

doctrines of Wicliffe, whereby he incurred the bitter hatred of the clergy. The moral condition of Prague was at the time deplorable. All classes had abandoned themselves to every kind of profligacy, and from the outset of his ministry Huss endeavoured to stem the tide of wickedness by faithfully preaching the word of God. In due time he was elevated to the rectorship of the University which added greatly to his influence. For a time he seemed to be in favour with Shinko, the Archbishop of Prague, a young, accomplished nobleman, who was painfully aware of the distracted state of his diocese and disposed to adopt anything that might restore order among his clergy and discourage the gross superstition of the people. But Shinko was a man of the world. Huss, on the other hand, was actuated by deep religious sentiment. Betwixt two such different natures there could be no lasting friendship, and it was not long before the archbishop became his persecutor. It was as a defender of Wicliffe that Huss first incurred his displeasure. Other matters of dispute soon arose to widen the breach, till at length Shinko procured from Pope Alexander V. full powers to suppress preaching in private chapels and to burn the writings of Wicliffe. A bonfire of upwards of two hundred volumes, beautifully written and elegantly bound, was set fire to in the public street amid the tolling of bells. The effect of these proceedings on Huss was only to increase his zeal. He denounced indulgences and other flagrant abuses more loudly than ever. A second bull was issued. Huss was ordered to appear at Rome to answer for his heretical utterances, but as he did not obey the summons he was condemned, and the city of Prague placed under interdict until it should rid itself of the heretic. The church doors were closed and Prague wore the aspect of a doomed city. What should Huss do? He was the cause of this calamity. He retired to his native village where he employed his time in writing to his friends and preaching to crowds of peasants in the open fields.

Huss had not yet broken with the church of Rome. She was still dear to him. What he ardently desired was her reformation. He would have the church to recognize the Bible as the rule of faith. Little did he know how far-reaching was the principle

he advocated. In the meantime he returns to Prague and preaches with greater power than before. The Queen and many of the nobles took his part. A majority of the people sympathized with him and were captivated by his eloquence and his consistent life, so markedly in contrast with what they saw every where in the priesthood. It was about this time that he formed the romantic friendship with 'Jerome of Prague,' a Bohemian Knight who had imbibed the doctrines of Wicliffe while studying at Oxford University. For some time they worked together in Prague with perfect accord. But events were hastening to a crisis. The divided state of Christendom at the beginning of the fifteenth century threatened the entire overthrow of the church. There were three rival popes who mutually cursed and excommunicated each other; dissenting sects began to multiply and many who had not the courage of their convictions looked on in dismay. Huss kept on the even tenor of his way, unruffled amid the storms of party warfare. The more he studied his Bible the firmer his conviction became that the Church of Rome had become essentially corrupt. He published a list of errors and placarded them on the door of Bethlehem chapel. This produced a profound impression on the public mind. In 1414 he was summoned by the Emperor Sigismund to appear before the Council of Constance to answer for his conduct. Before going, he secured from the Emperor a letter of safe conduct and also an assurance from the pope of protection from harm. Neither of them kept their word. Accompanied by several Bohemian noblemen, he went to Constance believing that he would have a fair hearing. The council met on the 1st of November. Four weeks were taken up with the trial of the rival popes, who were severally charged with murder, heresy, simony, and other heinous offences. Two of them were deposed, John XXIII and Benedict XIII; the third, Gregory XII, voluntarily resigned. The attention of the council was now directed to Huss. In violation of the assurances given him, he was thrown into a loathsome dungeon—the council declaring "that no faith is to be kept with heretics to the prejudice of the church." While the libel against him was being prepared, Huss was removed for safe keeping to the