

future may contain a terrible retribution for our neglect of this mission: but, if the door be not already closed, it becomes us to hasten to its discharge, and preach the word of eternal life among the nations, who with the name of Christ, and some of them with the profession of the principles of the Reformation on their lips, are perishing in a darkness as thick as that which broods over heathen lands. The mission knows neither German nor Slavonian; but only seeks a door by which it may enter and proclaim to every creature—repentance and remission of sins, in the name of Jesus. It mingles not in the politics of the world, looks not to the dominance of races, or the establishment of empires;—its results are to make men "free indeed;" and it looks away to the day when human pride and earthly sovereignty shall be broken in pieces and consumed, and the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.

Against the discharge of this true mission the door of access to the Slavonians is for the most part closed. Wherever the power of Russia extends, the missionary is excluded; Bible Societies are prohibited; even the missionaries, who are laboring in the Asiatic provinces of the empire, have been forbidden to prosecute their labors. The only country in which we are greeted by the hope of ready access to his people, is Bohemia, where a movement has already begun in connection with the labors of F. W. Kossuth, a near relation of the Governor of Hungary.—In 1846, this gentleman undertook to gather and organize a Bohemian Protestant Church, at Prague; in 1848, his labors attracted much attention, and many Roman Catholics were converted. In the face of every kind of persecution he has been enabled to persevere until his church numbers eleven hundred, of whom seven hundred are converted Romanists, including three priests.

Bohemia and Prague, it may strike all our readers, are names not unknown in the history of the church of Christ; and the names of at least two Martyrs, familiar almost as those of our own reformers, will immediately be suggested,—we trust to increase the interest and enforce the object of these remarks. The country of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, presents strong claims upon those who cherish the name and memory of Wickliffe. Bohemia was occupied by the Slavonic race about the fifth or sixth century; five centuries later, they received the christianity of the Greek church, and maintained its rites and discipline; their worship being conducted in the national language. Gradually the Romish church was forced upon the people—the Latin liturgy was introduced, and the national churches were abolished. Still an attachment to their ancient faith lingered among them in secret, and afforded a point of entrance to the Waldensian preachers, who sought refuge from persecution among them. Peter Waldo, himself, it is said, and at all events, some of his followers, propagated their sentiments there, the influence of which was felt for centuries. At length, the Bohemian crown passed into the house of Luxemburg, and so it became an appendage to the Austrian Empire. The pressure of German influence, which had long been felt, now reduced the native Bohemians to complete subordination; not, however, without arousing an indignant animosity. The Romish church was naturally associated in the minds of the people with Austrian oppression; and the injuries of the slighted race promoted disaffection to that church, and prepared the way for the immense influence of the Reformers, who appeared in the beginning of the fifteenth century. In fact, the great leader of the Bohemian reformation, originally took his place in the affections of his countrymen, not as a religious reformer so much as a champion of Bohemian nationality.

John Huss was born in 1369. He was of humble parentage; and rose to eminence by his distinguished abilities and virtues. His eloquence and zeal—his irreproachable life—"his pale and emaciated countenance" and the sweetness of his temper, gave him great persuasive power. He speedily rose to the highest honors in the church, and became also the idol of the populace. The Germans and the high Romanists had obtained the control of the University of Prague, which they used to promote their own ends. Huss and his fellow martyr, Jerome of Prague, boldly assailed the abuse of a national institution, and secured a change in its constitution, which provided for the honor and influence of the natives. Huss became as popular with his own countrymen as he became odious to the Germans. He was elected rector of the University, and began openly to preach doctrines opposed to Rome, though he did not separate from her communion.

Wickliffe, the English reformer, had, previous to this, lifted up his testimony against Popery and in behalf of God's truth. His sentiments and writings had already been widely propagated. In the latter part of the life of Wickliffe, an alliance, by marriage, of the Royal Families of England and Bohemia, led to free intercourse between the two kingdoms. The writings of Wickliffe, thus found their way to Prague, and Huss became acquainted, also, with some of his disciples. These writings Huss translated, and circulated in Bohemia, Moravia and Poland, with the most marked effect. Bohemia was ripe for resistance to Rome; and the personal popularity of Huss lent an influence to the works he circulated, which soon attracted the notice of the Archbishop of Prague.—The works of Wickliffe were proscribed and burnt, which furnished Huss with the occasion for new and more forcible appeals to his indignant countrymen; and a contest arose between the reformer and the ecclesiastical party, which ended in his being summoned to appear before a council to answer to the charge of heresy.

William Jones gives a copy of a fervent letter which Wickliffe wrote to Huss during these trials, in which after many arguments for their perseverance, he says: "Do thou, therefore, O Huss, a brother greatly be-

loved in Christ, unknown to me, indeed, in person, but not in faith and love (for no part of the world can separate those whom Christ unites), be composed and strengthened in the grace which is given thee. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, war in word and deed, and recall into the way of truth as many as thou art able."

