

THE  
**LIVES**  
OF  
**JOHN WICLIFF,**

AND OF THE MOST EMINENT OF HIS

DISCIPLES;

**LORD COBHAM, JOHN HUSS, JEROME  
OF PRAGUE, AND ZISCA.**

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*After the way, which they call Heresy, so worship we the God of  
our Fathers.*

Acts xxiv. 14.

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BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM GILPIN,  
VICAR OF BOLDRE.

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TO

**THE RIGHT REVEREND**

**THOMAS,**

**LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL.**

MY LORD,

I have taken the liberty to present the following work to your lordship; the fruit of the little leisure of many years. It may put in a distant claim to your protection, as a kind of appendix to some of your lordship's valuable *Dissertations on the Prophecies*. The man of sin was never more apparent than at the time, when these reformers lived; who began to strip him of his disguises; and gave the first and fairest illustration of that prophecy, which your lordship has so ably explained.

## DEDICATION.

In whatever light this work may be considered by the public, your lordship, with your usual candour, will accept it as an acknowledgment of the respect, with which

I am, my lord,

Your lordship's obliged,

And most obedient, humble servant,

WILLIAM GILPIN.

*Chcam, February 20, 1765.*

THE  
HOUSE OF SUPERSTITION.

A VISION.

*By Thomas Denton, M. A. Rector of Ashted,  
in Surrey.*

I.

WHEN sleep's all soothing hand with fetters soft  
Ties down each sense and lulls to balmy rest ;  
The internal pow'r, creative fancy, oft  
Broods o'er her treasures in the formful breast.  
Thus when no longer daily cares engage,  
The busy mind pursues the darling theme ;  
Hence angels whisper'd to the slumb'ring sage,  
And god's of old inspir'd the heroe's dream ;  
Hence as I slept, these images arose,  
To fancy's eye, and join'd this fairy scene compose.

II.

As, when fair morning dries her dewy tears,  
The mountain lifts o'er mists its lofty head ;  
Thus new to sight a Gothic dome appears,  
With the grey rust of rolling years o'erspread.  
On solid base of ever-during stone,  
Which erst was laid by workmanship divine,

Distorted fancy's way-ward freaks are shewn,  
 To hide with airs grotesque the grand design:  
 With fragil straw and reeds the front is lin'd ;  
 Vain prop of tott'ring age, the sport of every wind.

## III.

In flocks unnumbered, like a pitchy cloud,  
 Birds of ill omen round the fabric fly,  
 Here build their nests, and nurse their callow brood,  
 And scare the timorous soul with boading cry.  
 Here SUPERSTITION holds her dreary reign,  
 And her lip-labour'd orisons she plies.  
 In Tongue unknown, when morn bedews the plain,  
 Or evening skirts with gold the western skies ;  
 To the dumb flock she bends, or sculptur'd wall,  
 And many a cross she makes, and many a bead lets fall.

## IV.

Near to the dome a magic pair reside.  
 Prompt to deceive, and practis'd to confound ;  
 Here hood-wint *Ignorance* is seen to bide,  
 Stretching in darksome cave along the ground ;  
 No object dawns upon his stupid eyes,  
 Nor voice articulate arrests his ears,  
 Save when beneath the moon pale spectres rise,  
 And haunt his soul with visionary fears ;  
 Or when hoarse winds incavern'd murmur round,  
 And babbling echo wakes, and iterates the sound.

## V.

Where boughs entwining form an artful shade,  
 And in faint glimmerings just admit the light,  
 There *Error* sits in borrow'd white array'd,  
 And in *Truth's* form deceives the transient sight.

Her beaming lustre when fair *Truth* imparts,  
A thousand glories wait her opening day ;  
Thus *Error* fain would cheat with mimic arts  
Th' unpractis'd mind and pours a spurious ray ;  
She cleaves with magic wand the liquid skies,  
Bids airy forms appear, and scenes fantastic rise.

VI.

A porter deaf, decrepid, old and blind  
Sits at the gate, and lifts a liberal bowl  
With wine of wondrous power to lull the mind,  
And check each vig'rous effort of the soul :  
Who'er unwares shall ply his thirsty lip,  
And drink in gulps the luscious liquor down,  
Shall hapless from the cup delusion sip,  
And objects see in features not their own ;  
Each way-worn traveller that hither came,  
He lav'd with copious draughts, and *Prejudice* his name.

VII.

Within a various race are seen to wonne,  
Props of her age, and pillars of her state,  
Which erst were nurtur'd by the\* wither'd crone,  
And born to *Tyranny*, her griesly mate :  
The first appear'd in pomp of purple pride,  
With triple crown erect, and throned high ;  
Two golden keys hang dangling by his side  
To lock or ope the portals of the sky ;  
Crouching and prostrate there (ah sight unmeet !)  
The crowned head would bow, and lick his dusty feet.

VIII.

With bended arm he on a book reclin'd  
Fast lock'd with iron clasps from vulgar eyes ;

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\* Superstition.

Heav'n's gracious gift to light the wand'ring mind,  
To lift fall'n man, and guide him to the skies!  
A man no more, a God he would be thought,  
And 'mazed mortals blindly must obey:  
With sleight of hand he lying wonders wrought,  
And near him loathsome heaps of reliques lay;  
Strange legends would he read, and figments dire  
Of Limbus' prison'd shades, and purgatory fire.

IX.

There meagre *Penance* sat, in sackcloth clad,  
And to his breast close hugg'd the viper, sin;  
Yet oft with brandish'd whip would gaul, as mad,  
With voluntary stripes his shrivel'd skin.  
Counting large heaps of o'erbounding good  
Of saints that dy'd within the church's pale,  
With gentler aspect there *Indulgence* stood,  
And to the needy culprit would retail;  
There too, strange merchandize! he pardons sold,  
And treasons would absolve, and murders purge with gold.

X.

With shaven crown in a sequester'd cell,  
In dortour sad a lazy lubbard lay;  
No work had he, save some few beads to tell,  
And indolently snore the hours away.  
No patriot voice awakes his languid eye;  
No calls of honour raise his drowsy head,  
Impure he deems chaste Hymen's holy tie;  
To all life's elegant endearments dead:  
No social hopes hath he, no social fears,  
But spends in lethargy devout the ling'ring years.

XI.

Gnashing his teeth in mood of furious ire  
Fierce *Persecution* sits, and with strong breath



Wakes into living flame huge heaps of fire,  
 And feasts on murders, massacres and death.  
 Near him is plac'd *Procrustes'* iron bed  
 To stretch or mangle to a certain size;  
 To see the victims pangs each heart must bleed,  
 To hear their doleful shrieks and piercing cries;  
 Yet he beholds them with unmoistned eye,  
 Their writhing pains his sport, their moans his melody.

## XII.

A gradual light diffusing o'er the gloom,  
 And slow approaching with majestic pace,  
 A lovely maid appears in beauty's bloom,  
 With native charms and unaffected grace:  
 Her hand a clear reflecting mirror shows,  
 In which all objects their true features wear,  
 And on her cheek a blush indignant glows  
 To see the horrid sorceries practis'd there;  
 She snatch'd the volume from the tyrant's rage  
 Unlock'd it's iron clasps, and ope'd the heavenly page.

## XIII.

Marching in goodly row, with steady feet,  
 Some reverend worthies followed in her train,  
 With love of truth whose kindred bosoms beat,  
 To free the fettered mind from errors chain.  
*Wicliff* the first appeared and led the croud,  
 And in his hand a lighted torch he bore,  
 To drive the gloom of superstition's cloud.  
 And all corruption's mazes to explore.  
 Next noble *Cobham*, on whose honoured brow [boughs  
 The martyr's crown is placed, wreath'd with the laurel

## XIV.

So mild and firm next dares the tyrant's fires;  
 And sweet-tongu'd *Jerome*, skilful to persuade:

And *Zisca*, whom fair liberty inspires,  
 Blind chieftain! waves around his burnish'd blade.  
 Unwearied pastor, with unbating zeal.  
 Next \* *Gilpin* comes, on shepherd's staff reclin'd:  
 He of his much-loved flock each want can feel,  
 And feeds the hungry mouth, and famish'd mind:  
 Worster's good † prelate last, with artless smile,  
 Surveys each magic fraud, and eyes the flaming pile.

## XV.

" My name is *TAUTH*, and you, each holy seer,  
 " Who thus my steps with ardent gaze pursue,  
 " Unveil, she said, the sacred mysteries here,  
 " Give the celestial boon to public view.  
 " Tho' blatant *Obloquy* with leprous jaws  
 " Shall blot your fame, and blast the generous deed.  
 " Yet in revolving years your liberal cause  
 " Shall meet in glory's court its ample meed,  
 " Your names, illustrious in the faithful page,  
 " With each historic grace shall shine thro' ev'ry age.

## XVI.

" What tho' the tyrant's fierce relentless pow'r  
 " Exerts in torment all its horrid skill;  
 " Tho' premature you meet the fatal hour  
 " Scorching in flames, or writhing on the wheel;  
 " Yet when the § dragon in the deep Abyss  
 " Shall lye, fast bound in adamantinè chain,  
 " Ye with the lamb shall rise to ceaseless bliss,  
 " First-fruits of death, and partners of his reign;  
 " Then shall the great sabbatic rest repay  
 " The noble strife sustained, the sufferings of a day."

\* Bernard Gilpin.

† Bp. Latimer.

‡ See Revel. Chap. 20. and the learned and ingenious  
 Bishop of Bristol's Comment upon it, in the 3d vol. of his  
 dissertation on the Prophecies.

THE  
**LIFE**  
OF  
**JOHN WICLIFF.**

**ABOUT** the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the usurpations of the church of Rome had arisen to their greatest height. That amazing system of spiritual tyranny had drawn within its influence, in a manner, the whole government of England. The haughty legate, striding over law, made even the ministers of justice tremble at his tribunal: parliaments were over-awed; and sovereigns obliged to temporize: while the lawless ecclesiastic, intrenched behind the authority of councils and decrees, set at naught the civil power; and opened an assylum to any, the most profligate, disturbers of society.

In the mean time the taxes gathered, under various pretences, by the agents of the conclave, exceeded, by above two thirds, the produce of the royal treasury: and when men considered how one after another had arisen, and from slender

pretences had taken the forms of legal establishments, they could not but be alarmed at an evil teeming with such ruin; and saw delusion even through the gloom of ignorance. The people, in spite of superstition, cried out against such scandalous exactions; and the legislature began to think seriously of checking these enormities by resolute laws.

The rapacity of the court of Rome first set the suspicions of men afloat. The votaries of the church bore with temper to see the extension of its power; and its advocates had always to obtrude upon the people the divine sanctions of its dominion; and could on that topic descant plausibly enough. But when this holy church, the sacred object of veneration, became immersed in temporal things; when it plainly appeared to be fully instructed in all the arts of grasping and squandering, which were found among mere human beings; its mercenary views were evident; and serious men were led to question opinions, which came accompanied by such unwarrantable practice.

The first person of any eminence, who espoused the cause of religious liberty, was JOHN WICLIFF. This reformer was born about the year 1324, in the reign of Edward II. Of his extraction we have no certain account. His parents designing him for the church, sent him to Queens College in Oxford, then just founded by Robert E.

field, confessor to queen Philippa. But not meeting with the advantages for study in that new established house, which he expected, he removed to Merton College; which was then esteemed one of the most learned societies in Europe.

Here he applied with such industry, that he is said to have gotten by heart the most abstruse parts of the works of Aristotle. The logic of that acute philosopher seems chiefly to have engaged his attention; in which he was so conversant, that he became a most subtle disputant, and reigned in the schools without a rival.

Thus prepared, he began next with divinity. The divinity of those times corresponded with the logic. What was farthest from common sense had most the air of learning, and appeared most worth a scholar's pursuit. In that age flourished those eminent doctors, who mutually complimenting each other with sounding titles, the profound, the angelic, and the seraphic, drew upon themselves the reverence of their own times, and the contempt of all posterity. WICLIFF'S attention was a while engaged in this fashionable study; in which he became so thorough a proficient, that he was master of all the niceties of that strange jargon, which is commonly called school divinity.

His good sense, however seems to have freed him early from the shackles of authority and fashion. He saw the folly of that species of learning, which had taken his attention; and having been

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misled rather than bewildered, he disengaged himself without much difficulty.

From this time he seems to have chalked out for himself a simpler path. He took the naked text of scripture into his hands, and became his own annotator. The writings of the schoolmen, he soon found, were calculated only to make sectaries; the bible alone to make a rational christian. Hence he attained that noble freedom of thought, which was afterwards so conspicuous in all his writings; and among his contemporaries was rewarded, after the fashion of the times, with the title of the *evangelic doctor*,

To these studies he added that of the civil and canon law; and is said also to have been well versed in the municipal laws of his country.

In the mean time his reputation increased with his knowledge: and he was respected not only as an able scholar, but esteemed as a serious and pious man; a sincere enquirer after truth; and a steady maintainer of it when discovered.

The first thing, which drew upon him the public eye, was his defence of the university against the begging friars. The affair was this;

These religious, from the time of their first settlement in Oxford, which was in the year 1230, had been very troublesome neighbours to the university. They set up a different interest, aimed at a distinct jurisdiction, fomented feuds between the scholars and their superiors, and in many

respects became such offensive inmates, that the university was obliged to curb their licentiousness by severe statutes. This insolent behaviour on one side, and the opposition it met with on the other, laid the foundation of an endless quarrel. The friars appealed to the pope; the scholars to the civil power: and sometimes one party, and sometimes the other prevailed. Thus the cause became general; and an opposition to the friars was looked upon as the test of a young fellow's affection to the university.

It happened, while things were in this situation, that the friars had gotten among them a notion, of which they were exceedingly fond; that Christ was a common beggar; that his disciples were beggars also; and that begging, by their example, was of gospel institution. This notion they propagated with great zeal from all the pulpits, both in Oxford, and the neighbourhood, to which they had access.

WICLIFF, who had long held these religious in great contempt for the laziness of their lives, thought he had now found a fair occasion to expose them. He drew up therefore, and presently published, a treatise *Against Able Beggary*; in which he first shewed the difference between the poverty of Christ and that of the friars, and the obligations which all christians lay under to labour in some way for the good of society. He then lashed the friars with great acrimony, proving them to be an infamous and useless set of men,

wallowing in luxury; and so far from being objects of charity, that they were a reproach not only to religion, but even to human society. This piece was calculated for the many, on whom it made a great impression. At the same time it increased his reputation with the learned; all men of sense and freedom admiring the work, and applauding the spirit of the author.

From this time the university began to consider him as one of her first champions; and in consequence of the reputation he had gained, he was soon afterwards promoted to the mastership of Balliol College.

About this time, archbishop Islip, founded Canterbury Hall in Oxford, where he established a warden, and eleven scholars. The warden's name was Wodehall; who with three of his scholars was monks; the rest were secular. The prudent archbishop, unwilling to irritate either side, chose in this way to divide his favours. Wodehall, though brought from a distant monastery, rushed immediately into the quarrel, which he found subsisting at Oxford; and having vexed the unhappy seculars incorporated with him, by every method in his power, he became next a public disturber; and made it his particular employment to raise and foment animosities in colleges, and disputes in the convocation. The archbishop, hearing of his behaviour, and finding the report well grounded, apologized to the university for placing among them so



troublesome a man ; and immediately ejected both him, and the three regulars, his associates. The primate's next care was to appoint a proper successor ; and with this view applied to WICLIFF, whom he was greatly desirous of placing at the head of his new foundation. WICLIFF, whether through an inclination to cultivate the archbishop's acquaintance, or to put in order a new established house, accepted the proposal, and was immediately chosen warden of Canterbury Hall.

But his new dignity soon involved him in difficulties. He was scarce established in it, when the archbishop died, and was succeeded by Simon Langham, bishop of Ely. This prelate had spent his life in a cloyster, having been first a monk, and afterwards an abbot. The ejected regulars failed not to take advantage of so favourable an opportunity ; and made instant application to the new archbishop, expecting every thing from a man whom they naturally imagined well inclined to their order. Their expectations were justly founded. Langham espoused their cause with great readiness ; ejected WICLIFF, and the regulars his companions ; and sequestered their revenues.

So flagrant a piece of injustice, raised a general out cry. " If the very act of a founder might be thus set aside by a private person, how precarious was college preferment !" In short, WICLIFF was advised by his friends to appeal to the pope ; who durst not, they told him, countenance so injurious

a proceeding: Urban foreseeing some difficulty in the affair, prudently stepped behind the curtain, and commissioned a cardinal to examine it. The archbishop being cited put in his plea; and each side accused and answered by turns, protracting the business into great length.

