taken below the gallows, and dealt with according to the sentence. One of the lights, not of Bohemia only, but of Europe, had been put out.

Christopher Khobr was the next whose life was demanded. He was a man of heroic mind. Speaking

to his fellow-sufferers, he said, "How glorious is the memory of Huss and Jerome! And why? because they laid down their lives for the truth." He cited the words of Ignatius -- "I am the corn of God, and shall be ground with the teeth of beasts." "We also," he added, "are the corn of God, sown in the field of the Church. Be of good cheer, God is able to raise up a thousand witnesses from every drop of our blood." He went with firm step, and face elate, to the place where he was to die. Standing on the scaffold, he said, "Must I die here? No! I shall live, and declare the works of the Lord in the land of the living." Kneeling down, he gave his head to the executioner and his spirit to God. He was followed by John Schulz, Burgomaster of Kuttensburg. On being led out to die, he sent a message to his friends, saying, "The bitterness of this parting will make our reunion sweet indeed." On mounting the scaffold, he quoted the words of the Psalm, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" When he had gone a few paces forward, he continued, "Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him." Advancing to the spot where he was to die, he threw himself on his face, and spread forth his

hands in prayer. Then, rising up, he received that stroke which gave him at once temporal death and eternal life.

In this procession of kingly and glorious spirits who travel by the crimson road of the scaffold to the everlasting gates, there are others whom we must permit to pass on in silence. One other martyr only shall we notice; he is the youngest of them all, and we have seen him before. He is John Kutnauer, senator of Old Prague, the same whom we saw praying that there might be given some "token" to the martyrs, and who, when the bow appeared a little after sunrise spanning the heavens above Prague, accepted it as the answer to his prayer.[7] No one of all that heroic company was more courageous than Kutnauer. When the Jesuits came round him, he said, "Depart, gentlemen; why should you persist in labor so unprofitable to yourselves, and so troublesome to us?" One of the Fathers observed, "These men are as hard as rocks." "We are so, indeed," said the senator, "for we are joined to that rock which is Christ."

When summoned to the scaffold, his friends threw themselves upon him, overwhelming him with their embraces and tears. He alone did not weep. "Refrain," he said, "let us be men; a little while, and we shall meet in the heavenly glory." And then, says the chronicler, "with the face of a lion, as if going to battle, he set forward, singing in his own tongue the German hymn: 'Behold the hour draws near,' etc."

Kutnauer was sentenced to die by the rope, not by the sword. On the scaffold he gave his purse to the executioner, and then placed himself beneath the beam from which he was to be suspended. He cried, or rather, says the chronicler, "roared," if haply he might be heard above the noise of the drums and trumpets, placed around the scaffold on purpose to drown the last words of the sufferers. "I have plotted no treason," he said; "I have committed no murder; I have done no deed worthy of death. I die because I have been faithful to the Gospel and my country. O God, pardon my enemies, for they know not what they do. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He was then thrown off

the ladder, and gave up the ghost.[8]

We close this grand procession of kings, this march of palm-bearers. As they pass on to the axe and the halter there is no pallor on their countenances. Their step is firm, and their eye is bright. They are the men of the greatest talents and the most resplendent virtues in their nation. They belong to the most illustrious families of their country. They had filled the greatest offices and they wore the highest honors of the State; yet we see them led out to die the death of felons. The day that saw these men expire on the scaffold may be said to have witnessed the obsequies of Bohemia.

Footnotes:

1. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia, vol. 1., p. 401.
2. Comenius, cap. 63.
3. Comenius, cap. 64. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia, vol. 1., pp. 416, 417.
4. Comenius, cap. 65.
5. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in

Bohemia, vol. 1., p. 423

6. This anticipation was realized in 1631. After the victory of Gustavus Adolphus at Leipsic, Prague was entered, and Count Thorn took down the heads from the Bridge-tower, and conveyed them to the Tein Church, followed by a large assemblage of nobles, pastors, and citizens, who had returned from exile. They were afterwards buried, but the spot was concealed from the knowledge of the Romanists. (Comenius, cap. 73.)
7. This bow is mentioned by both Protestant and Popish writers. The people, after gazing some time at it, admiring its beauty, were seized with fear, and many rushed in terror to their houses.
8. Comenius, cap. 78. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia, vol. 1., pp. 429, 430.