After various delays, Huss, encouraged by the Emperor Sigismund, who gave him a safe conduct, consented to appear before a general council, at Constance, in 1414. Amid the fears and solicitude of his countrymen, he set out, exhorting them to maintain God's truth, whatever should befall him. Arrived at Constance, he soon learned the worthlessness of imperial pledges. He had been entrapped, and was placed under arrest, whence, after many sufferings, he was led to the mockery of a trial. Before the council he maintained the truth with unflinching intrepidity, and defended himself with eloquence and talent. But what availed any defence before such a tribunal! The cardinal summoned up the proceedings by declaring that Huss had the alternative of unconditional submission or to have sentence pronounced upon him. To such a man there was no choice here, and he was led back to prison, where every art was used to reduce him to recant. On July 1, 1415, he sent to the council his firm and final refusal, and the council decided on his execution.

On the day appointed for his martyrdom, a grand council was assembled in the Cathedral under the presidency of the Emperor. In the nave a scaffold was erected, beside which hung the vestments of a Romish Priest. The proceedings were opened by the Bishop of London, with a blasphemous address to the Emperor, whose renown, he said, should eternally last, for destroying such a heretic. The sentence was read from the pulpit, Huss, meanwhile, praying for his persecutors. He was clothed with the priestly garments, and again adjured to recant. "How," said he, "could I lift my eyes to heaven—how could I show my face to those whom I have taught, were I to unsettle their minds by denying the pure doctrine of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. No, I shall let it appear that I have less regard for this mortal body than for the eternal salvation of those souls."

The bishops then began the ceremony of degrading him from his priestly office. One took the chalice from his hand, saying, "O thou accursed Judas, we take from thee this cup of Salvation." "But He," said the martyr, "for whose name's sake I am suffering all this, will not take from me His cup of Salvation." After taking away the sacerdotal vestments, and cutting the skin from the crown of his head with scissors, these ministers of religion brought a cap painted with monstrous representations of fiends. "Our Lord," said Huss "wore for my sake a crown of thorns: why should I not wear this light though ignominious cap for his name's sake." "We deliver thy body to the flames, and thy soul to the devil," said they, as they placed the cap on his head. Huss lifted up his eyes and said: "Into thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, I commend my soul which thou has redeemed."

When bound to the stake he replied to the summons of the imperial marshal to retract: "I have preached the truth, and now I am ready to die for it with a contented mind." The marshal clapped his hands over his head; the executioners lighted the fire. "Jesus Christ Son of the Living God, have mercy upon me," cried the martyr, as the flames and smoke choked his utterance. His ashes were scattered on the waters of the Rhine. And so perished the great Slavonic Reformer, who, a century before Luther, sealed with his blood the great principle of protestantism—the scriptures, and not the church, the ultimate appeal in the matters of faith.

Huss' friend and fellow-laborer Jerome of Prague, similarly entrapped, was arrested and conveyed to Constance, while yet that martyr was confined in a castle near the city, and a few months later was honored to follow in his footsteps. Poggio Bracciolini, the secretary of the council, in a letter to the Pope's secretary, gives a glowing account of his trial and execution. "To confess truth," says he, relating Jerome's defence before the council, "I never knew the art of speaking carried so near the model of ancient eloquence. It was really amazing to hear with what force of expression, with what fluency of language, and with what excellent reasoning he answered his adversaries. Nor was I less struck with the gracefulness of his manner, the dignity of his action, and the firmness and consistency of his whole behaviour." After a summary of the trial, and an outline of Jerome's oration, he continues: "Every one expected that he would now either retract his assertions, or, at least apologise for them; but nothing of the kind was heard from him: he declared plainly he had nothing to retract. He launched out into a high eulogium of Huss, called him a holy man, and lamenting his cruel and unjust death. He had armed himself, he said, with a full resolution to follow that blessed martyr, and to suffer with constancy whatever the malice of his enemies could inflict.

This impartial witness thus describes his death; "With a cheerful countenance and more than stoical constancy he met his fate, fearing neither death nor the horrible form in which it appeared. When he came to the place he took off his upper garment, and made a short prayer at the stake, to which he was soon bound with wet cords and an iron chain, and enclosed as high as the breast in faggots.

"Observing the executioner about to set fire to the wood behind his back, he cried out, 'Bring thy torch hither; perform thy office before my face. Had I feared death I might have avoided it.'

As the wood began to blaze, he sung a hymn which the violence of the flame scarce interrupted.

"Thus died the prodigious man. The epithet is not extravagant. I