While this matter was in agitation, an affair happened, which brought it to a speedy conclusion. Edward the III. who was now king of England, had for some time withdrawn the tribute, which his predecessors, from the time of king John, had paid to the pope. The pope menaced in his usual language: but he had a prince to deal with of too high a spirit to be so intimidated. Edward called a parliament, laid the affair before them, and desired their advice. The parliament without much debating resolved, that king John had done an illegal thing, and had given up the rights of the nation. At the same time they advised the king by no means to submit to the pope; and promised to assist him to the utmost of their power, if the affair should bring on consequences.

While the parliament was thus calling in question the pope's authority, the clergy, especially the regulars, shewed their zeal by speaking and writing in his defence. His undoubted right to his revenue was their subject; which they proved by a variety of arguments, drawn from the divinity, and adapted to the genius of those times.

Among others who listed themselves in this

cause, a monk of more learning, and of a more liberal turn of thought than common, published a treatise, written in a very spirited and plausible manner. His arguments met with many advocates, and helped to keep the minds of the people in suspense. WICLIFF, whose indignation was raised at seeing so bad a cause so well defended, undertook to oppose the monk, and did it in so masterly a way, that he was no longer considered as unanswerable.

Soon after WICLIFF had published this book, the suit at Rome was determined against him: and when men saw an effect corresponding so exactly with a probable cause, they could not avoid assigning that probable cause as a real one. In a word, nobody doubted but his opposition to the pope, at so critical a time, was the true cause of his being non-sued at Rome.

Notwithstanding his disappointment, WICLIFF still continued at Oxford; where his friends, about this time, procured him a benefice. Soon after, the divinity professor's chair, falling vacant, he took a doctor's degree, and was elected into it; the university paying him this compliment, not only as the reward of his merit, but as a compensation for his loss.

WICLIFF had now attained the summit of his hopes. His station afforded him that opportunity, which he wanted, of throwing some new lights, as he imagined, upon religious subjects. A long course of reasoning had now fully convinced him, that the

Romish religion was a system of errors. The scandalous lives of the monastic clergy led him first into this train of thinking; and an enquiry into antiquity had confirmed him in it. But it was a bold undertaking to encounter errors of so long a standing; errors, which had taken so deep a root, and had spread themselves so wide. The undertaking at least required the greatest caution. He resolved therefore at first to go on with the popular argument, which he had begun, and continue his attack upon the monastic clergy.

It was a circumstance in his favour, that the begging friars were at this time in the highest discredit at Oxford. The occasional opposition he had already given them, had by no means hurt his reputation; and as he really thought the monastic clergy, the principal instruments of the prevailing corruption, he was fully determined not to spare them. In his public lectures therefore he represented them as a set of men, who professed indeed to live under the rule of holy saints, but had now so far degenerated from their first institution, that they were become a scandal to their founders.—Men might well cry out, he said, against the decay of religion; but he could shew them from whence this decay proceeded. While the preachers of religion never inculcated religious duties, but entertained the people with idle stories, and lying miracles; while they never enforced the necessity of a good life, but taught their hearers to put their

trust in a bit of sealed parchment, and the prayers of hypocrites, it was impossible, he said, but religion must decay. Such treacherous friends did more hurt than open enemies. But a regard for religion, he added, was not to be expected from them: they had nothing in view but the advancement of their order. In every age they had made it their practice to invent, and multiply such new opinions and doctrines as suited their avaricious views: nay they had, in a manner, set aside christianity, by binding men with their traditions in preference to the rule of Christ, who, it might well be supposed, left nothing useful out of his scheme.

In such language did WICLIFF inveigh against the monastic clergy; and opened the eyes of men to a variety of abuses, which were before hidden in the darkness of superstition.

He had not, however, yet avowedly questioned any doctrine of the church. All he had hitherto attempted was to loosen the prejudices of the vulgar. His success in this warranted a further progress; and he began next to think of attacking some of the fundamentals of popery.

In this design he still proceeded with his usual caution. At first he thought it sufficient to lead his adversaries into logical and metaphysical disputations; accustoming them to hear novelties, and to bear contradiction. Nothing passed in the schools but learned arguments on the form of things, on the increase of time, on space, substance, and iden-

tity. In these disputations he artfully intermixed, and pushed as far as he durst, new opinions in divinity ; founding, as it were, the minds of his hearers. At length, finding he had a great party in the schools, and that he was listened to with attention, he ventured to be more explicit, and by degrees opened himself at large.

He began by invalidating all the writings of the fathers after the tenth century. At that time he said an age of darkness and error commenced ; and the honest enquirer after truth could never satisfy himself among the opinions and doctrines, which then took their birth.

The speculative corruptions, which had crept into religion were the first subject of his inquiry.— Many of these he traced out, from their earliest origin ; and with great accuracy and acuteness shewed the progress they had made, as they descended through the ages of superstition. He attacked next the usurpations of the court of Rome. On this subject he was very copious : it was his favourite topic ; and seldom failed, however coolly he might begin, to give him warmth and spirit as he proceeded. On these, and many other subjects of the same kind, he insisted with great freedom, and a strength of reasoning far superior to the learning of those times.

This spirited attack upon the church of Rome hath been attributed by his enemies to motives of resentment. His deprivation, it is said, was the

unlucky cause of all this heat and bitterness. And indeed his conduct, in this instance, hath unquestionably the appearance of being influenced, by his passions. But the candid of all parties will be very cautious in *assigning motives*; and the friends of WICLIFF may with truth remonstrate, that he began his attack upon the church of Rome, before he had been injured by the pope. They may add too, that he never before had so proper an occasion to question publicly the erroneous tenets of religion.

From whatever motives however this spirited attack proceeded, we are not surprised to find a violent clamour raised against him by the Romish clergy. The archbishop of Canterbury, taking the lead, resolved to prosecute him with the utmost vigour. But heresy was a new crime. The church had slept in its errors through so many ages, that it was unprepared for an attack. Records however were searched, and precedents examined; till, with some difficulty, at length WICLIFF was deprived and silenced.

Edward the Third after a glorious and active reign, was, at this time, too much impaired both in body and mind, to bear the fatigues of government. The whole administration of affairs was in the hands of his son the duke of Lancaster, commonly known by the name of John of Ghent.

This prince had a spirit answerable to his birth, and preserved the forms of royalty as much as any

monarch of his time. He had violent passions, of which his enemies and friends were equally sensible. —In religion he had free notions; and whether his creed gave offence to the popish clergy; or whether he had made some efforts to curb the exorbitance of their power, it is certain they were vehemently incensed against him; and some of\* the leading churchmen, it is said, has used very base arts to blacken his character. With equal fire the duke retorted their ill treatment; and having long despised them, and being now so exceedingly provoked, he conceived a settled prejudice against the whole order; and endeavoured by all the means in his power to bring them into the same contempt with others, in which he held them himself.

This quarrel between the Duke of Lancaster and the clergy, was the occasion of introducing **WICLIFF** into public life; and this introduction afforded him afterwards an opportunity of signaling himself still more in the great cause of religious liberty. The duke, it seems, had heard with pleasure, of the attack he had made upon the church of Rome; and had waited the consequences of it with great attention; and when he now found, that **WICLIFF** was likely to be the sufferer, he interposed, rescued him out of the hands of his enemies, who were pursuing their advantage, and brought him to court, were through a passionate vibration of

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\* This is particularly charged upon William of Wickham, Bishop of Winchester; but a late very accurate and ingenious writer hath sufficiently exculpated him on this head.



temper he took him hastily into his confidence, and treated him with a kindest proportioned to the enmity which he bore the clergy.

The oppressions of the Court of Rome were, at this time, severely felt in England. Many things were complained of; but nothing more than the state of church preferments; almost all of which, and even rectories, and vicarages of any value, in whomsoever originally vested, were now through one fiction or another, claimed by the pope. With these he pensioned his friends and favourites; most of whom, being foreigners, resided abroad; and left their benefices in the hands of ill paid, and negligent curates. By these means religion decayed; the country was drained of money; and, what was looked upon as most vexatious, a body of insolent gatherers were set over the people, who had their own fortunes to make out of the surplus of their exactions.

These hardships, notwithstanding the blind obedience paid at that time to the see of Rome, created great unquietness. The nation saw itself wronged; and parliamentary petitions, in very warm language, were preferred to the conclave: but to little purpose; the pope lending a very negligent ear to any motion which so hearily effected his revenue.

The duke of Lancaster, however, at this time, though the nation had now complained, in vain during more than thirty years, was determined, if possible to obtain redress. And, in the first place,

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open the eyes of the people in the most effectual manner, he obliged the bishops to send in lists of the number and value of such preferments, as were in the hands of foreigners. From these lists it appeared what immense sums, in that one way, were conveyed every year out of the kingdom.

The next step taken was to send an embassy to the pope to treat of the liberties of the church of England; at the head of which embassy were the Bishop of Bangor, and Dr. Wicliff. They were met at Bruges, on the part of Rome, by the bishops of Pampelone and Semigaglia, and the provost of Valenza. These agents, practised in the policy of their court, spun out the negociation with great dexterity; some historians mention the continuance of it during two years. The Romish ambassadors however, finding themselves hard pressed by their antagonists; and prudently considering, that it would be easier to evade a treaty when made, than in the present circumstances not to make one, determined at last to bring matters to a conclusion. Accordingly it was agreed that the pope should no longer dispose of any benefices belonging to the church of England. No mention was made of bishopricks: this was thought a voluntary omission in the bishop of Bangor; and men the rather believed so; when they saw him twice afterwards translated by the pope's authority.

But though WICLIFF failed in his endeavours to serve his country by this treaty, (for indeed it was never observed) he made his journey however of

some service to himself. It was his great care to use the opportunity it afforded him of sifting out the real designs of the court of Rome, not only in this affair, but in all its other negotiations: he enquired into the ends it had in view, and the means it employed: and by frequent conversations with the ambassadors upon these subjects, he penetrated so far into the constitution and policy of that corrupt court, that he began to think of it in a much harsher manner than he had ever yet done, and to be more convinced of its avarice and ambition. Prejudiced as he had long been against its doctrines and ministry, he had never yet thought so ill of its designs.

Thus influenced, on his coming home, we find him inveighing in his lectures against the church of Rome, in warmer language than he had hitherto used. The exemption of the clergy from the jurisdiction of the civil power was one of his topics of invective: the use of sanctuaries was another: indulgences a third: in short there has scarce been a corrupt principle or practice in the Roman church, detected by latter ages, which his penetration had not at that early day discovered: and though his reasonings want much of that acuteness and strength, with which the best writers of these times have discussed those subjects; yet when we consider the unlightened age in which he lived, we rather stand astonished at that force of genius which carried him so far, than in any degree wonder at his not going farther.

The Pope himself was often the subject of his invective; his infallibility, his usurpations, his pride, his avarice, and his tyranny, were his frequent theme; and indeed his language was never warmer than when on these topics. The celebrated epithet of *antichrist*, which in after ages, was so liberally bestowed upon the pope, seems to have been first given him by this reformer.

The pomp and luxury of bishops he would frequently lash; and would ask the people, when they saw their prelates riding abroad accompanied with fourscore horsemen in silver trappings, whether they perceived any resemblance between such splendor, and the simplicity of primitive bishops?

Where these lectures were read, does not certainly appear. It is most probable, however, they were read in Oxford; where WICLIFF seems by this time to have recovered his former station, and where he had still a considerable party in his favour.

In the mean time he was frequently at court, where he continued in great credit with the duke of Lancaster. Many indeed expected some high preferment in the church was intended for him; but we meet with no account of his having had the offer of any such, whether he himself declined it, or the duke thought an eminent station in the church would only the more expose him to the malice of his enemies. The duke however took care to make him independent by conferring a good benefice

upon him, the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire; whither he immediately repaired, and set himself faithfully to discharge the duties of it. We hear nothing more of his other benefice; so that it is probable he gave that up, when he accepted Lutterworth.

WICLIFF was scarce settled in his parish, when his enemies taking the advantage of his retirement, began again to persecute him with fresh vigour. At the head of this persecution were Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, and Courtney, bishop of London. The former was a man of uncommon moderation for the times in which he lived; the latter was an inflamed bigot. The archbishop indeed seems to have been pressed into this service; to which he afforded only the countenance of his name. Courtney, took upon himself the management of it; and having procured proper letters from Rome, WICLIFF was cited to appear before him on a day fixed, at St. Paul's in London.

This was an unexpected summons to WICLIFF; who imagined probably that the obscurity of his retreat would have screened him from his enemies. He repaired however immediately to the duke of Lancaster, to consult him on a business of such importance. The duke did what he could to avert the prosecution; but finding himself unable to oppose a force composed of little less than the whole ecclesiastical order, he thought it more probable that he should be able to protect his friend from

the future consequences of the clergy's malice, than to screen him from the present effects of it. Determined however, to give him what countenance he could, he attended him in person to his trial; and engaged also the lord Piercy, earl marshal of England, to accompany them.

When they came to St. Paul's, they found the court sitting, and a very great croud assembled; through which the earl marshal made use of his authority to gain an entrance.

The arrival of such personages, with their attendants, occasioned no little disturbance in the church; and the bishop of London, piqued to see WICLIFF so attended, told the earl with a peevish air, that if he had known before what disturbance he would have made, he should have been stopped at the door. He was greatly offended also at the duke for insisting that WICLIFF should sit during his trial; and let fall some expressions, which that haughty prince was ill able to bear. He immediately fired; and reproached the bishop with great bitterness. Warm language ensued. The prelate however had the advantage; of which the duke seeming conscious, from railing began to threaten; and looking disdainfully at the bishop, told him, that he would bring down the pride, not only of him, but of all the prelacy of England; and turning to a person near him, he said in a half whisper, that rather than take such usage from the bishop, he would pull him by the hair of his head out of

the church. These words being caught up by some, who stood near, were spread among the croud, and in an instant threw the whole assembly into a ferment; voices from every part being heard, united in one general cry, that their bishop should not be so used, and that they would stand by him to their last breath. In short, the confusion arose to such an height, that all business was at an end, the whole was disorder, and the court broke up without having taken any step of consequence in the affair.

The tumult did not so end. The duke, agitated by his passions, went directly to the house of peers; where inveighing against the riotous disposition of the Londoners, he preferred a bill, that very day, to deprive the city of London of its privileges, and to alter the jurisdiction of it.

The city of London was never more moved than on this occasion. The heads of it met in consultation; while the populace assembled in a riot, and assaulted the houses of the duke, and the earl marshal, who both left the city with precipitation.

These tumults, which continued some time, put a stop to all proceedings against WICLIFF; nor indeed do we find him in any farther trouble, during the remainder of king Edward's reign.

In the year 1377 that prince died, and was succeeded by his grandson Richard the Second. Richard being only eleven years of age, the first business of the parliament was to settle a regency.

The duke of Lancaster aspired to be sole regent; but the parliament thought otherwise: much was apprehended from the violence of his temper; and more from his unpopular maxims of government. The regency therefore was put into commission, and he had only one voice in the management of affairs.

The duke of Lancaster's fall from his former height of power was a signal to the bishops to begin anew their persecution against WICLIFF; and articles of accusation were immediately drawn up and dispatched to Rome. How very heartily the pope engaged in this business may be inferred, from his sending on this occasion not fewer than five bulls into England: of these, three were directed to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London; a fourth to the university of Oxford; and a fifth to the king.

Together with his bulls to the bishops, he sent a copy of the heretical articles; requiring those prelates to inform themselves, whether WICLIFF really held the doctrines therein contained; and, if he did, forthwith to imprison him; or if they failed in that, to cite him to make his personal appearance at Rome within three months.

In his bull to the chancellor, and other heads of the university, he expostulates with some warmth upon their suffering tares to spring up with the wheat, and even to grow ripe without rooting them out. It gives him great uneasiness, he says, that



this evil was publicly spoken of at Rome, before any remedy had been applied in England. He bids them consider the consequences of WICLIFF's doctrines; that they tended to nothing less than the subversion both of church and state: and enjoins them lastly, to forbid the preaching of such tenets for the future within their districts; and to assist the bishops in bringing WICLIFF to condign punishment.

To the king he addressed himself in very obliging language, and exhorted him to shew his zeal for the faith, and the holy see, by giving his countenance to the prosecution commencing against WICLIFF.