Chapter 10

Suppression of Protestantism in Bohemia

THE sufferings of that cruel time were not confined to the nobles of Bohemia. The pastors were their companions in the horrors of the persecution. After the first few months, during which the conqueror lured back by fair promises all who had fled into exile, or had hidden themselves in secret places, the policy of Ferdinand II and his advisers was to crush at once the chief men whether of the nobility or of the ministry, and afterwards to deal with the common people as they might find it expedient, either by the rude violence of the hangman or the subtle craft of the Jesuit. This astute policy was pursued with the most unflinching resolution, and the issue was the almost entire trampling out of the Protestantism of Bohemia and Moravia. In closing this sad story we must briefly narrate the tortures and death which were inflicted on the Bohemian pastors, and the

manifold woes that befell the unhappy country.

Even before the victory of the Weissenberg, the ministers in various parts of Bohemia suffered dreadfully from the license of the troops. No sooner had the Austrian army crossed the frontier, than the soldiers began to plunder and kill as they had a mind. Pastors found preaching to their flocks were murdered in the pulpit; the sick were shot in their beds; some were hanged on trees, others were tied to posts, and their extremities scorched with fire, while others were tortured in various cruel ways to compel them to disclose facts which they did not know, and give up treasure which they did not possess. To the barbarous murder of the father or the husband was sometimes added the brutal outrage of his family.

But when the victory of the Weissenberg gave Bohemia and its capital into the power of Ferdinand, the persecution was taken out of the hands of the soldiers, and committed to those who knew how to conduct it, if not more humanely, yet more systematically. It was the settled purpose of

the emperor to bring the whole of Bohemia back to Rome. He was terrified at the spirit of liberty and patriotism which he saw rising in the nation; he ascribed that spirit entirely to the new religion of which John Huss had been the great apostle, since, all down from the martyr's day, he could trace the popular convulsions to which it had given rise; and he despaired of restoring quiet and order to Bohemia till it should again be of one religion, and that religion the Roman. Thus political were blended with religious motives in the terrible persecution which Ferdinand now commenced.

It was nearly a year till the plan of persecution was arranged; and when at last the plan was settled, it was resolved to baptize it by the name of "Reformation." To restore the altars and images which the preachers of the new faith had east out, and again plant the old faith in the deformed churches, was, they affirmed, to effect a real Reformation. They had a perfect right to the word. They appointed a Commission of Reformers, having at its head the Archbishop of Prague and several of the Bohemian grandees, and united with

them was a numerous body of Jesuits, who bore the chief burden of this new Reformation. After the executions, which we have described, were over, it was resolved to proceed by kindness and persuasion. If the Reformation could not be completed without the axe and the halter, these would not be wanting; meanwhile, mild measures, it was thought, would best succeed. The monks who dispersed themselves among the people assured them of the emperor's favor should they embrace the emperor's religion. The times were hard, and such as had fallen into straits were assisted with money or with seed-corn. The Protestant poor were, on the other hand, refused alms, and at times could not even buy bread with money. Husbands were separated from their wives, and children from their parents. Disfranchisement, expulsion from corporations and offices, the denial of burial, and similar oppressions were inflicted on those who evinced a disposition to remain steadfast in their Protestant profession. If any one declared that he would exile himself rather than apostatize, he was laughed at for his folly. "To what land will you go," he was asked, "where you shall find the

liberty you desire? Everywhere you shall find heresy proscribed. One's native soil is sweet, and you will be glad to return to yours, only, it may be, to find the door of the emperor's clemency closed." Numerous conversions were effected before the adoption of a single harsh measure; but wherever the Scriptural knowledge of Huss's Reformation had taken root, there the monks found the work much more difficult.