Of the success of these bulls the pope had little doubt. The court of Rome had never been accustomed to contradiction. Despotic in all its commands, it had only to dictate, and the proudest monarch was ready to obey. But a new scene of things was now opening; and a more liberal spirit taking possession of the minds of men. It must have been a sensible mortification to the haughty pontiff, to see the neglect with which he was treated on this occasion. Opposition to his exactions he had sometimes found before; but this was the first time he had ever been treated with contempt. The university deliberated, whether it should even receive his bull; and by what appears it did not. And the regency were so little disposed to shew him any reverence, that they joined with the par-

liament at this very time, in giving a signal instance of their confidence in WICLIFF, as if on purpose to make their contempt as notorious as possible. The instance was this:

A truce with France at this juncture expiring, that nation took the advantage of a minority, and was making mighty preparations to invade England. As the country was far from being in a posture of defence, all the money that could be raised was wanted. The parliament deliberating about the means, it was debated in the house, whether, upon an emergency, the money collected in England for the use of the pope, might not be applied to the service of the nation. The expediency of the measure was acknowledged by all, but the legality of it was doubted. At last it was agreed both by the regency and the parliament, to put the question to WICLIFF. It appears as if they only wanted the authority of an able casuist to give a sanction to a resolution already made; a sanction very easily obtained from the casuist they consulted.

But whatever disrespect was paid to the pope's bulls by the king and the university of Oxford, the zeal of the bishops made ample amends. The bishop of London especially complied not only with the letter, but entered into the spirit of the pontiff's mandate.

He had taken however only the first step in this business, when he received a peremptory order from the duke of Lancaster, not to proceed to

imprisonment. To imprison a man for holding an opinion, the duke told him, could not be justified by the laws of England: he took the liberty therefore to inform him, that if he proceeded to any such extremity, he must abide the consequences.

This menace alarmed the bishop: he dropt the design of an imprisonment; and contented himself with citing WICLIFF to make his appearance, on such a day, before a provincial synod in the chapel at Lambeth; sending him at the same time a copy of the articles, which had been objected to, and desiring his explanation of them.

On the day appointed WICLIFF appeared; and being questioned about the articles he delivered in a paper, which explained the sense, in which he held them.

It would be tedious to transcribe this collection of antiquated opinions; many of which, at this day, would seem of little importance. The curious reader may see them at large in the first volume of Fox's acts and monuments. We cannot however avoid observing, that WICLIFF by no means appears in the most favourable light on this occasion.\* He explains many of the articles in a forced, unnatural manner, with much art, and in a very unmanly strain of compliment. On the other hand, it must not be concealed, that his advocates call in question the

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\* The ingenious Mr. Hume, alluding to this passage of his life, tells us, that "*Wicliff*, notwithstanding his enthusiasm, seems not to have been actuated by the spirit of martyrdom; and in all subsequent trials before the prelates, he so explained away his doctrine by tortured meanings, as to ren-

authenticity of this explanation : and have at least to say for themselves, that it is solely conveyed down through the channel of popish writers.

While the bishops were deliberating upon WICLIFF'S confession, which, however cautiously worded, was far from being satisfactory, (an argument; by the way, against the authenticity of that confession, which is handed down to us) the people both within doors, and without, grew very tumultuous, crying aloud, they would suffer no violence to be done to WICLIFF.

At this juncture Sir Lewis Clifford, a gentleman about the court, entered the chapel, and in an authoritative manner forbidding the bishops to proceed to any definitive sentence, retired. Sir Lewis was very well known to many there present; and the bishops taking it for granted, that he came properly authorized, (which yet does not appear) were in some confusion at the message. The tumult at the door in the mean time increasing, and adding to their perplexity, at length they dissolved the assembly; having forbidden WICLIFF, to preach any more those doctrines which had been objected to him. To this prohibition, it seems, he paid little respect; going about barefooted, as we are informed, in a long frieze-gown, preaching every where occasionally to the people, and without any reserve

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der it quite innocent and inoffensive." Mr. Hume's censure, without question, hath some foundation in history; which affords in this instance a very good handle to any one, who is glad of an opportunity of traducing the memory of this reformer.

in his own parish. His zeal it is probable, might now break out with the greater warmth, as he might tax his late behaviour, if the account we have is genuine, with the want of proper freedom.

In the year 1378, pope Gregory the XIth died, and was succeeded by the archbishop of Barri, a Neapolitan, who took upon him the name of Urban VI. This pontiff, a man of an haughty temper, began his reign in so arbitrary a manner, that he alienated from him the affections of his subjects. The cardinals in particular so highly resented his behaviour, that a majority of them resolved to run any lengths rather than bear it longer. They found therefore, or pretended to find, some flaw in his election; and assembled at Avignon, where the popes had often resided, declared the election of Urban void, and chose Clement VII. This was a passionate measure; and produced, as passionate measures commonly do, destructive consequences. The two popes, laying an equal claim to St. Peter's chair, began to strengthen their respective parties: their quarrel immediately became the cause of God, found adherents in all parts of Europe, occasioned deluges of blood, and gave a more fatal blow to popery than any thing had yet done.

WICLIFF, it may easily be supposed, was among those who took most offence at this unchristian schism. He considered it as a new argument against popery; and as such he failed not to use it. A tract soon appeared in his name against the

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schism of the Roman pontiffs, in which he shewed what little credit was due to either of the contending parties. This tract was eagerly read by all sorts of people, and tended not a little to open the eyes of the vulgar.

About the end of the year **WICLIFF** was seized with a violent distemper, which, it was feared, might have proved fatal. Upon this occasion, we are told, he was honoured by a very extraordinary deputation. The begging friars, it seems, whom he had heretofore so severely treated, sent four of their order, accompanied by four of the most eminent citizens of Oxford, to attend him; who having gained admittance to his bed chamber, acquainted him, that hearing he lay at the point of death, they were come in the name of their order, to put him in mind of the many injuries he had done them; and hoped for his soul's sake, that he would do them all the justice now in his power, by retracting in the presence of those respectable persons, the many severe and unjust things he had said of them. **WICLIFF** surprised at this solemn message, raised himself in his bed; and we are informed, with a stern countenance cried out, "I shall not die, but live to declare the evil deeds of the friars." The unexpected force of his expression, together with the sternness of his manner, the story adds, drove away the friars in confusion.

Soon after his recovery, **WICLIFF** set about a great work, which he had long intended, the trans-

lation of the scriptures into English. It had ever given him great offence, and indeed he always considered it as one of the capital errors of popery, that the bible should be locked up from the people. He resolved therefore to free it from this bondage. But before his grand work appeared, he published a tract, in which, with great strength of argument, he shewed the necessity of engaging in it. The bible he affirmed contained the whole of God's will. Christ's law he said was sufficient to guide his church; and every christian might there gather knowledge enough to make him acceptable to God: and as to comments, he said, a good life was the best guide to the knowledge of scripture; or, in his own language; "He that keepeth righteousness hath the true understanding of holy writ."

When he thought these arguments were sufficiently digested, his great work came abroad much to the satisfaction of all sober men.

Some have contended, that WICLIFF was not the first translator of the bible into English. The truth seems to be, that he was the first, who translated the whole together; of which, it is probable, others might have given detached parts. It does not however appear, that WICLIFF understood the Hebrew language. His method was, to collect what Latin bibles he could find: from these he made one correct copy; and from this translated.— He afterwards examined the best commentators than

extant, particularly Nicholas Lyra; and from them inserted in his margin those passages, in which the Latin differed from the Hebrew.

In his translation of the bible he seems to have been literally exact. In his other works, his language was wonderfully elegant for the times in which he lived: but here he was studious only of the plainest sense; which led him often, through the confusion of idioms, within the limits of nonsense. *Quid nobis and tibi, Jesu fili Dei*, we find translated thus, *What to us, and to thee, Jesus the son of God.*

This work, it may easily be imagined, had no tendency to reinstate him in the good opinion of the clergy. An universal clamour was immediately raised. Knighton, a canon of Leicester, and nearly a contemporary with WICLIFF, hath left us, upon record, the language of the times. "Christ intrusted his gospel, (says that ecclesiastic,) to the clergy, and doctors of the church, to minister it to the laity, and weaker sort, according to their exigences, and several occasions. But this master JOHN WICLIFF, by translating it has made it vulgar; and has laid it more open to the laity, and even to women, who can read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy; and those of the best understanding; and thus the gospel jewel, the evangelical pearl, is thrown about, and trodden under foot of swine." Such language was looked upon as good reasoning by the clergy of that day, who saw



not with what satire it was edged against themselves. The bishops, in the mean time, and mitred abbots, not content with railing, took more effectual pains to stop this growing evil. After much consultation, they brought a bill into parliament to suppress WICLIFF'S bible. The advocates for it set forth, in their usual manner, the alarming prospect of heresy, which this version of the scriptures opened; and the ruin of all religion, which must inevitably ensue.

These zealots, were answered by the principal reformers, who judiciously encountered them with their own weapons. It appears, said the Wiclivites, from the decretals, that more than sixty different species of heresy sprang up in the church, after the translation of the bible into Latin. But these heresies were never charged upon that translation. With what face therefore, they asked, could the bishops pretend to discountenance an English translation, when they could not produce one argument against it, which did not equally conclude against the Latin one?—This reasoning silenced all opposition; and the bill was thrown out by a great majority.

The zeal of the bishops to suppress WICLIFF'S bible only made it, as is usually the case, the more sought after. They who were able among the reformers, purchased copies; and they who were not able, procured at least transcripts of particular gospels, or epistles as their inclinations led. In after times,

when boldly increased, and the flames were kindled, it was a common practice, to fasten about the neck of the condemned heretic, such of these scraps of scripture as were found in his possession, which generally shared his fate.

Before the clamour, which was raised against WICLIFF, on the account of his bible, was in any degree silenced, he ventured a step farther; and attacked that favourite doctrine of the Roman church the doctrine of transubstantiation.

About the year 820 this strange opinion was first heard of. Paschase Rabbert has the best claim to the honour of giving it birth. This wild enthusiast published it, not as falshood generally gains ground, by little and little; but as once glaring in its full absurdity. He informed the world in plain language, that the elements after consecration, are instantly changed into the body and blood of Christ; that every body, which was born of Mary, suffered upon the cross, and rose from the dead. It is amazing, that an opinion so big with absurdity, and yet unaided by prejudice, could fasten upon the minds of men, however rude of science. Yet the improbable tale, we find, went down; as if the greater the improbability, the more venerable the mystery. It was found a doctrine well adapted to impress the people with that awful and superstitious horror, which is the necessary foundation of false religion: as such the church of Rome with great zeal upheld it; and if any were staggered by the

appearance of an impossibility, they were presently told, that, "The accidents, or forms of bread and wine, it was true, still remained after consecration; but by the omnipotence of God they remained without a subject." This was the argument of the clergy; and it was thought conclusive, for who could doubt the omnipotence of God?

WICLIFF, after a thorough examination of this doctrine was entirely satisfied, that it had no scriptural foundation. In his lectures therefore before the university of Oxford, in the year 1381, which he seems still to have continued every summer as professor of divinity, he took upon him to confute this error; and to explain the real design of the Lord's supper. He principally endeavoured to establish, that the substance of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper remained the same after consecration; and that the body and blood of Christ were not substantially in them, but only figuratively. These conclusions he offered to defend publicly in the schools. But the religious, who were now, it seems, getting ground in the university, would not suffer any question of this kind to be moved:—upon which WICLIFF, without further ceremony, published a treatise upon that subject; in which he went great lengths, and attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation with all the freedom of a man, not hesitating, but fully convinced of the truth of what he maintained.

Dr. Barton was at that time, vice chancellor of

Oxford. He was a person of great zeal against innovations in religion; which he considered as the symptoms of its ruin; and had always used a bitterness of expression in speaking of WICLIFF; which easily shewed with how much pleasure he would take hold of any fair occasion against him. He called together therefore the heads of the university; and, finding he could influence a majority, obtained a decree, by which WICLIFF's doctrine was condemned as heretical, and himself and his hearers threatened, if they persisted in their errors, with imprisonment, and excommunication.

WICLIFF, we are told, was greatly mortified on finding himself thus treated at Oxford, which had till now been his sanctuary. He had one resource however still left, his generous patron the duke of Lancaster; to whom he resolved to fly for protection, and through the hopes of whose interest he appealed to the king from the vice chancellor's sentence.

While WICLIFF and his followers, who were now very numerous, were thus censured at Oxford, a calumny was raised against them, which might have proved of more dangerous consequence. It took its rise from an insurrection, which at this time alarmed the whole kingdom.

Vexed by the severe exaction of a severe impost, the counties of Kent and Sussex took arms. Their body increased as it moved; and under the conduct of one Tiler, approached London with a

force greatly superior to any tumultuary troops that could be brought against it. Here the rebels, having done infinite mischief, and brought even the government to a treaty, were dispersed by the mere address and resolution of the young king. The behaviour of Richard, on this occasion ought never to be omitted even in a slight account of these things, as it is the only part of his whole life, that deserves recording.

When all danger was over, and the thoughts of the ministry were now turned upon punishing the guilty, great pains were taken by the enemies of WICLIFF, to fix the odium of this insurrection upon him; but with very little effect: for after the strictest scrutiny, nothing was produced to prove their accusation, but that one Ball, a priest, was seized among the rebels, whom the archbishop of Canterbury had formerly thrown into prison for preaching WICLIFF'S doctrines. But it appeared, that Ball was a conceited, empty fellow, who through motives of vanity was ready to adopt any singularity. And indeed the whole tenor of history has exculpated WICLIFF, and his disciples on this head, by assigning other and more probable causes of this rebellion.

We left WICLIFF, in the midst of his distresses, carrying up an appeal from the university to the king. But his appeal, it seems, met with no countenance. The duke of Lancaster finding his credit declining, supposed probably that the protection:

he afforded **WICLIFF** might be the principal cause of its decline; perhaps too he might think this bold reformer, by attacking transubstantiation, had gone greater lengths than could well be warranted: it is certain however, that he now for the first time deserted him; and when **WICLIFF** pressed his highness in the affair, and urged him with religious motives, he was answered coolly, that of these things the church was the most proper judge, and that the best advice he could give him was to quit these novelties, and submit quietly to his ordinary.—**WICLIFF** finding himself thus exposed, had only to wrap himself in his own integrity, and push through the storm as he was able.

It was a circumstance greatly against him, that **William Courtney** was at this time promoted to the see of Canterbury; **Simon of Sudbury**, his predecessor, having been murdered by the rebels in the late insurrection. **Courtney**, when bishop of London, had been **WICLIFF**'s most active adversary; and was now glad to find his hands strengthened by the addition of so much power, were it only for the ability it gave him to crush the **Wiclivites**. He highly approved therefore of what the vice chancellor of Oxford had done, and resolved to go vigorously on with the prosecution.

His piety however allowed **WICLIFF** some respite. So scrupulous was the primate, even in matters of form, that he forbore any public exercise of his office, till he should receive the consecrated pall

from Rome; which did not arrive till the May of the next year, 1382.

Being thus duly invested, WICLIFF was cited to appear before him in the monastery of the grey friars, on the 17th day of the same month: so eager was the archbishop to enter upon this business!

But before we proceed in the relation, it may not be improper to inform the reader, that we find great obscurity in the accounts of this part of WICLIFF's life, many of these accounts differing from each other; and many being plainly contradictory. All therefore, which in such a case can be done, is to select from a variety of circumstances, such as seem most probable, and best founded.

WICLIFF being thus cited before the archbishop, refused to appear; alledging that as he was a member of the university, and held an office in it, he was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction. The university was now, it seems, under different influence; the vice chancellor was changed; and the determination of the majority was to support their member. With this plea therefore the archbishop remained satisfied.

But though he could not proceed against the person of WICLIFF, he resolved however to proceed against his opinions. When the court therefore met on the appointed day, a large collection of articles, extracted from his books and sermons, was produced.

In the instant, as the bishops and divines, of

which this court consisted, were about to enter upon business, a violent earthquake shook the monastery. The affrighted bishops threw down their papers; cried out, the business was displeasing to God; and came to a hasty resolution to proceed no farther.

The archbishop alone remained unmoved. With equal spirit and address he chid their superstitious fears; and told them, that if the earthquake portended any thing, it portended the downfall of heresy; that as noxious vapours are lodged in the bowels of the earth, and are expelled by these violent concussions, so by their strenuous endeavours, the kingdom should be purified from the pestilential taint of heresy, which had infected it in every part.

This speech, together with the news, that the earthquake had been general through the city, as it was afterwards indeed found to have been through the island, dispelled their fears. WICLIFF would often merrily speak of this accident; and would call this assembly, the council of the herydene; herydene being the old English word for earthquake.

The court, again composed, entered warmly into the business; and went through the examination of all the articles. In fine, they came to a determination, that some of them were erroneous; and some plainly heretical.

This determination was published, and afterwards



answered by WICLIFF, who shewed how much his enemies had misrepesented him in several points ; and defended his opinions with a spirit of truth and freedom, which brought over many to his party.

The primate took new offence at this audacity, as he called it, of WICLIFF; and being determined at all events to crush him, preferred a bill in parliament to enable sheriffs (upon proper information from bishops) to proceed as far as imprisonment against the preachers of heresy. This bill passed the lords, but was rejected by the commons; who, being already jealous of the power of the clergy, were in no degree inclined to make any addition to it.

The archbishop, notwithstanding this check, applied to the king for his license, which he imagined would be full as effectual, though not so plausible, as an act of parliament. The king, immersed in pleasures, thought only of tenths and subsidies, and could refuse nothing to the clergy, who were so ready on all occasions to comply with him. Letters patent therefore were immediately made out, granting the full powers, which the archbishop required.

The practice heretofore had been, in cases of this kind, for the king to grant special licenses on particular occasions. This unlimited power therefore, before unheard of, was very disagreeable to the whole nation. Accordingly, when the parliament met, which it did soon after, heavy com-

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plaints came from every country to their representatives, setting forth, how much the people thought themselves aggrieved.

The alarm spread through the house, where the affair was taken up with a becoming zeal. "These new powers, it was said, were dangerous encroachments. If the liberties of the people were thus put into the hands of the clergy, the nation became subject to a new kind of despotism. Heresy was an unlimited word, and might bear as wide a construction as a bishop might chuse to give it: nor could it be doubted, but it would often be made to signify whatever the pride, or avarice of the clergy might think expedient."

This language was carried in a petition from the commons to the king. The king, as was usual, being in want of money, and afraid at this time of disobliging the commons, revoked the license through the hope of a subsidy from the laity, which he had just before granted through the hope of an aid from the clergy. Such were the weak politics of Richard; and thus was the archbishop's zeal baffled a second time.

In one point however the primate succeeded better. He obtained letters from the king, directed to the vice chancellor and proctors of the university of Oxford, by which they were required to make diligent search in their colleges and halls for all who maintained heretical opinions; particularly those condemned by the archbishop of Canterbury

and for all, who had in their possession the books of JOHN WICLIFF. Such delinquents were ordered to be expelled the university; and the sheriff and mayor of Oxford were commanded to assist the academical magistrates in the execution of this order. The archbishop also himself wrote to the vice chancellor, injoining him to publish in St. Mary's church the king's letter, and also those articles of WICLIFF's doctrine, which had been condemned. The vice chancellor modestly answered, that party at this time ran so high in Oxford, where the seculars, who generally favoured WICLIFF, bore a principal sway, that such a publication would not only be very dangerous to himself, but would greatly endanger, also the peace of the university.

In answer to this, the violent primate called him before the council, where he was vexed and questioned with all the inhumanity of insolent authority. This brought him to a compliance; and every thing was published, and in what manner, the archbishop required.

The vice chancellor's fears however were well grounded. The secular clergy were so exceedingly incensed against the religious, that the university became a scene of the utmost tumult: all study was at an end: and to such an height were the animosities of the two parties carried, that they distinguished themselves by badges, and were

scarce controuled from breaking out into the most violent effects of rage.

Whether WICLIFF was ever brought to any public question in consequence of these proceedings, we meet with no account. It is most probable he was advised by his friends to retire from the storm. It is certain however, that at this time he quitted the professor's chair, and took his final leave of the university of Oxford; which till now he seems to have visited generally once every year. Thus the unwearied persecution of the archbishops prevailed; and that prelate had the satisfaction of seeing the man whom he hated, and whom, for so many years he had in vain pursued, retreating at length before his power into an obscure part of the kingdom.—The seeds however were scattered, though the root was drawn. WICLIFF'S opinions began now to be propagated so universally over the nation, that as a writer of those times tells us, if you met two persons upon the road, you might be sure that one of them was a lollard.

While these things were doing in England the dissention between the two popes continued. Thus far they had fought with spiritual weapons only, bulls, anathemas, and excommunications; and thus far their contention had excited only contempt. But Urban perceiving how little the thunders of the church availed, had recourse to more substantial arms. With this view he published a bull, in which he called upon all, who had any regard for

religion, to exert themselves at this time in its cause; and take up arms against Clement, and his adherents, in defence of the holy see. The times, he said, required violent measures; and for the encouragement of the faithful he promised the same pardons and indulgences, which had been always granted to those, who lost their lives in the holy wars. This bull met with great encouragement in England, especially as the pope chose an ecclesiastic of that nation for his general, Henry Spencer, bishop of Norwich; "a young and stout prelate, says Fox, fitter for the camping cure, than for the peaceable church of Christ." This officer having obtained a parliamentary assistance, and made his levies, set out with great eagerness upon his expedition.

A war in which the name of religion was so vilely prostituted, roused WICLIFF'S indignation, even in the decline of years. He took up his pen once more, and wrote against it with great acrimony. He expostulates with the pope in a very free manner, and asks him boldly, "how he durst make the token of Christ on the cross (which is a token of peace, mercy, and charity) a banner to lead on to slay christian men, for the love of two false priests; and to oppress christendom worse than Christ and his apostles were oppressed by the Jews? When, says he, will the proud priest of Rome grant indulgences to mankind to live in peace and charity, as he now does to fight and slay one another?"

This severe piece drew upon him the resentment of Urban, and was likely to have involved him in greater troubles than he had yet experienced: but God himself delivered his faithful servant. He was struck with a palsy, soon after the publication of this treatise; and though he lived some time, yet he lived in such a way, that his enemies considered him as a person below their resentment. To the last he attended divine worship; and received the fatal stroke of his disorder in his church at Lutterworth, in the year 1384.

The papists of those times gloried much in the circumstances of his death. "It was reported, one of them tells us, that he had prepared accusations and blasphemies, which he intended on the day he was taken ill, to have uttered in his pulpit, against Thomas A. Becket, the saint and martyr of the day; but by the judgment of God he was suddenly struck, and the palsy seized all his limbs; and that mouth which was to have spoken huge things against God, and his saints, and holy church was miserably drawn aside, and afforded a frightful spectacle to the beholders: His tongue was speechless, and his head shook, shewing plainly that the curse of God was upon him."

Thus did his enemies, in the true spirit of superstition, turn the most common symptoms of a common malady into a divine judgment; and discover, by calling in such feeble aids, how much in earnest their cause wanted a support.

Such was the life of JOHN WICLIFF: whom we hesitate not to admire as one of the greatest ornaments of his country; and as one of those prodigies, whom providence raises up, and directs as its instruments to enlighten mankind. His amazing penetration; his rational manner of thinking; and the noble freedom of his spirit, are equally the objects of our admiration. WICLIFF was in religion, what Bacon was afterwards in science; the great detector of those arts and glosses, which the barbarism of ages had drawn together to obscure the mind of man.

To this intuitive genius Christendom was unquestionably more obliged than to any name in the list of reformers. He explored the regions of darkness, and let in not a feeble and glimmering ray; but such an effulgence of light, as was never afterwards obscured. He not only loosened prejudices; but advanced such clear incontestible truths, as, having once obtained footing, still kept their ground, and even in an age of reformation wanted little amendment. How nearly his sentiments, almost on every topic agreed with those of the reformers of the succeeding century, hath been made the subject of set enquiries, and will easily appear from a general view of his opinions.

As the opinions of WICLIFF make a very material part of his life, it may be proper to give a fuller account of them, in a separate view, than could well be introduced in the body of the work.

The following therefore, which are all either collected from his own words, or by a fair deduction from them, are the principal opinions which this reformer held.

With regard to the church, he was not fond of applying the words *church* and *churchmen*, merely to the clergy. As these were often men of bad lives, he thought such application a vile prostitution of those sacred names. Besides, it had bad influence, he thought, upon the laity; seeming to exclude them from the pale of Christ's church, and to give them a dispensation for licentious practice. If they were not of Christ's church, they were not under Christ's laws. He would never therefore have any idea fixed to the word *church*, but that of the whole body of Christians. In some of his writings he makes a distinction between the true church of Christ, and the nominal. By the true church he means such persons only as God shall please to save. Christ's nominal church he calls a net, yet undrawn to land, full of every kind, which must afterwards be picked and separated.

He was a warm assertor of the king's supremacy; to prove which he reasoned thus. Under the old law, we read that Solomon deposed one high priest, and ordained another, by his own proper authority without the concurrence of any ecclesiastical synod: and in the new testament, though we meet with no express command on the point of the king's supremacy; yet in general we are told, that magis-



trates are ordained of God to punish evil doers; and that without any limitation. If then they are ordained to punish evil doers without any restriction, certainly they are in the highest degree bound to punish those who do the most evil: and who will contend, that the wicked priest is not a worse citizen, than the wicked layman? Christ, say he, and his apostles were obedient to the temporal powers than existing: and not to mention the many precepts of the gospel writers on this subject, which seem to be generally directed to all Christians; we see in one place our Saviour himself paying tribute to the emperor; and in another, answering before Pilate without claiming an exemption. Against those who maintained the pope's supremacy to be an article of faith he was very warm. The saving faith of a Christian, says he consists in believing that Christ is the Messiah: but the Roman church has multiplied articles of faith without number. It is not enough now to believe in Christ; we must believe in the pope of Rome. The holy apostles never ascribed to themselves any such honour: how then can a sinful wretch require it, who knows not whether he shall be damned or saved? If the pope, says he, should happen to be a wicked man, we profess it is an article of our belief, that a devil of hell is head of the church—that he is the most holy father, infallible, and without sin, who poisons the principles of the church, and corrupts its practice, who contri-

butes what he is able to banish out of it, faith, meekness, patience, charity, humility, and every other virtue of a christian.

The authority likewise claimed by the church **WICLIFF** strenuously opposed. It was a scandal, he would say, to the christian church, that any of its members should set up their own authority against that of their Saviour. The great argument of that day (which was indeed a subtile one) for the authority of the church, was this. Many persons, besides Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, wrote gospels; but the church rejected them all, excepting these four: and this it did by its own proper authority. It might by the same authority have rejected those four gospels, and have received others. It follows therefore, that the authority of the church is above that of any gospel. To this **WICLIFF** replied, that the evidence for the received gospels was so strong, and that for the rejected ones so weak, that the church could not have done otherwise than it did, without doing violence to reason. But the best argument, he said, if it were proper to avow it, for supporting the authority of the church, was the necessity of it to support the tyranny of the pope. This was what made it worth defending at the expense of truth. In another place, speaking on the same subject, he says, that the pope would not submit his actions to the same criterion, by which Christ was contented to have his actions tried. If I do not, says Christ, the works of my

father which is in heaven, believe me not. But the pope's authority it seems, must be acknowledged, though he manifestly does the works of the devil. Thus, says he, christians are in greater thralldom than the Jews under the old law; and that liberty, by which Christ hath made us free, is by the wickedness of designing men, changed into the most absolute spiritual bondage. The days, says he, I hope, will come, when men will be wise enough to shake from their necks the dominion of human ordinances; and disdain submission to any ecclesiastical injunctions, but such as are plainly authorized by the word of God.

WICLIFF acknowledged seven sacraments; but is very inaccurate in his definition of a sacrament; which he calls, *A token that may be seen of a thing that may not be seen.* This inaccuracy however, is not peculiar to WICLIFF. We meet with it universally amongst the old writers in divinity, both before and after his time; whose idea of a sacrament seems to have been extremely vague: from WICLIFF's logical exactness we might have expected a more accurate definition.

But though he thus acknowledges seven sacraments, he expressly says, he does not esteem them all necessary to salvation; and inveighs warmly against the many idle ceremonies used by the church of Rome in the administration of them all; ceremonies, he says, which have no use in themselves, nor any foundation in scripture. When

ceremonies are few and expressive, he thinks, they may be of use; and enumerates, among others, kneeling, and beating the breast in prayer.

With regard to baptism, he thought it necessary to salvation. This he grounded on the expression, *Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;* which he understood of material water. But he opposed the superstition of three immersions. In case of necessity, he thought, any one present might baptise. The priest, he said, in baptism (as indeed in all the other sacraments) administered only the token, or sign; but God, who is the priest, and bishop of our souls, administered the spiritual grace. This gave occasion to his enemies to represent him (which they did with great falshood) as denying any use of material water. When he speaks of water, say they, he means only figuratively the water, which flowed from the side of Christ. With regard to the question, whether unbaptized infants could be saved, he waves it, adding, that he thinks it probable, Christ may spiritually baptize such infants, and consequently save them. This opinion too might afford some foundation to the slander above mentioned; though he guards against it by saying, that we must not neglect baptism by water, on a supposition, that we are baptised by the spirit.

Of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we have already seen his opinion. But though it

appears from the account given of his creed in this point, that he thought bread and wine only signs of Christ's body; yet in other parts of his writings we find him speaking of them in a much higher strain. The truth seems to be, that he was late in settling his notions of the Lord's supper: whence it is, that in different parts of his writings he contradicts himself. This appears to be the foundation of Melancthon's complaint. "I have looked, says he, into WICLIFF; and find him very confused in this controversy of the Lord's supper."

With regard to confirmation, he thought the oil, and the veil, made use of by the bishop had no foundation in scripture, and were better omitted; and that the other ceremonies, together with all the parade and pomp, which accompany this sacrament, were still worse, tending only to fix the minds of the people upon trifles, and to impress on them a superstitious veneration for the clergy. He could see no reason, why the priest might not confirm, as well as baptize; baptism, he said, must be acknowledged to be the sacrament of greater dignity, inasmuch as it is of authentic gospel institution.

Speaking of matrimony, he inveighs warmly against granting divorces on slight occasions, as was customary in the church of Rome; and says, that a divorce can be justified on no cause, but that of adultery.

In extreme unction he sees nothing unscriptural:

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at least I meet with nothing of objection to it, in any part of his writings which I have seen. Only indeed, he blames the exorbitant fees, which the avarice of the priests, of those times exacted for the performance of it.

Speaking likewise of orders, he inveighs against the same avarice; and jocularly says, a man might have a barber to attend him a whole year for what he pays to have his crown shaven once.

With regard to confession, his opinion was, that if a man be really contrite, external confession is by no means of absolute necessity: yet as it may bring on repentance, he would not reject it, if a proper choice be made of a confessor. But as confession was practised in the church of Rome, he thought it a vile and scandalous method of getting into the secrets of families, and tended only to advance the power of the church.

Penance, he says, hath no sort of merit in God's sight, unless followed by a reformed life.

Of absolution, as practised in the church of Rome, he was a warm opposer. It was the height of blasphemy, he said, to ascribe to man the power of God, *Who can forgive sins, but God alone?* Instead of acting as God's ministers, the Romish clergy, he said, took upon them, in their own names, to forgive sins. Nay in the plentitude of their power they will do, says he, what God himself (if there is truth in scripture) would not do—pardon unrepented sin. Express passages of scrip-

ture in favour of the contrite heart are nothing: God's absolution is of no effect, unless confirmed by theirs. Presumptuous guides, says he, they ought to urge the necessity of repentance, instead of absolution; and preach a future state of rewards and punishments, the deformity of sin, and the mercy of God, instead of deceiving mankind by their ridiculous impostures.