The first great tentative measure was the expulsion of the Anabaptists from Moravia. The most unbefriended, they were selected as the first victims. The Anabaptists were gathered into some forty-five communities or colleges, where they had all things in common, and were much respected by their neighbors for their quiet and orderly lives. Their lands were skillfully cultivated, and their taxes duly paid, but these qualities could procure them no favor in the eyes of their sovereign. The order for their banishment arrived in the beginning of autumn, 1622, and was all the more severe that it inferred the loss of the labors of the year. Leaving their fields unreaped and their grapes to

rot upon the bough, they arose, and quitted house and lands and vineyards. The children and aged they placed in carts, and setting forward in long and sorrowful troops, they held on their way across the Moravian plains to Hungary and Transylvania, where they found new habitations. They were happy in being the first to be compelled to go away; greater severities awaited those whom they left behind.

Stop the fountains, and the streams will dry up of themselves. Acting on this maxim, it was resolved to banish the pastors, to shut up the churches, and to burn the books of the Protestants.

In pursuance of this program of persecution, the ministers of Prague had six articles laid before them, to which their submission was demanded, as the condition of their remaining in the country. The first called on them to collect among themselves a sum of several thousand pounds, and give it as a loan to the emperor for the payment of the troops employed in suppressing the rebellion. The remaining five articles amounted to an

abandonment of the Protestant faith. The ministers replied unanimously that "they would do nothing against their consciences." The decree of banishment was not long deferred. To pave the way for it, an edict was issued, which threw the whole blame of the war upon the ministers. They were stigmatized as "turbulent, rash, and seditious men," who had "made a new king," and who even now "were plotting pernicious confederacies," and preparing new insurrections against the emperor. They must therefore, said the edict, be driven from a kingdom which could know neither quiet nor safety so long as they were in it. Accordingly on the 13th of December, 1621, [1] the decree of banishment was given forth, ordering all the ministers in Prague within three days, and all others throughout Bohemia and the United Provinces within eight days, to remove themselves beyond the bounds of the kingdom, "and that for ever." If any of the proscribed should presume to remain in the country, or should return to it, they were to suffer death, and the same fate was adjudged to all who should dare to harbor them, or who should in the least favor or help them.[2]

But, says Comenius, "the scene of their departure cannot be described," it was so overwhelmingly sorrowful. The pastors were followed by their loving flocks, bathed in tears, and so stricken with anguish of spirit, that they gave vent to their grief in sighs and groans. Bitter, thrice bitter, were their farewells, for they knew they should see each other no more on earth. The churches of the banished ministers were given to the Jesuits.

The same sorrowful scenes were repeated in all the other towns of Bohemia where there were Protestant ministers to be driven away; and what town was it that had not its Protestant pastor? Commissaries of Reformation went from town to town with a troop of horse, enforcing the edict. Many of the Romanists sympathized with the exiled pastors, and condemned the cruelty of the Government; the populations generally were friendly to the ministers, and their departure took place amid public tokens of mourning on the part of those among whom they had lived. The crowds

on the streets were often so great that the wagons that bore away their little ones could with difficulty move forward, while sad and tearful faces looked down upon the departing troop from the windows. On the 27th of July, 1623, the ministers of Kuttensburg were commanded to leave the city before break of day, and remove beyond the bounds of the kingdom within eight days. Twenty-one ministers passed out at the gates at early morning, followed by some hundreds of citizens. After they had gone a little way the assembly halted, and drawing aside from the highway, one of the ministers, John Matthiades, preached a farewell sermon to the multitude, from the words, "They shall cast you out of the synagogues."

Earnestly did the preacher exhort them to constancy. The whole assembly was drowned in tears. When the sermon had ended, "the heavens rang again," says the chronicler, "with their songs and their lamentations, and with mutual embraces and kisses they commended each other to the grace of God." [3] The flocks returned to the city, and their exiled shepherds went on their way.