Against indulgences, he was very severe, a mere trick, he called them, to rob men of their money. The pope, says he, has the surplus of the merits of pious saints to dispose of. A profitable doctrine this; but were found? certainly not in scripture. For my own part, says he, I meet not, in the whole new testament with one saint who had more merit than was necessary for his own salvation. And if Christ, who taught all that was needful and profitable, taught not this doctrine, it may be fairly presumed, that this doctrine is neither needful nor profitable. All men, as far as the merits of another can avail, are partakers of the merits of Christ: and no man can expect more. How absurd then is it to see men squander away their money upon indulgences, instead of laying it out properly in charitable uses: as if it were a more acceptable service to God, to add superfluous wealth to a monastery, than to distribute alms among necessitous christians. Besides, in how uncharitable a light doth the pope appear if there be one soul left in purgatory. A turn of his pen might deliver the sinner, and if he

deny that, it can only be through avarice, and want of a good heart. If he have not power indeed to deliver all men, he is a deceiver; for he declares, that he has such power. But his pardons, it seems, are only to be had for ready money, and granted too, not for the good of mankind, but to promote dissention and war. Were this boasted power of pardoning an heavenly gift, like God's other favours, it would certainly be dispensed in an impartial manner. Wealth could not command it: and the pope, like the apostles, would cry out, "Thy money perish with thee." Whether the pope's pardons be dispensed in this impartial manner, let the papist say. They will tell you perhaps, he adds, that the pardons themselves are a free gift; but that the bull occasions the expense. Such prevarication puts one in mind of the host, who professed to treat his guest with a goose for nothing; but charged them without conscience for the sauce. Thus by the vile trade of indulgences are men deceived. Any one who can pay for a pardon, may laugh at sin. He has found an easy way to heaven; much easier than by contrition, repentance, and works of charity. May we not then, says he, safely conclude, that indulgences were an invention of anti-christ to magnify the sacerdotal power; and to bring in wealth the church, at the expense of religion, and the souls of men?

With regard to purgatory, he believed in such a



state; and, as it appears from some parts of his works, was once of opinion that pious prayers might be serviceable to souls imprisoned there; but in his later writings, he wholly renounces this opinion, and calls it a pernicious error; especially to pray for one person more than other, which he looks upon as a most unchristian practice; though he still seems to think we may pray in general for all those, whom God in his mercy intends for happiness. In short, upon this subject he does not seem to have absolutely fixed his opinion. He saw something extremely plausible in the Romish doctrine of purgatory; he likewise saw the absurdity of supposing, that God intrusted any man with a power to release sinners from such a state; but whether the souls of the dead might be profited by the prayers of the living, he seems to have been in doubt.

He was a great enemy to the endowments of chauntry priests. They led the people, he thought, to put their trust in such endowments, rather than in a good life: whereas no prayers, even of the holiest saints, he thought, could benefit a bad man. *That man, saith he excellently, who liveth best, prayeth best.* A simple pater-noster from a religious ploughman, is of more value in the sight of God, than a thousand masses from a wicked prelate.

He had a great dislike to chaunting in divine worship, which was then commonly used in cathedrals and religious houses; and was known by the

name of the new song. This sort of worship, he says, was originally introduced to impose on the understanding, by substituting sound in the room of sense ; and so to be one mean of keeping the people in ignorance. He owns it is a merry way of serving God ; and therefore, he supposes, it meets with so much encouragement. But he would have men be of St. Austin's opinion, who says, that as often as sound drew his attention from sense, so often he worshipped God improperly. If, says he, the temple music of the old law be alledged as a sufficient warrant for cathedral worship, it may easily be answered, that Christ, who was the best commentator upon the old law, gives us no instruction on this head ; but tells his disciples, that he requires no recommendation of prayer, but the devotion of the heart. Others again will perhaps say, that the angels praise God in heaven : to which, it may as easily be answered, that we know nothing of heavenly music. Only this we know, that the angels are in a triumphant state, and we in a militant one ; in a state of trial and affliction, where music diverts us from better things. It is grievous, says he, to see what sums of money are yearly expended upon these singing priests, and how little upon the education of children. Besides, he adds, how absurd is it to hear in a large congregation, only two or three chaunting a piece of devotion ; while all the rest, not only cannot join with them ; but even do not understand what they say.

He often inveighs against prayers to saints, and the use of any mediator but Christ. He even goes so far as to wish that all festivals in the church were abolished, except christmas day, and easter. For the devotion of the people, says he, being undivided, would be more fervent upon those solemn days. As to modern canonizations, he says, they owe their birth to nothing but excessive bigotry on one side, or excessive avarice on the other.

With regard to images he thought, that if they were exact representations of the truth, they might be very serviceable to give the vulgar strong impressions of the poverty, and sufferings of Christ; his apostles, and martyrs. But this use, he says, could not be expected from them in the Roman church. Those gay representations, decked in costly apparel, instead of giving us the idea of suffering saints, exhibit to us persons of pomp and expense; and should be considered as heretical books, full of false doctrines; and as such should be condemned to the fire. Besides, says he, how shocking is it to see those dumb idols covered with gold and silver; while Christ's poor members are starving in the streets. But of all the bad effects which attend images, the worst, he says, is their leading the people into idolatry. If Hezechiah broke in pieces the brazen serpent, which God commanded to be made, because it attracted the veneration of the people; how much more ought a

christian king to break in pieces those images, which God is so far from having commanded to be made, that we have in scripture the most express commands against making them.

He greatly disliked the ceremonies of consecration so frequent in the church of Rome. These consecrations, says he, and benedictions, in which the Roman church is so profuse upon water, oil, salt, wax, vestments, walls, pilgrims staves, and a variety of other things, have more the appearance of necromancy, than of true religion. They are absurd, because these things are just the same after consecration as before: and they are idolatrous, because they tend to make people pay a divine honour to them.

No man could be more strenuous than WICKLIFF against resting upon the externals of religion; or said more to convince men of the folly of expecting, that building and ornamenting churches, frequenting public worship, or any outward expression of religion, would satisfy God without the heart, or make any atonement for a bad life. Holy water, says he, and the blessing of a bishop are mere impositions, tending only to blind the people, and make them rest in those externals, rather than in God's mercy, and their own repentance.

He asserted the necessity of being assisted by divine grace. Without this, he saw not how a human being could make himself acceptable to God.

With regard to pilgrimages, he says, that although

visiting the shrines of saints might be suffered with a view to impress us strongly with a sense of their virtues; yet pilgrimages, as commonly used, are of most pernicious consequence. If idol worship be bad, pilgrimages are equally so, leading the people into idolatry, and a misapplication of their charity.

Against sanctuaries he is still warmer. That the grossest crimes should be sheltered, under the safeguard of religion, was, in his opinion, such a perversion of all the principles of reason and christianity, as could not be sufficiently exclaimed against.

He was a great advocate for the marriage of the clergy, and thought the celibacy prescribed by the Roman church one of the principal causes of its corruption.

He denied the power of excommunication to the church; and styles such ecclesiastical censures, punishments inflicted by antichrist's jurisdiction. No man, says he, can be excommunicated, unless he first excommunicated himself.

Peter-pence, he calls an iniquitous imposition, without any foundation in scripture.

These are the principal opinions of WICLIFF with regard to church doctrines. The following are his opinions on several miscellaneous subjects,

He was a great enemy to the superfluous wealth of the clergy. He allowed the labourer to live by his labour; but he asserted that he had a right to his hire from nothing else. Tythes, he said, were

only a sort of alms, no where of gospel institution, which the people might either give or withdraw, as they found their pastor deserved. This opinion drew upon him the resentment both of papists and protestants. Melancthon, in particular, is very warm with him on this head; says he raved, and was plainly mad. But it is no wonder, if WICLIFF'S dislike to the prevailing luxury of the clergy, which was then so exorbitant, led him into an extreme. His constant advice to his brethren was, to exact their tythes by the holiness of their lives. If thou be a priest, says he, contend with others, not in pomp, but in piety. Ill befits it a man, who lives on the labours of the poor, to squander away the dear bought fruits of their industry upon his own extravagancies.

Church endowments, he thought, were the root of all the corruption among the clergy. He often lamented the luxury they occasioned; and used to wish the church was again reduced to its primitive poverty and innocence.

With still greater warmth he expressed himself against the secular employments of the clergy. This he seemed to think an unpardonable desertion of their profession.

In some parts of his writings, he appears to have held, that strange doctrine, *That dominion is founded on grace*. His argument, if I understand it all, seems to be, that as all things belong to God, and as good men alone are the children of God,

they are of course the only true inheritors. But in other parts of his writings, it appears, as if he only spoke figuratively on this subject, and of ideal perfection. That he did not hold the doctrine in its literal sense, seems plain from many passages of his works. In his Trialogue particularly, he says, “*Duplici titulo stat hominem habere temporalia, scilicet titulo originalis justitiæ, & titulo mundanæ justitiæ titulo autem originales justitia habuit Christus omnia bona mundi. Illo titulo, vel titulo gratiæ, justorum sunt omnia: sed longa billo titulo civilis possessio.*” Upon the whole, however, what he says on this subject may be called whimsical.

He held fasting to be enjoined only for the sake of virtuous habits; and calls it therefore highly pharisaical to place a greater value upon bodily abstinence from food, than spiritual abstinence from sin.

It was a conjecture of his, that this world was created to supply the loss in heaven occasioned by the fallen angels; and that when that loss should be supplied, the end of things would succeed.

Upon a text in the revelations he founded an opinion, that the devil was let loose about a thousand years after Christ; from which period he dates the rise of the principal corruptions of the church.

With regard to oaths, he considered it as plain idolatry to swear by any creature. In this sense he understood the prohibition of our Saviour against swearing by heaven and earth. It is not found,

saith, he, in the old law, that God at any time granted his permission to swear by any creature.

He seems to have thought it wrong, upon the principles of the gospel, to take away the life of man upon any occasion. The whole trade of war he thought utterly unlawful: nor does he seem to think the execution of a criminal a more allowed practice.

In some parts of his writings he speaks so strongly of fate, that he appears an absolute predestinarian. In other parts he expresses himself in so cautious a manner, that we are apt to think he had no fixed principles on this subject.

All arts, which administered to the luxuries of life, he thought were prohibited by the gospel. The scriptures, says he, tells us, that having food and raiment, we should be therewith content.

Heresy, according to WICLIFF, consisted in a bad life, as well as in false opinions. No good man, he thought, could be an heretic.

His opinion, on this last point, agrees with that of a prelate of latter times, who generally speaks the language of true christian freedom and charity.

I shall quote some passages at large from this celebrated writer, not only as they tend to shew the justness of WICLIFF'S own manner of thinking; but as they may serve as a conclusion to this review of his opinions, in being a proper answer to all his adversaries.

“No heresies, (says bishop Taylor, in his liber-



ty of prophesying) are noted in scripture; but such as are errors practical. In all the animadversions against errors in the new testament, no pious person was condemned. Something was amiss in genere morum. Heresy is not an error of the understanding, but an error of the will. And indeed, if we remember, that St. Paul reckons heresy among the works of the flesh, and ranks it with all manner of practical impieties, we shall easily perceive, that if a man mingles not a vice with his opinions, if he be innocent in his life, though deceived in his doctrine, his error is his misery, not his crime; he may be an object of pity, but by no means a person consigned to ruin. There are as many innocent causes of error, as there are weaknesses, and unavoidable prejudices. In questions practical, the doctrine itself, and the person too, may be reprov'd; but in other things, which end in notion, where neither the doctrine is malicious, nor the person apparently criminal, he is to be left to the judgment of God. Opinions and persons are to be judged like other things. It must be a crime and it must be open, of which any cognizance can be taken. Let me farther observe that since there are such great differences of apprehension concerning the consequences of an action, no man is to be charged with the odious consequences of his opinion. Indeed his doctrine may be, but the man is not, if he understand not such things to be consequent to his doctrine. For if he did, and then avows them,

they are his direct opinions; and "he stands as chargeable with them, as with his first proposition. No error then, nor its consequent, is to be charged as criminal upon a pious person, since no simple error is sin, nor does condemn us before the throne of God,"\*

### *Of the Writings of WICLIFF.*

Having thus taken a view of WICLIFF'S opinions, let us consider him next as a writer.

He is amazingly voluminous; yet he seems not to have engaged in any very large work: his pieces in general may properly be called tracts. Of these many were written in Latin, and many in English; some on school questions; others on subjects of more general knowledge; but the greatest part on divinity. It may be some amusement to the reader to see what subjects he hath chosen, I shall

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\* A very ingenious historian, hath charged *Wicliff* with enthusiasm. "He denied the doctrine, (says he,) of the real presence—the supremacy of the church of Rome—the merit of monastic vows. He maintained; that the scripture was the sole rule of faith; that the church was dependant on the state, and ought to be reformed by it; that the clergy ought to possess no estates; that the begging friars were a general nuisance, and ought not to be supported; that the numerous ceremonies of the church were hurtful to true piety. He asserted, that oaths were unlawful; that dominion was founded in grace; that every thing was subject to fate and destiny; and that all men were predestinated either to eternal salvation or reprobation."

Having given this abstract of his opinions, which is in general very just, the historian proceeds to inform us, that "from the whole of his doctrines *Wicliff* appears to have been strongly tinctured with enthusiasm."

give a list therefore of the more remarkable of them, from the various collections which have been made.

Trialogorum lib. 4.

De religione perfectorum.

De ecclesia & membris.

De diabolo & membris.

De Christo & Antichristo.

De Antichristo & membris.

Sermones in epistolas.

De veritate scripturæ.

De statu innocentie.

De dotatione ecclesie.

De stipendiis ministrorum.

De episcoporum erroribus.

De curatorum erroribus.

De perfectione evangelicâ

De officio pastorali.

De simonia sacerdotum.

Super pœnitentiis injungendis.

Mr. Hume has certainly expressed himself here in a very unguarded manner, unless he meant to brand under the name of enthusiasm, the whole system of the reformation. He hath given us twelve of the opinions of *Wicliff*, of which only the seventh, and two last, seem to be carried farther, than was done by the more sober part of the reformers of the sixteenth century; and indeed, Mr. Hume has been ingenuous enough to own, that, "the doctrines of *Wicliff*, being derived from his search into the scriptures, and into ecclesiastical antiquity, were nearly the same with those propagated by the reformers in the sixteenth century; some of them only carried farther." And yet, notwithstanding this, "Upon the whole, they were *strongly* tinged with enthusiasm."

This writer has been charged with resolving all revealed religion into enthusiasm, or superstition. And indeed his treatment of *Wicliff* seems in some degree to justify the charge; "He appears, (says the historian,) to have been *strongly* tinged with enthusiasm, and to have been thereby

De seductione simplicium.

Dæmonum astus in subvertenda religione.

De pontificum Romanorum schismate.

De ultîma ætate ecclesiæ.

Of temptation.

The chartre of hevenc.

Of ghostly battel.

Of ghostly and fleshy love.

The confession of St. Brandoun.

Active life, and contemplative life.

Virtuous patience.

Of pride.

Observationes piæ in X præcepta.

De impedimentis orationis.

De cardinalibus virtutibus.

De actibus animæ.

Expositio orationis dominicæ.

De 7 sacramentis.

“the better qualified to oppose a church, whose distinguishing character was *superstition*.” It was his enthusiasm, it seems, and not his rational arguments, (for our historian appears to have thrown reason out of both sides of the question) that made him a formidable adversary to the church of Rome.

If Mr. Hume had not been under the influence of prejudice, it is impossible but a person of his liberal cast of mind, must have admired the noble freedom, and rational manner, with which this great reformer opposed the slavish principles of his times. Had *Wicliff* lived in the days of philosophy, this writer had been among his first admirers; but a religionist is a formal character; and what in a philosopher is a manly exercise of reason, becomes in a modern reformer, irrational zeal, and a ridiculous pretence to inspiration.

If I have mistaken Mr. Hume's meaning, I heartily beg his pardon. The reader, judging for himself, will lay no farther stress on what I have said, than fair quotations will authorize against Mr. Hume; and fair representations of facts in favour of *Wicliff*.

- De natura fidei.**  
**De diversis gradibus charitatis.**  
**De defectione a Christo.**  
**De veritate & mendacio.**  
**De sacerdotio Levitico.**  
**De sacerdotio Christi.**  
**De dotatione Cæsareâ.**  
**De versutiis pseudocleri.**  
**De immortalitate animæ.**  
**De paupertate Christi.**  
**De physica naturali.**  
**De essentia accidentium.**  
**De necessitate futurorum.**  
**De temporis quidditate.**  
**De temporis ampliacione.**  
**De operibus corporalibus.**  
**De operibus spiritualibus.**  
**De fide & perfidia.**  
**De sermone domini in monte.**  
**Abstractiones logicales.**  
**A short rule of life.**  
**The great sentence of the curse expounded.**  
**Of good priests.**  
**De contrarietate duorum dominorum.**  
**Wicliff's wicket.**  
**De ministrorum conjugio.**  
**De religiosis privatis.**  
**Conciones de morte.**  
**De vita sacerdotum.**  
**De ablatis restituendis.**

- De arte sophistica.**  
**De fonte errorum.**  
**De incarnatione verbi.**  
**Super impositis articulis.**  
**De humanitate Christi.**  
**Contra concilium terræ-motus.**  
**De solutione Satanæ.**  
**De spiritu quolibet.**  
**De Cristianorum baptismo.**  
**De clavium protestate.**  
**De blasphemia.**  
**De paupertate Christi.**  
**De raritate & densitate.**  
**De materia and forma.**  
**De anima.**  
**Octo beatitudines.**  
**De trinitate.**  
**Commentarii in psalterium.**  
**De abominatione desolationis.**  
**De civili dominio.**  
**De ecclesiæ dominio.**  
**De divino dominio.**  
**De origine sectarum.**  
**De perfidia sectarum.**  
**Speculum de antichristo.**  
**De virtute orandi.**  
**De remissione fraternæ.**  
**De censuris ecclesiæ.**  
**De charitate fraternæ.**  
**De purgatorio piorum.**  
**De Pharisæa & Publicanæ.**

I might have greatly enlarged this catalogue of the works of WICLIFF, but the titles I have inserted, will be sufficient to give the reader an idea in general of the subjects on which he wrote. To give him an idea of his manner of writing, I have thought proper to insert the following short treatise ; in which the reader will have a specimen of that mastery style, that clearness, conciseness, and elegance, (considering the times) with which he treated every subject. If the reader compare it with the original, he will find, that a few sentences have been left out, and a few words altered, which were unintelligible ; but nothing added.