The first edict of proscription fell mainly upon the Calvinistic clergy and the ministers of the United Brethren. The Lutheran pastors were left unmolested as yet. Ferdinand II hesitated to give offense to the Elector of Saxony by driving his co-religionists out of his dominions. But the Jesuits took the alarm when they saw the Calvinists, who had been deprived of their own pastors, flocking to the churches of the Lutheran clergy. They complained to the monarch that the work was only half done, that the pestilence could not be arrested till every Protestant minister had been banished from the land, and the urgencies of the Fathers at length prevailed over the fears of the king. Ferdinand issued an order that the Lutheran ministers should follow their brethren of the Calvinistic and Moravian Communion into exile. The Elector of Saxony remonstrated against this violence, and was politely told that it was very far indeed from being the fact that the Lutheran clergy had been banished -- they had only received a "gracious dismissal." [4]

The razing of the churches in many places was consequent on the expulsion of the pastors. Better that they should be ruinous heaps than that they should remain to be occupied by the men who were now brought to fill them. The lowest of the priests were drafted from other places to enjoy the vacant livings, and fleece, not feed, the desolate flocks. There could not be found so many curates as there were now empty churches in Bohemia; and two, six, nay, ten or a dozen parishes were committed to the care of one man. Under these hirelings the people learned the value of that Gospel which they had, perhaps too easily, permitted to be taken from them, in the persons of their banished pastors. Some churches remained without a priest for years; "but the people," says Comenius, "found it a less affliction to lack wholesome instruction than to resort to poisoned pastures, and become the prey of wolves." [5]

A number of monks were imported from Poland, that country being near, and the language similar, but their dissolute lives were the scandal of that Christianity which they were brought to teach.

On the testimony of all historians, Popish as well as Protestant, they were riotous livers, insatiably greedy, and so shamelessly profligate that abominable crimes, unknown in Bohemia till then, and not fit to be named, say the chroniclers, began to pollute the land. Even the Popish historian Pelzel says, "they led vicious lives." Many of them had to return to Poland faster than they had come, to escape the popular vengeance which their misdeeds had awakened against them. Bohemia was doubly scourged: it had lost its pious ministers, and it had received in their room men who were fitter to occupy the culprit's cell than the teacher's chair.

The cleansing of the churches which had been occupied by the Protestant ministers, before being again taken possession of by the Romish clergy, presents us with many things not only foolish, but droll. The pulpit was first whipped, next sprinkled with holy water, then a priest was made to enter it, and speaking for the pulpit to say, "I have sinned." The altars at which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper had been dispensed were dealt with much in the same way. When the Jesuits took possession

of the church in Prague which had been occupied by the United Brethren, they first strewed gunpowder over its flora-, and then set fire to it, to disinfect the building by flame and smoke from the poison of heresy. The "cup," the well-known Bohemian symbol, erected over church portals and city gates, was pulled down, and a statue of the Virgin put up fit its stead. If a church was not to be used, because it was not needed, or because it was inconveniently situated, it was either razed or shut up. If only shut up it was left unconsecrated, and in that dreadful condition the Romanists were afraid to enter it. The churchyards shared the fate of the churches. The monumental tablets of the Protestant (lead were broken in pieces, the inscriptions were effaced, and the bones of the dead in many instances were dug up and burned.[6]