# WHY MANY PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES.

*A TREATISE OF*

## JOHN WICLIFF.

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SOME causes why poor priests receive not benefices. The first for dread of symony. The second for dread of mispending poor mens' goods. The third for dread of letting of better occupation that is more light or easy, more certain and more profitable.

I. For first, If men should come to benefices by gift of prelates, there is dread of symony. For commonly they taken the first fruits, or other pensions, or holden curates, in their courts or chapels, in offices far fro priests life, taught and ensampled of Christ and his apostles. So that commonly such benefices comen not freely as Christ commandeth, but rather for worldly winning, or flattering of mighty men, and not for kunning of God's law, and true preaching of the gospel; and ensample of holy life; and therefore commonly these prelates, and receivers ben fouled with symony, that is cursed heresie, as God's law and man's law techen. And now whoever can run to Rome, and bear gold out of the lond, and strive and plead, and curse for tithes,



and other temporal profits, that ben cleped with antichrist's clerks rights of holy church, shall have great benefices of cure of many thousand souls, tho he be unable, and of cursed life, and wicked ensample of pride, of covetisse, glotony, leachery, and other great sins. But if there be any simple man, that desireth to live well, and teche truly God's law, he shall ben holden an hypocrite, a new teacher, an heretic, and not suffered to come to any benefice. But if in any little poor place he liven a poor life, he shall be so pursued, and slandered, that he shall be put out by wiles, cautels, frauds, and worldly violence, and imprisoned or brent. And if lords shullen present clerks to benefices, they wolen have commonly gold in great quantity, and holden these curates in some wordly office, and suffren the wolves of hell to stranglen mens' souls, so that they have their office done for nought, and their chappels holden up for vain glory or hypocrisy; and yet they wolen not present a clerk able of God's law, and of good life, and holy ensample to the people; but a kitchen clerk, or a penny clerk, or one wise in building castles; or other wordly doing; tho he kun not read his sauter; and knoweth not the commandments of God, ne sacraments of holy church. And yet some lords; to colouren their symbony wole not take for themselves, but kerchiess for the lady, or a palfray, or a tun of wine. And when some lords woulden present a good man, then some ladies ben means to

have a dancer presented, or a tripper on tapits, or hunter, or a hawker, or a wild player of summer gambels. And thus it seemeth, that both prelates, and lords commonly maken some cursed antichrist, or a quick fiend to be master of Christ's people for to leaden them to hell to Sathanas their master; and suffer not Christ's disciples to teche Christ's gospel to his children for to save their souls.

But in this presenting of evil curates, and holding of curates in wordly office, letting them fro their ghostly cure, ben three degrees of traytery agenst God and his people. The first is in prelates and lords, that thus holden curates in their worldly office; for they have their high states in the church, and lordships, for to purvey true curates to the people, and to meyntene them in God's law, and punish them, if they failen in their ghostly cure, and by this they holden their lordships of God. Then if they maken evil curates, and holden them in their worldly office, and letten them to lead God's people the rightful way to heaven, but helpen them, and constreynen them to lead the people to hell-ward, by withdrawing of God's word, and by evil ensample geving they ben weiward traytors to God and his people, and vicars of Sathanas.

2. Yet more traytery is in false curates, that geven mede or hire to comen into such worldly offices, and to get lordship and maintenance agenst ordinances, and couchen in lord's courts for to get mo-

fatte benefices, and purposen not spedly to do their ghostly office. Woe is to the lords that been led with such cursed heretics, antichrists, traytors of God and his people; and traytors to lords themselves; who ben so blinded, that they perceiven not that such traytors, that openly been false to God, wolen much more been false to them. 3. But the most traytery is in false confessors, that shulden by their office warn prelates, and lords of this great peril, and clerks also that they holden none such curates in their wordly offices. For they don not this, lest they lesen lordship, and friendship, and gifts, and welfare of their stinking belly; and so they sellen christen souls to Sathanas, and maken prelates and lords, and curates to live in sin and traytery agenst God and his people, and deceiven them in their souls health, and meyn-tenen them in cursed traytery of God and his people; and thus almost all the world goeth to hell for this cursed symony of false confessors. For commonly prelates, lords, and curates ben enveny-med with this heresy of symony, and never done very repentence, and satisfaction therefore. For when they have a fat benefice geten by symony, they forsaken it not as they ben bounden by law, but wittingly usen forth that symony, and liven in riot, covetisse, and pride, and don not their office neither in good ensample, ne in true teching. And thus antichrist's clerks, enemies of Christ, and his people, by money and flattering, and fleshy love,

gedring to them leading of the people, forbare true<sup>1</sup> priests to teche God's law, and therefore the blind leadeth the blind, and both parts runnen into sin, and full many to hell: and it is huge wonder that God of his righteousness destroyeth not the houses of prelates, and lords, and curates, as Sodom and Gomor for heresie, extortions, and other cursedness. And for dread of this sin, and many mo, some poor wretches receive no benefices in this world.

II. Yet tho poor priests mighten freely getten presentation of lords to have benefices with cure of souls, they dreaden of mispending poor mens' goods. For priests owen to hold themselves paid with food, and cloathing, as St. Paul techeth; and if they have more it is poor mens' goods, as their own law, and God's law seyn, and they ben keepers thereof, and procurators of poor men. But for institution and induction he shall give much of this good, that is poor mens', to bishops' officers, archdeacons, and officials, that ben too rich. And when bishops and their officers comen, and feynen to visit, tho they nourishen men in open sin for annual rent, and don not their office, but sellen souls to Sathanas for money, wretched curates ben neded to feasten them richly, and give procuracy and synage, yea against God's law, and man's, and reason and their own conscience, and yet they shullen not be suffered to teche truly God's law to their own subjects, and warn them of false prophets, who deceiven them both in belief and tech-

ing: for then they musten crie to the people the great sins of prelates; but they demen that such sad reprovng of sin is envy, slandering of prelates, and destroying of holy church. Also many times their patrons willen look to be feasted of such curates, else maken them lese that little thing, that they and poor men shullen live by. So that they shullen not spend their tithes and offerings after good conscience, and God's laws, but waste them on rich and idle men. Also eche good day commonly these small curates shullen have leters fro their ordinaries to summon, and to curse poor men for nought, but for covetisse of antichrists clerks; and if they not summonen and cursen them, tho they know no cause why, they shullen been hurted, and summoned fro day to day, fro far place to farther, or cursed, or lese their benefits or profits. For else, as prelates feinen, they by their rebeldy shoulde soon destroy prelates jurisdiction, power, and winning. Also, when poor priests, first holy of life, and devout in their prayers, ben beneficed, if they ben not busy about the world to make great feasts to rich persons and vicars, and costly and gayly arrayed, by false doom of the world, they shullen be hated and hayned on as hounds, and ech man redy to peire them in name, and worldly goods. So many cursed deceits hath antichrist brought up by his worldly clerks to make curates to mispende poor mens' goods, and not truly do their office; or else to forsaken all, and let antichrist's clerks, as

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lords of this world, rob the poor people by feyned censures, and teche the fend's lore both by open preaching and ensample of cursed life. Also, if such curates ben stirred to learn God's law, and teach their parishens the gospel, commonly they shullen get no leave of bishops but for gold; and when they shullen most profit in their learning, then shullen they be clepid home at the prelate's will. And if they shullen have any high sacraments, commonly they shulle buy them with poor mens' goods; and so there is full great peril of evil spending of these goods, both upon prelates, rich men of the country, patrons, parsons, and their own kyn, for fame of the world, and for shame, and evil deeming of men. And certes it is great wonder that God suffereth so long this sin unpunished, namely of prelates courts, that ben dens of thieves, and larders of hell; and so of their officers, that ben sotil in malice and covetisse; and of lords, and mighty men, that shulden destroy this wrong and other, and meyntenen truth, and God's servants, and now meyntenen antichrist's falsness and his clerks, for part of the winning. But certes God suffreth such hypocrites and tyrants to have name of prelates for great sins of the people, that eche part lead other to hell by blindness of the fend. And this is a thousand time more vengeance, than if God shud destroy bodily both parts, and all their goods, and earth therewith, as he did by Sodom and Gomor. For the longer that they liven thus

in sin, the greater pains shullen they have in hell, unless they amenden them. And this dread, and many mo, maken some poor priests to receiven none benefices.

III. But yet the poor priests mighten have freely presentation of lords, and been holpen by meyntheing of kings; and help of good commons fro extortions of prelates, and other mispending of these goods, that is full hard in this reigning of antichrist's clerks, yet they dreaden sore that by singular cure ordained of sinful men they shulden be letted fro better occupation, and fro more profit of holy church. And this is the most dread of all; for they have cure and charge at the full of God to help their brethren to heavenward, both by teaching, praying, and example geving. And it seemeth that they shullen most easily fulfil this by general cure of charity, as did Christ and his apostles. And by this they most sikerly save themselves, and help their brethren: and they ben free to flee fro one city to another, when they ben pursued of antichrist's clerks, as biddeth Christ in the gospel. And they may best without challenging of men go and dwell among the people where they shullen most profit, and in covenable time, come and go after stirring of the holy ghost, and not be bounden by sinful mens' jurisdiction fro the better doing. Also they pursuen Christ and his apostles nearer, in taking alms wilfully of the people that they techen, than in taking dymes and offerings by customs

that sinful men ordeynen, and usen now in the time of grace. Also this is more medeful on both sides as they understonden by Christs life, and his apostles: for thus the people giveth them alms more wilfully and devoutly, and they taken it more mekely, and ben more busy to lerne, kepe and teche God's law, and so it is the better for both sides. Also by this manner might and shulde the people geve freely their alms to true priests that truely kepen their order, and taughten the gospel; and withdrawen fro wicked priests, and not to be constreyned to pay their tithes, and offrings to open cursed men to meyntene them in their open cursedness. And thus should symony, covetisse, and idleness of worldly clerks be laid down: and holiness, and true teching, and knowing of God's law be brought in: also thus shulde striving, pleading, and cursing for dymes and offrings, and hate and discord among priests, and lewid men be ended; and unity, peace and charity meyntened. Also these benefices, by this course, that men usen now, bring in worldliness, and needless business about worldly offices, that Christ and his apostles wolden never taken upon them, and yet they weren more mighty, more witty, and more brenning in charity to God, and to the people, both to live the best manner in themselves, and to teche other men. Also covetisse, and worldliness of the people shulden be done away; and Christs poverty, and his apostles, by ensample of poor life of clerks, and trust in God,



and desiring of heavenly bliss, should regne in christen people. Also then shulde priests study holy writt, and be devout in their prayers, and not be caried away with new offices, and mo sacraments than Christ used, and his apostles, that taughten us all truth. Also mochil blasphemy of prelates, and other men of feyned obedience, and needless swearings made to worldly prelates shulden then cessen, and sovereyn obedience to God and his law, and eschewing of needless othes shulde regne among christen men. Also then shulde men eschew commonly all the perils said before in the first chapter, and second, and many thousand mo, and live in clenness; and sikerness of conscience. Also then shulde priests be busy to seke God's worship and saving of mens' souls, and not their own worldly glory and winning of workly dritt. Also then shulden priests live like to angels, as they ben angels of office, whereas they liven now as swine in fleshly lusts, and turnen agen to their former sins for abundance of wordly goods, and idleness in their ghostly office, and overmuch business about this wretched life.

For these dreads and many thousand mo, and for to be mo like to Christ's life and his apostles, and for to profit mo to their own souls and other mens, some poor priests thinken with God to tra-veile about were they shulden most profiten, by evidence that God geveth them, while they have time, and little bodily strength and youth. Neth-

less they damen not curates that done well their office, and dwellen where they shullen most profit, and techen truly and stably God's law agenst false prophets, and cursed fends deceits.

Christ, for his endless mercy, help his priests and common people to beware of antichrist's deceits, and go even the right way to heaven. Amen, Jesu, for thy endless charity.

THE  
**LIFE**  
OF  
**LORD COBHAM.**

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IT is a common observation, that the vulgar are generally the most open to conviction. The great are attached to establishments, in which their interests are concerned: the learned to systems on which their time hath been spent. We need not wonder therefore, if we find few of any considerable eminence among the disciples of Wicliff.

Among his own countrymen, sir John Oldcastle, LORD COBHAM, is the most remarkable. We meet indeed with greater names; as Joan dowager of the black prince, and Ann, queen to Richard II. But these, and some others, were rather his favourers, than professed disciples.

Sir John Oldcastle was born in the reign of Edward the third. He obtained his peerage by marrying the heiress of that LORD COBHAM, who with so much virtue and patriotism opposed the tyranny of Richard the second; with which noblemen he has been sometimes confounded.

With the estate and title of his father in law, he seems also to have inherited his virtue and independent spirit. In the early part of his life we find him warmly distinguishing himself in the cause of religious liberty. The famous statute against provisors, which had been enacted in the late reign, was now become, during the languid government of Richard, a mere dead letter. **THE LORD COBHAM** with great spirit undertook the revival of it; and through his persuasion it was confirmed by parliament, and guarded by severer penalties.

The news of what the English parliament was doing in this business gave a great alarm at Rome; and Boniface the ninth, who was then pope, dispatched a nuncio immediately to check their proceedings. This minister at first cajoled; and afterwards threatened; but the spirit, which had been raised in the parliament, supported itself against both his artifices and his menaces. This is the first instance we meet with of **LORD COBHAM'S** avowed dislike to the church of Rome.

Four years after he made a farther effort. A rebellion having discovered itself in Ireland, the king passed over with an army. He had made one campaign, and was preparing to take the field early in the spring of the year 1395, when the archbishop of Canterbury arriving at his camp, intreated his immediate return into England, to put a stop to the ruin of the church. By the ruin of the church the good primate meant the reformation.

of the clergy; which had been attempted, during the king's absence, by the LORD COBHAM, sir Richard Story, sir Thomas Latimer, and others of the reforming party. These leaders having collected their strength had drawn up a number of articles against the corruptions, which then prevailed among churchmen, and presented them in the form of a remonstrance, to the commons. As they had many friends in the house, and as their principal opponents were then abroad with the king, they thought it more than probable, that something might be done by the parliament, in consequence of their petition. But the zeal of the clergy prevailed; and the king who came instantly from Ireland, put an entire stop to the affair.

The partiality, which the LORD COBHAM thus discovered on all occasions for the reformers, easily pointed him out to the clergy as the head of that party. Nor indeed made he any secret of his opinions. It was publicly known, that he had been at great expense in collecting and transcribing the works of Wicliff, which he had dispersed among the common people without any reserve. It was publicly known also, that he maintained a great number of the disciples of Wicliff, as itinerant preachers in many parts of the country, particularly in the diocesses of Canterbury, Rochester, London, and Hereford. These things drew upon him the resentment of the whole ecclesiastical order; and made him more obnoxious to that body

of men, than any other person at that time in England.