After the pastors, the iron hand of persecution fell upon the schoolmasters. All teachers who refused to conform to the Church of Rome, and teach the new catechism of the Jesuit Canisius, were banished. The destruction of the Protestant University of Prague followed. The non-Catholic

professors were exiled, and the building was delivered over to the Jesuits. The third great measure adopted for the overthrow of Protestantism was the destruction of all religious books. A commission traveled from town to town, which, assembling the people by the tolling of the bells, explained to them the cause of their visit, and "exhorted them," says George Holyk, "in kind, sweet, and gentle words, to bring all their books." If gentle words failed to draw out the peccant volumes, threats and a strict inquisition in every house followed. The books thus collected were examined by the Jesuits who accompanied the commissioners, and while immoral works escaped, all in which was detected the slightest taint of heresy were condemned. They were carried away in baskets and carts, piled up in the market-place, or under the gallows, or outside the city gates, and there burned. Many thousands of Bohemian Bibles, and countless volumes of general literature, were thus destroyed. Since that time a Bohemian book and a scarce book have been synonymous. The past of Bohemia was blotted out; the great writers and the illustrious warriors who had flourished in it

were forgotten; the noble memories of early times were buried in the ashes of these fires; and the Jesuits found it easy to make their pupils believe that, previous to their arrival, the country had been immersed in darkness, and that with them came the first streaks of light in its sky.[7]

The Jesuits who were so helpful in this "Reformation" were Spaniards. They had brought with them the new order of the Brethren of Mercy, who proved their most efficient coadjutors. Of these Brethren of Mercy, Jacobeus gives the following graphic but not agreeable picture: -- "They were saints abroad, but furies at home; their dress was that of paupers, but their tables were those of gluttons; they had the maxims of the ascetic, but the morals of the rake." Other allies, perhaps even more efficient in promoting conversions to the Roman Church, came to the aid of the Jesuits. These were the well-known Lichtenstein dragoons. These men had never faced an enemy, or learned on the battle-field to be at once brave and merciful. They were a set of vicious and cowardly ruffians, who delighted in

terrifying, torturing, and murdering the pious peasants. They drove them like cattle to church with the saber. When billeted on Protestant families, they conducted themselves like incarnate demons; the members of the household had either to declare themselves Romanists, or flee to the woods, to be out of the reach of their violence and the hearing of their oaths. As the Jesuits were boasting at Rome in presence of the Pope of having converted Bohemia, the famous Capuchin, Valerianus Magnus, who was present, said, "Holy Father, give me soldiers as they were given to the Jesuits, and I will convert the whole world to the Catholic faith." [8]

We have already narrated the executions of the most illustrious of the Bohemian nobles. Those whose lives were spared were overwhelmed by burdensome taxes, and reiterated demands for stuns of money, on various pretexts. After they had been tolerably fleeced, it was resolved to banish them from the kingdom. On Ignatius Loyola's day, the 31st of July, in the year 1627, an edict appeared, in which the emperor declared that, having "a fatherly

care for the salvation of his kingdom," he would permit none but Catholics to live in it, and he commanded all who refused to return to the Church of Rome, to sell their estates within six months, and depart from Bohemia. Some there were who parted with "the treasure of a good conscience" that they might remain in their native land; but the greater part, more steadfastly-minded, sold their estates for a nominal price in almost every instance, and went forth into exile.[9] The decree of banishment was extended to widows. Their sons and daughters, being minors, were taken forcible possession of by the Jesuits, and were shut up in colleges and convents, and their goods managed by tutors appointed by the priests. About a hundred noble families, forsaking their ancestral domains, were dispersed throughout the neighboring countries, and among these was the gray-headed baron, Charles Zierotin, a man highly respected throughout all Bohemia for his piety and courage.

The places of the banished grandees were filled by persons of low degree, to whom the emperor could give a patent of nobility, but to whom he

could give neither elevation of soul, nor dignity of character, nor grace of manners. The free cities were placed under a reign of terrorism. New governors and imperial judges were appointed to rule them; but from what class of the population were these officials drawn? The first were selected from the new nobility; the second, says Comenius - - and his statement was not denied by his contemporaries -- were taken from "banished Italians or Germans, or apostate Bohemians, gluttons who had squandered their fortunes, notorious murderers, bastards, cheats, fiddlers, stage-players, mutineers, even men who were unable to read, without property, without home, without conscience." [10] Such were the judges to whom the goods, the liberties, and the lives of the citizens were committed. The less infamous of the new officials, the governors namely, were soon removed, and the "gluttons, murderers, fiddlers, and stage-players" were left to tyrannize at pleasure. No complaint was listened to; extortionate demands were enforced by the military; marriage was forbidden except to Roman Catholics; funeral rites were prohibited at