Nine years had now elapsed, since Richard the second had taken the government into his own hands. This entire interval he had consumed in one steady encroachment (the only instance of steadiness he gave) upon the laws of his country. So many indeed, and gross were his indiscretions, that it was commonly said by the people, their king was under some preternatural infatuation. But as old Speed very well remarks (a remark too which might equally have fallen, were that cautious writer in matters of kingship would least have chosen it) "when princes are wilful and slothful, and their favourites flatterers, there needs no other enchantment to infatuate, yea to ruin the greatest monarchs." After repeated strokes upon the expiring liberties of the nation, a conclusive blow was struck. The whole legislative power was intrusted, by the act of a venal parliament, to the king, six peers, and three commoners. An iron sceptre being thus forged, was immediately shaken over the people. It were trifling to mention instances of private oppression: towns and counties were seized at once. "For a while, (says the judicious Rapin, reasoning upon Richard's actions) five or six hundred persons, who compose a parliament, and as many magistrates of towns and counties, may seem to an imprudent prince the body of a nation; but a

time will come, when every single person must be taken into the account."

That time was now come. The nation, exasperated beyond sufferance, cast their eyes upon the duke of Lancaster, who was now in exile, The archbishop of Canterbury, who shared the same fate, undertook to inform him of the designs of the malecontents in England. Henry, who had private, as well as public wrongs to revenge, put himself without delay at the head of the enterprize. His party soon became numerous, and was in general attended by the good wishes of the nation.

LORD COBHAM had always shewn himself as much a friend to the civil, as the religious liberties of his country; and had followed the steps of his father in law in opposing the tyrannical encroachments of Richard; whose resentment he had felt oftener than once. Convinced therefore of the feebleness and wickedness of those hands, by which the sceptre was swayed, he was among the first who attached themselves to the fortunes of Henry, and was received by that prince with those marks of favour, which a person of his consequence might naturally expect.

When Henry the fourth came to the crown, it was imagined by all men, that in his heart he inclined to the opinions of the reformers. But Henry was a prudent prince; and maxims of policy were ever the rules of his conscience. He found, upon examining the state of parties in England, that the

ecclesiastical interest was the most able to support his pretensions; and without farther hesitation attached himself to it. The clergy were high in their demands. Their friendship was not to be purchased but at the price of blood. Lollardy spread apace. The laws in being were unable to check its progress: and the king was given to understand, that his protection would secure their loyalty. In short, they must be made easy by a law to burn heretics.

The king discovered no great reluctance: but the commons, among whom, many thought favourably of Wicliff, were very averse from these sanguinary proceedings. At length however an act passed, empowering the clergy to the extent of their desires: yet it passed not but with the utmost stretch of the king's authority. By this act the civil power was obliged to assist in the execution of ecclesiastical sentences. Mr. Fox indeed tells us, that he cannot find, it ever did pass the commons; but supposes, that as parliamentary affairs were then managed with little regularity, it was huddled in among other acts, and signed by the king without further notice.

That wicked and ambitious men should wade through blood to support either civil or ecclesiastical tyranny, is too common a sight to be matter of surprise. But that any set of men should so far pervert their notions of right and wrong, as calmly to believe, that a few erroneous opinions could



make a man in the highest degree criminal, however excellent his life might be, is a thing altogether amazing. And yet charity obligeth us to believe that many of the popish persecutors of those times were thus persuaded. "The disciples of Wicliff, says Reihner, a popish writer) are men of a serious, modest deportment, avoiding all ostentation in dress, mixing little with the busy world, and complaining of the debauchery of mankind. They maintain themselves wholly by their own labour, and utterly despise wealth: being fully content with bare necessaries. They are chaste, and temperate; are never seen in taverns, or amused by the trifling gaities of life. Yet you find them always employed, either learning, or teaching. They are concise, and devout in their prayers, blaming an unanimated prolixity. They never swear; speak little; and in their public preaching lay the chief stress on charity." All these things this writer mentions, with great simplicity, not as the marks of a virtuous conduct, but as the signs of heresy. A striking instance this, among many others that might be produced from those times, of the little regard paid to morals, in comparison of opinions and outward observances.

Notwithstanding the determination of Henry, at any rate, to keep the clergy in good humour, he does not seem to have discovered the least change towards LORD COBHAM, who was indeed one of the principal ornaments of his court. On the con-

trary, in the year 1407, he gave him a public testimony of his regard.

France was at this time a scene of great disorder, through the competition of the Orlean and Burgundian factions. Henry remembering that the French had more than once insulted him, while he was in no condition to oppose them, resolved, in the spirit of retaliation, to avail himself of these troubles by assisting one of the contending parties. After balancing some time, he thought it best to join the duke of Burgundy. He raised an army therefore with all speed, and giving the command of it to the earl of Arundel, and LORD COBHAM, transported it into France. LORD COBHAM, it seems was not so thorough a disciple of Wickliff, as to imbibe his opinions without reserve. He had been bred to the profession of arms, and could not entirely reconcile himself to the peaceable tenets of his master. Perhaps, like other casuists, he indulged a favourite point, and found arguments to make that indulgence lawful.

The English army found the duke of Orleans besieging Paris, which was attached to the Burgundian interest. The relief therefore of this city the Burgundians had greatly at heart. He communicated his views to the English generals, who readily came into them. A bold push was accordingly made: the enemy's lines were pierced; and the duke entered Paris at the head of his victorious army. This gallant action, in which the English

had a principal share, put an end to the contest for this time. Orleans drew off his men: and waited for a more favourable opportunity of renewing the war.

Henry the fourth died in the year 1413; in whom the clergy lost all their hopes. His successor was a dissolute prince, careless even of appearances—without question therefore unconcerned about religion. Had heaven granted a few years more to his father's life, the church had been established on a solid basis. But now all was at an end.—Such were the fears and desponding murmurs of the clergy. But their hopes immediately revived. Henry the fifth was a person wholly different from the prince of Wales. He dismissed the companions of his looser hours; and with them his debauchery. No sentiments, but what were noble, great, and generous had any sway with him. And what is very remarkable, among his virtues, piety was conspicuous. This the clergy presently observed; and resolved to turn it to their own advantage.

Thomas Arundel was, at this time, archbishop of Canterbury; and presided over the church of England with as much zeal, and bigotry, as any of his predecessors. By his councils the convocation, which assembled in the first year of the new king, were directed. The growth of heresy was the subject of their debate, and the destruction of the LORD COBHAM the chief object which the arch-

bishop had in view. It was an undertaking however, which required caution. The LORD COBHAM was a person in favour with the people; and, what was more, in favour with his prince. At present therefore the primate satisfied himself with sounding the king's sentiments, by requesting an order from his majesty to send commissioners to enquire into the growth of heresy at Oxford. To this request the king made no objection.

Oxford was the seat of heresy. Here the memory of Wicliff was still gratefully preserved. His learning, his eloquence, his labours, and noble fortitude were yet the objects of admiration. His tenets had spread widely among the junior students, whose ingenuity rendered them more open to conviction. Nor indeed was it an uncommon thing to hear his opinions publicly maintained even in the schools. The governing part of the university were however still firmly attached to the established religion.

The commissioners were respectfully received; and having made their enquiry, returned with the particulars of it to the archbishop, who laid them before the convocation. Long debates ensued. The result was, that the increase of heresy was particularly owing to the influence of the LORD COBHAM, who not only avowedly held heretical opinions himself; but encouraged scholars from Oxford, and other places, by bountiful stipends, to propagate those opinions in the country. In the



end, it was determined, that without delay a prosecution should be commenced against him.

Into this hasty measure the convocation had certainly run, had not a cool head among them suggested, that as the LORD COBHAM was not only a favourite, but even a domestic at court, it would be highly improper to proceed farther in this business, till application had been made to the king. This advice prevailed; the archbishop, at the head of a large procession of dignified ecclesiastics, waited upon Henry; and with as much acrimony as decency would admit, laid, before him the offence of his servant the LORD COBHAM, and begged his majesty would suffer them for Christ's sake to put him to death.

Some historians have charged Henry with cruelty. In this instance at least he shewed lenity. He told the archbishop, he had ever been averse from shedding blood in the cause of religion. Such violence he thought more destructive of truth than error. He enjoined the convocation therefore, to postpone the affair a few days; in which time he would himself reason, with the LORD COBHAM, whose behaviour he by no means approved; and if this were ineffectual, he would then leave him to the censure of the church.

With this answer the primate was satisfied; and the king sending for the LORD COBHAM, endeavoured by all the arguments in his power, to set before him the high offence of separating from the

church; and pathetically exhorted him to retract his errors. LORD COBHAM'S answer is upon record. "I ever was, (said he,) a dutiful subject to your majesty, and I hope ever will be. Next to God, I profess obedience to my king. But as for the spiritual dominion of the pope, I never could see on what foundation it is claimed, nor can I pay him any obedience. As sure as God's word is true, to me it is fully evident, that he is the great antichrist foretold in holy writ."

This answer of the LORD COBHAM so exceedingly shocked the king, that turning away in visible displeasure, he withdrew from that time, every mark of favour from him.

The archbishop, thus triumphant; immediately cited the LORD COBHAM to appear before him on a fixed day: but that high spirited nobleman, expressing great contempt for the archbishop's citation, would not even suffer his summoner (as he is called) to enter his gate. Upon this the archbishop fixed the citation upon the doors of the cathedral of Rochester, which was only three miles from Cowling castle, the LORD COBHAM'S seat; but it was immediately torn away by unknown hands.

The day appointed for his appearance, was the eleventh of September, on which day the primate, and his associates, sat in consistory. The accused party not appearing, the archbishop pronounced him contumacious; and after receiving a very exaggerated charge against him, which he did not

examine, he excommunicated him without further ceremony. Having proceeded thus far, he armed himself with the terrors of the new law, and threatening direful anathemas, called in the civil power to assist him.

Now first the LORD COBHAM thought himself in danger. He saw the storm approaching in all its horrors; and in vain looked round for shelter. Aided as the clergy were by the civil power, he knew it would be scarce possible to ward off the meditated blow. Still however he had hope that the king's favour was not wholly alienated from him. At least he thought it of importance to make the trial. He put in writing therefore a confession of his faith; and with this in his hand, waited upon the king; begging his majesty to be the judge himself; whether he had deserved the rough treatment he had found.

In this confession he first recites the apostles creed; then, by way of explanation, he professes his belief in the trinity, and acknowledges Christ as the only head of the church, which he divides into the blessed in heaven, those who are tormented in purgatory, (if, says he, there is foundation in scripture for any such place) and the righteous on earth. He then professes to believe, that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper are contained Christ's body and blood under the similitude of bread and wine. "Finally, (says he,) my faith is, that God will ask no more of a Christian in this life.

than to obey the precepts of his blessed law. If any prelate of the church requireth more, or any other kind of obedience, he contemneth Christ, exalteth himself above God, and becometh plainly antichrist."

This confession the LORD COBHAM offered to the king in the manner as hath been mentioned. The king coldly ordered it to be given to the archbishop. LORD COBHAM then offered to bring an hundred knights, who would bear testimony to the innocence of his life, and opinions. The king being silent, he assumed a higher strain, and begged his majesty would permit him, as was usual in less matters, to vindicate his innocence by the law of arms. The king continued silent.

At this instant a person entered the chamber, and in the king's presence cited LORD COBHAM to appear before the archbishop. It is probable this was a concerted business. Startled at the suddenness of the thing, the LORD COBHAM made his last effort. "Since I can have no other justice (said he) I appeal to the pope at Rome." The king fixing at this, cried out with vehemence, "thou shalt never prosecute thy appeal;" and LORD COBHAM refusing to submit implicitly to the censure of the church, was immediately hurried to the tower by the king's express order.

There is something uncommonly strange in the account here given us of LORD COBHAM'S appeal to the pope, whose supremacy he had ever



denied. No consistent reason can be assigned for it. As to the fact however we have only its improbability to alledge against it.

On the twenty-third of September the primate sat in the chapter house of Paul's assisted by the bishops of London and Winchester, when LORD COBHAM was brought before him by sir Robert Morley, lieutenant of the tower.

The archbishop first broke silence. "Sir, (said he) it was sufficiently proved in a late session of convocation, that you held many heretical opinions; upon which, agreeable to our forms, you were cited to appear before us; and refusing, you have been for contumacy, excommunicated. Had you made proper submissions, I was then ready to have absolved you, and am now."

LORD COBHAM, taking no notice of the offer of absolution; only said in answer, that if his lordship would give him leave, he would just read his opinion on those articles, about which he supposed he was called in question; that any farther examination on those points was needless, for he was entirely fixed, and should not be found to waver.

Leave being given, he read a paper, which contained his opinion on four points, the sacrament of the Lords's supper, penance, images, and pilgrimages.

With regard to the first point, he held, as hath been already mentioned, that Christ's body was really contained under the form of bread. With

regard to the second, he thought penance for sin, as a sign of contrition, was useful and proper. With regard to images, he thought them only allowable to remind men of heavenly things; and that he who really paid divine worship to them, was an idolater. With regard to the last point, he said that all men were pilgrims upon earth towards happiness or misery; but that as to pilgrimages undertaken to the shrines of saints, they were frivolous, he thought, and ridiculous.

Having read this paper, he delivered it to the archbishop; who having examined it, told him, that what it contained was in part truly orthodox; but that in some parts he was not sufficiently explicit. There were other points, the primate said, on which it was expected he should give his opinion.

LORD COBHAM refused to make any other answer; telling the archbishop, he was fixed in his opinions. "You see me, (added he,) in your hands; and may do with me what you please."

This resolution, in which he persisted, disconcerted the bishops. After a consultation among themselves, the primate told him, that on all these points holy church had determined; by which determination all Christians ought to abide. He added, that for the present he would dismiss him, but should expect a more explicit answer on the Monday following; and that in the mean time he would send him, as a direction to his faith, the determination of the church upon these points, on

which his opinion would be particularly required.

The next day he sent the following paper; which, as it will shew the grossness of some of the opinions of the church at that time, the reader shall have in its own language.

*The determination of the archbishop, and the clergy.*

“The faith and determination of the holy church touching the blissful sacrament of the altar, is this, that after the sacramental words be once spoken, the material bread, that was before bread, is turned into Christ’s very body: and the material wine, that was before wine, is turned into Christ’s very blood. And so there remaineth from thenceforth no material bread, nor material wine, which were there before the sacramental words were spoken.—Holy church hath determined, that every Christian man ought to be shriven to a priest, ordained by the church, if he may come to him.—Christ ordained St. Peter the apostle, to be his vicar here on earth, whose see is the holy church of Rome; and he granted, that the same power, which he gave unto Peter, should succeed to all Peter’s successors, which we call now pope’s of Rome; by whose power he ordained, in particular churches, archbishops, bishops, parsons, curates, and other degrees; whom christian men ought to obey after the laws of the church of Rome. This

is the determination of holy church. Holy church hath determined, that it is meritorious to a christian man to go on a pilgrimage to holy places; and there to worship holy reliques, and images of saints, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, approved by the church of Rome."

On the day appointed the archbishop appeared in court, attended by three bishops, and four heads of religious houses. As if he had been apprehensive of tumult, he removed his judicial chair from the cathedral of Paul's, to a more private place in a dominican convent; and had the area crowded with a numerous throng of friars and monks, as well as seculars.

Amidst the contemptuous looks of these fiery zealots, LORD COBHAM, attended by the lieutenant of the tower, walked up undaunted to the place of hearing.

With an appearance of great mildness the archbishop accosted him; and having cursorily run over what had hitherto passed in the process, told him, he expected, at their last meeting, to have found him suing for absolution; but that the door of reconciliation was still open, if reflection had yet brought him to himself.

"I have trespassed against you in nothing, said the high spirited nobleman: I have no need of your absolution."

Then kneeling down, and lifting up his hands to

heaven, he broke out into this pathetic exclamation:

“ I confess myself here before thee, O Almighty God, to have been a grievous sinner. How often have ungoverned passions misled my youth! How often have I been drawn into sin by the temptations of the world. Here absolution is wanted. O my God, I humbly ask thy mercy.”

Then rising up, with tears in his eyes, and strongly affected with what he had just uttered, he turned to the assembly, and stretching out his arm, cried out with a loud voice: “ Lo! these are your guides, good people. For the most flagrant transgressions of God’s moral law was I never once called in question by them. I have expressed some dislike to their arbitrary appointments and traditions, and I am treated with unparalleled severity. But let them remember the denunciations of Christ against the Pharisees: all shall be fulfilled.”

The grandeur and dignity of his manner, and the vehemence with which he spoke, threw the court into some confusion. The archbishop however attempted an awkward apology for his treatment of him: and then turning suddenly to him, asked what he thought of the paper, that had been sent to him the day before? and particularly, what he thought of the first article, with regard to the holy sacrament?