Protestant burials; to harbor any of the banished ministers was to incur fine and imprisonment; to work on a Popish holiday was punishable with imprisonment and a fine of ten florins; to laugh at a priest, or at his sermon, inferred banishment and confiscation of goods; to eat flesh on prohibited (lays, without an indulgence from the Pope, was to incur a fine of ten florins; to be absent from Church on Sunday, or on festival-mass days, to send one's son to a non-Catholic school, or to educate one's family at home, was forbidden under heavy penalties; non-Catholics were not permitted to make a will; if nevertheless they did so, it was null and void; none were to be admitted into arts or trades unless they first embraced the Popish faith. If any should speak unbecomingly of the "Blessed Virgin the Mother of God," or of the "illustrious House of Austria," "he shall lose his head, without the least favor or pardon." The poor in the hospitals were to be converted to the Roman Catholic faith before the feast of All Saints, otherwise they were to be turned out, and not again admitted till they had entered the Church of Rome. So was it enacted in July, 1624, by Charles, Prince of Lichtenstein, as

"the constant and unalterable will of His Sacred Majesty Ferdinand II."[11]

In the same year (1624) all the citizens of Prague who had not renounced their Protestant faith, and entered the Roman communion, were informed by public edict that they had forfeited their estates by rebellion.

Nevertheless, their gracious monarch was willing to admit them to pardon. Each citizen was required to declare on oath the amount of goods which he possessed, and his pardon-money was fixed accordingly. The "ransom" varied from 100 up to 6,000 guilders. The next "thunderbolt" that fell on the non-Catholics was the deprivation of the rights of citizenship. No one, if not in communion with the Church of Rome, could carry on a trade or business in Prague. Hundreds were sunk at once by this decree into poverty. It was next resolved to banish the more considerable of those citizens who still remained "unconverted." First four leading men had sentence of exile recorded against them; then seventy others were expatriated. Soon

thereafter, several hundreds were sent into banishment; and the crafty persecutors now paused to mark the effect of these severities upon the common people. Terrified, ground down into poverty, suffering from imprisonment and other inflictions, and deprived of their leaders, they found the people, as they had hoped, very pliant. A small number, who voluntarily exiled themselves, excepted, the citizens conformed. Thus the populous and once Protestant Prague bowed its neck to the Papal yoke.[12] In a similar way, and with a like success, did the "Commissioners of the Reformation" carry out their instructions in all the chief cities of Bohemia.

After the same fashion were the villages and rural parts "unprotestantized." The Emperor Matthias, in 1610, had guaranteed the peasantry of Bohemia in the free exercise of the Protestant religion. This privilege was now abolished, beginning was made in the villages, where the flocks were deprived of their shepherds. Their Bibles and other religious books were next taken from them and destroyed, that the flame might go

out when the fuel was withdrawn. The ministers and Bibles out of the way, the monks appeared on the scene. They entered with soft words and smiling faces. They confidently promised lighter burdens and happier times if the people would only forsake their heresy. They even showed them the beginning of this golden age, by bestowing upon the more necessitous a few small benefactions. When the conversions did not answer the fond expectations of the Fathers, they changed their first bland utterances into rough words, and even threats. The peasantry were commanded to go to mass. A list of the parishioners was given to the clerk, that the absentees from church might be marked, and visited with fine. If one was detected at a secret Protestant conventicle, he was punished with flagellation and imprisonment. Marriage and baptism were next forbidden to Protestants. The peasants were summoned to the towns to be examined and, it might be, punished. If they failed to obey the citation they were surprised overnight by the soldiers, taken from their beds, and driven into the towns like herds of cattle, where they were thrust into prisons, towers, cellars, and stables;

many perishing through the hunger, thirst, cold, and stench which they there endured. Other tortures, still more horrible and disgusting, were invented, and put in practice upon these miserable creatures. Many renounced their faith.

Some, unwilling to abjure, and yet unable to bear their prolonged tortures, earnestly begged their persecutors to kill them outright. "No," would their tormentors reply, "the emperor does not thirst for your blood, but for your salvation." This sufficiently accounts for the paucity of martyrs unto blood in Bohemia, notwithstanding the lengthened and cruel persecution to which it was subject. There were not wanting many who would have braved death for their faith; but the Jesuits studiously avoided setting up the stake, and preferred rather to wear out the disciples of the Gospel by tedious and cruel tortures. Those only whose condemnation they could color with some political pretext, as was the case with the noblemen whose martyrdoms we have recorded, did they bring to the scaffold. Thus they were able to suppress the Protestantism of Bohemia, and yet

they could say, with some little plausibility, that no one had died for his religion.

But in trampling out its Protestantism the persecutor trampled out the Bohemian nation. First of all, the flower of the nobles perished on the scaffold. Of the great families that remained 185 sold their castles and hinds and left the kingdom. Hundreds of the aristocratic families followed the nobles into exile. Of the common people not fewer than 36,000 families emigrated. There was hardly a kingdom in Europe where the exiles of Bohemia were not to be met with. Scholars, merchants, traders, fled from a land which was given over as a prey to the disciples of Loyola, and the dragoons of Ferdinand. Of the 4,000,000 who inhabited Bohemia in 1620, a miserable remnant, amounting not even to a fifth, were all that remained in 1648. [13] Its fanatical sovereign is reported to have said that he would rather reign over a desert than over a kingdom peopled by heretics. Bohemia was now a desert.

This is not our opinion only, it is that of Popish

historians also. "Until that time," says Pelzel, "the Bohemians appeared on the field of battle as a separate' nation, and they not infrequently earned glory. They were now thrust among other nations, and their flame has never since resounded on the field of battle.... Till that time, the Bohemians, taken as a nation, had been brave, dauntless, passionate for glory, and enterprising; but now they lost all courage, all national pride, all spirit of enterprise. They fled into forests like sheep before the Swedes, or suffered themselves to be trampled under foot.... The Bohemian language, which was used in all public transactions, and of which the nobles were proud, fell into contempt.... As high as the Bohemians had risen in science, literature, and arts, in the reigns of Maximilian and Rudolph, so low did they now sink in all these respects. I do not know of any scholar who, after the expulsion of the Protestants, distinguished himself in any learning.... With that period the history of the Bohemians ends, and that of other nations in Bohemia begins." [14]

Footnotes:

1. Comenius, cap. 51, p. 184.
2. Ibid.
3. "Tandem cantu et fictu resonante caelo, amplexibus et osculis mutuis Divinae se commendarunt gratiae." (Comenius, p. 195.)
4. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia. vol. 2., pp. 32, 33.
5. Comenius, cap. 54, p. 192.
6. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia, vol. 2., pp. 16-19.
7. Comenius, cap. 105. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia, vol. 2., chap. 3.
8. The Reformation and Anti-Reformation in Bohemia, vol. 2., p. 114.
9. Comenius, cap. 89.
10. "Lurcones qui sua decoxerant, homicidas infames, spurios, mangones, fidicines, comaedos, ciniflones, quosdam etiam alphabeti ignaros homines," etc. (Comenius, cap. 90, p. 313.)
11. Comenius, cap. 91.
12. Comenius, cap. 92.

13. Ludwig Hausser, *Period of the Reformation*, vol. 2., p. 107; Lond., 1873.
14. Pelzel, *Geschichte von Bohmen*, p. 185 et seq. Krasinski, *Slavonia*, p. 158.