“ With regard to the holy sacrament, (answered LORD COBHAM,) my faith is, that Christ sitting

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with his disciples, the night before he suffered, took bread; and blessing it, brake it, and gave it to them, saying, take, eat, this is my body, which was given for you: do this in remembrance of me.—This is my faith, sir, with regard to the holy sacrament. I am taught this faith by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul.”

The archbishop then asked him, “Whether, after the words of consecration, he believed there remained any *material* bread?”

“The scriptures, said he, make no mention of the world *material*. I believe, as was expressed in the paper I gave in, that, after consecration, Christ’s body remains in the *form* of bread.”

Upon this a loud murmur arose in the assembly; and the words “heresy, heresy,” were heard from every part. One of the bishops especially crying out with more than ordinary vehemence, “That it was a foul heresy to call it bread; LORD COBHAM, who stood near, interrupting him, said, St. Paul, the apostle, was as wise a man as you are, and perhaps as good a Christian; and yet he, after the words of consecration, plainly calls it *bread*. The *bread*, saith he, that we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? St. Paul, he was answered, must be otherwise understood; for it was surely heresy to say so.” LORD COBHAM asked, “How that appeared? —“ Why, said the other, it is against the determination of holy church.” “You know, sir, (interrupted the arch-

bishop,) we sent you the true faith on this point, clearly determined by the church and holy doctors." "I know none holier, replied LORD COBHAM, than Christ and his apostles; and this determination is surely none of theirs. It is plainly against scripture." Do you not then believe in the determination of the church?—"I do not, I believe the scriptures; and all that is founded upon them: but in your idle determinations I have no belief. To be short with you, I cannot consider the church of Rome as any part of the Christian church, Its endeavour is to oppose the purity of the gospel, and to set up in its room, I know not what absurd constitutions of its own."

This free declaration threw the whole assembly into great disorder. Every one exclaimed against the audacious heretic. Among others, the prior of the Carmelites, lifting up his eyes to heaven, cried out, "What desperate wretches are these scholars of Wicliff."

"Before God and man, (answered LORD COBHAM, with vehemence,) I here profess, that before I knew Wicliff, I never abstained from sin; but after I was acquainted with that virtuous man, I saw my errors, and I hope reformed them."

"It were an hard thing, replied the prior, if in an age so liberally supplied with pious and learned men, I should not be able to amend my life, till I heard the devil preach."

"Go on, go on, (answered LORD COBHAM with

some warmth;) follow the steps of your fathers, the old Pharisees. Ascribe, like them, every thing good to the devil, that opposes your own iniquities: Pronounce them heretics, who rebuke your crimes: and if you cannot prove them such by scripture, call in the fathers. Am I too severe? Let your own actions speak. What warrant have you from scripture for this very act you are now about? Where do you find it written in all God's law, that you may thus sit in judgment upon the life of man? Hold—Annas and Caiphas may perhaps be quoted in your favour.

“Ay, (said one of the doctors,) and Christ too; for he judged Judas.”

“I never heard that he did, (said LORD COBHAM.) He pronounced indeed a wo against him, as he doth still against you, who have followed Judas's steps: for since his venom hath been shed in the church, you have vilely betrayed the cause of real christianity.”

The archbishop desired him to explain what he meant by venom?

“I mean by it, (said LORD COBHAM,) the wealth of the church. When the church was first endowed, (as an author of your own pathetically expresses it) an angel in the air, cried out, wo, wo, wo: This day is venom shed into the church of God. Since that time, instead of laying down their lives for religion, as was common in the early ages, the bishops of Rome have been engaged in a



constant scene of persecution, or in cursing, murdering, poisoning, or fighting with each other. Where is now the meekness of Christ, his tenderness, and indulging gentleness? not in Rome certainly."

Then raising his voice, he cried out, Thus saith Christ in his gospel, wo unto you scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites, you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: you neither enter in yourselves, neither will you suffer those to enter, who otherwise would. You stop the way by your traditions: you hinder God's true ministers from setting the truth before the people. But let the priest be ever so wicked, if he defend your tyranny, he is suffered."

Then looking steadfastly upon the archbishop, after a short pause, he said, "both Daniel and Christ have prophesied, that troublesome times should come, such as had not been from the foundation of the world. This propesy seems in a great measure fulfilled in the present state of the church. you have greatly troubled the people of God: you have already dipped your hands in blood; and, if I foresee aright, will still farther embue them. But there is a threat on record against you: therefore look to it: your days shall be shortened. For the elects sake your days shall be shortened."

The very great spirit, and resolution with which LORD COBHAM behaved on this occasion, together

with the quickness and pertinence of his answers, Mr. Fox tells us, so amazed his adversaries, that they had nothing to reply. The archbishop was silent. The whole court was at a stand.

At last one of the doctors, taking a copy of the paper which had been sent to the tower, and turning to LORD COBHAM, told him, that the design of their present meeting was not to spend the time in idle altercation; but to come to some conclusion. "We only, (said he,) desire to know your opinion upon the points contained in this paper." He then desired a direct answer, whether, after the words of consecration, there remained any material bread?

"I have told you, (answered LORD COBHAM) that my belief is, that Christ's body is contained under the *form* of Bread."

He was again asked, whether he thought confession to a priest of absolute necessity.

He said, he thought it might be in many cases useful to ask the opinion of a priest, if he were a learned and pious man; but he thought it by no means necessary to salvation.

He was then questioned about the pope's right to St. Peter's chair.

He that followeth Peter the highest in good living, (he answered,) is next him in succession. You talk, said he, of Peter; but I see none of you that followeth his lowly manners; nor indeed the manners of his successors, till the time of Sylvester."

"But what do you affirm of the pope?"

“That he and you together, replied (LORD COBHAM,) make whole the great antichrist. He is the head, you bishops and priests are the body, and the begging friars are the tail, that covers the filthiness of you both with lies and sophistry.”

He was lastly asked, what he thought of the worship of images and holy relicts?

“I pay them, (answered LORD COBHAM,) no manner of regard. Is it not, said he, a wonderful thing, that these saints, so disinterested upon earth, should after death become suddenly so covetous? It would indeed be wonderful did not the pleasurable lives of priests account for it.”

Having thus answered the four articles, the archbishop told him, that he found lenity was indulged to no purpose. “The day, (says he) is wearing apace: we must come to some conclusion. Take your choice of this alternative; submit obediently to the orders of the church, or endure the consequence.”

“My faith is fixed, (answered LORD COBHAM aloud) do with me what you please.”

The archbishop then standing up, and taking off his cap, pronounced aloud the censure of the church.

LORD COBHAM, with great cheerfulness, subjoined, “you may condemn my body: my soul, I am well assured, you cannot hurt.” Then turning to the people, and stretching out his hands, he cried out with a loud voice, “good christian peo-

ple, for God's sake be well aware of these men; they will otherwise beguile you, and lead you to destruction." Having said this, he fell on his knees, and, raising his hands, and eyes, begged God to forgive his enemies.

He was then delivered to sir Robert Merley, and sent back to the tower.

These proceedings of the clergy were very unpopular. Few men were generally more esteemed than LORD COBHAM. His great virtues would have gained him respect, had his opinions been disreputable. But the tenets of Wicliff had, at this time, many advocates. The clergy therefore were in some degree perplexed. They saw the bad consequences of going farther, but saw worse in receding. What seemed best, and was indeed most agreeable to the genius of popery, was, to endeavour to lessen his credit among the people. With this view many scandalous aspersions were spread abroad by their emissaries. Mr. Fox tells us, they scrupled not even to publish a recantation in his name; and gives us a copy of it. LORD COBHAM, in his own defence, had the following paper posted up in some of the most public places in London.

“ Forasmuch as sir John Oldcastle, LORD COBHAM, is untruly convicted, and imprisoned, falsely reported of, and slandered among the common people by his adversaries, that he should otherwise speak of the sacraments of the church, and espe-

cially of the blessed sacrament of the altar, than was written in the confession of his belief; known be it here to all the world, that he hath never since varied in any point therefrom, but this is plainly his belief, that all the sacraments of the church be profitable, and expedient also to all, taking them after the intent that Christ and his true church hath ordained. Furthermore he believeth, that the blessed sacrament of the altar, is verily and truly Christ's body in the form of bread."

Some months had now elapsed, since LORD COBHAM had been condemned: nor did the primate and his clergy seem to have come to any resolution. They thought it imprudent yet to proceed to extremities.

Out of this perplexity, their prisoner himself extricated them. By unknown means he escaped out of the tower, and taking the advantage of a dark night, evaded pursuit, and arrived safe in Wales; where, under the protection of some of the chiefs of the country, he secured himself against the attempts of his enemies.

This, it may easily be imagined, was a sensible mortification to the clergy; and great pains were taken to persuade the king to issue a proclamation against him. But the king, who probably thought, that enough had been done already, paid little attention to what was urged; and shewed no inclination to afford his countenance in apprehending him.

This was still a greater mortification. They

remembered the wicked attempts made against them by the commons in the last reign; and dreaded the revival of them. The least coolness in the king, they knew, would be a signal to their enemies; and it was the part of prudence, to spare no pains in alienating him from the lollards.

Jealousy, the natural companion of usurped power, was the ruling foible of the house of Lancaster. This the clergy had observed; and thought they could not do better than to represent the lollards as ill inclined to the government. The king lent an ear to their whispers, and began to eye these unfortunate men with that caution, with which he guarded against his greatest enemies.

Among other instances of the zeal of the clergy in propagating calumny, the following story, attended by very extraordinary circumstances, is related.

The bishops had lately obtained a proclamation, forbidding the lollards to assemble in companies; which they had commonly done for the sake of devotion. The proclamation had in part only its effect: they still continued to assemble: but in less companies, more privately, and often in the dead of night. St. Giles's fields, then a thicket, was a place of frequent resort on these occasions. Here about an hundred of them had met one evening, with an intention, as was usual, to continue their meeting to a very late hour. Emissaries, mixing with them under the disguise of friends, soon gave intelligence of their design.

The king was then at Eltham, a few miles from London. As he was sitting down to supper, advice was brought him, that the LORD COBHAM, at the head of 20,000 men, had taken post in St. Giles's fields, breathing revenge, and threatening to murder the king, the princes of the blood, and all the lords, spiritual and temporal, who should oppose him.

The king, not considering how improbable it was, that such an army could have been gotten together without earlier notice; and having few about him to advise with, consulted only the gallantry of his own temper, and took a sudden resolution to arm what men he could readily muster, and surprise the rebels before they had concerted their schemes. Soon after midnight he arrived upon the place, and fell with great spirit upon what he supposed the advanced guard of the enemy. They were soon thrown into confusion, and yielded an easy victory. About twenty were killed, and sixty taken; the chief leader of whom was one Beverly, a preacher. Flushed with this success, the king marched on towards the main body. But no main body was found; and this formidable army was dispersed as easily as it had been raised.

This strange affair, we may imagine, is differently related by different party writers. The popish historians talk of it, as of real conspiracy; and exclaim loudly against tenets, which could encourage such crimes. Among these the ingenuous Mr.

Hume has chosen to list himself; and on no better authority than Walsingham, a mere bigot, hath without any hesitation charged LORD COBHAM with high treason.

On the other hand, the protestant writers, in general, treat the whole as a fiction, and censure their adversaries with great acrimony for so malicious an aspersion.

The papists, put to proof, alledge, that arms were found upon the field; and that many of the prisoners made open confession of the wickedness of their intentions.

As to arms, reply the protestants, it is a stale trick to hide them on purpose to serve an occasion by finding them: and as to confessions, nothing is more common, than to extort them from innocent persons. Besides, they might have been drawn from popish emissaries, mixing among the Wicklites, with the very intention of being brought to confession. "In truth, (says the judicious Rapin, reasoning upon this fact) it is hardly to be conceived, that a prince so wise as Henry, could suffer himself to be imposed upon by so gross a fiction. Had he found indeed, as he was made to believe, 20,000 men in arms in St. Giles's fields, it might have created suspicion; but that fourscore, or an hundred men, among whom there was not a single person of rank, should have formed such a project, is extremely improbable. Besides, he himself knew sir John Oldcastle to be a man of sense;



and yet nothing could be more wild than the project fathered upon him; a project, which it was supposed he was to execute with a handful of men, and yet he himself absent, and no leader in his room. Besides, notwithstanding the strictest search made through the kingdom, to discover the accomplices of this pretended conspiracy, not a single person could be found, besides those taken at St. Giles's. Lastly, the principles of the Lollards were very far from allowing such barbarities. It is therefore more than probable, that the accusation was forged to render the Lollards odious to the king, with a view to obtain his license for their prosecution."

It would be tedious to say all that might be said in defence of LORD COBHAM on this occasion. Mr. Fox, in the first volume of his acts and monuments, hath given us a very laboured, and satisfactory vindication of him. He examines first the statutes and authentic records, and afterwards the earliest historians, from all which he draws a very conclusive argument, that there was no conspiracy intended. The title of Mr. Fox's tract is, *A defence of LORD COBHAM against Alanus Copus.*

As improbable however as this conspiracy was, it was, for a time at least, entirely credited by the king, and fully answered the designs of the clergy. It thoroughly incensed Henry against the Lollards; and gave a very severe check to the whole party. As for LORD COBHAM himself, the king was so persuaded of his guilt, that through his influence, a

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bill of attainder against him passed the commons, as appears from an old parliamentary record, preserved in the British Museum. And not satisfied with this, Henry set a price of a thousand marks upon his head; and promised a perpetual exemption from taxes to any town, that should secure him. This affair happened in the year 1414.

In a few months after, a parliament was called at Leicester. Hither the zeal of the clergy followed the king. In pursuance of their old scheme of rendering the Lollards suspected as enemies to the state, they had a bill brought in, by which heresy should incur the forfeitures of treason. This bill likewise made those liable to the same penalties, who had broken prison, after having been convicted of heresy, unless they rendered themselves again. This clause was too evidently aimed at LORD COHAM, to need a comment.

To this bill the clergy foresaw a furious opposition from the Lollards, who bore no inconsiderable sway in the house. Great therefore was their surprise, when they found their bill passed without any obstacle. Their pulpits rang with the praises of the parliament; and they congratulated each other upon the glorious prospect of the church, when every branch of the legislature united in their endeavours to extirpate heresy. But the clergy were much deceived in their opinion of the commons, who acted in this business with great address.

It had long been the favourite scheme of a major-

ity in the house; to strip the clergy of their possessions; and in this majority many were found, who were by no means inclined to the opinions of Wickliff. These men were too much patriots to wish their country enslaved by an oppressive hierarchy; and saw no way of escaping such bondage, but by wringing from the church that wealth, which was the source of its power. Friends to its spiritual jurisdiction, they cavilled only at its temporal.

Full of these sentiments, the commons, though twice foiled in the late reign, were not discouraged. Their disappointment put them only upon a change of measures. The zeal which the reformers had shown in parliament against the unbounded wealth of religious houses, had heretofore furnished the clergy with a pretence for clamouring, "That all was virulence against the church." To this clamour the late king paid great regard. The leading members therefore of this parliament resolved first to exculpate themselves of the charge of heresy; and having done this, they imagined they might, with much greater facility, put their designs in execution: and on this principle they gave way to the clergy in their late act.

Their intention was not long a mystery. In the midst of the praises bestowed upon them; while the clergy were every where extolling them as the wisest, and most respectable body of men that ever met together, how were they thunderstruck, when they heard that these wise and respectable

men, had almost unanimously presented a petition to the king to seize the revenues of the clergy? This was an unexpected blow. Something however was to be done, and that instantly. The king had discovered no marks of displeasure at the petition which was a dreadful omen.

It was matter of joy to all good catholics, that Henry Chicheley was now archbishop of Canterbury. This prelate had succeeded Arundel; and to the zeal of his predecessor, added a more artful address in the management of affairs. Such address was the principal thing, at that time, required in an archbishop of Canterbury.

Undaunted at the storm, this able pilot stepped to the helm; and judging it adviseable to give up a part rather than hazard the whole, he went to the king; and with all humility hoped, "his majesty did not mean so rash a thing, as to put it out of the power of his old friends to serve him as they had ever done: the clergy were his sure refuge upon all occasions; and as a proof of their zeal, they begged his majesty would accept at their hands, a surrender of all the alien priories; which being not fewer than an hundred and ten, would very considerably augment his revenues." Henry paused—and considering the noble sacrifice they had offered, and reflecting upon the old maxim of prudence, that a security, though of less value, is better than a contingency; and withal, dreading the consequences of irritating so powerful

a body, he accepted their offer; and the clergy had once more the pleasure to see their arts counterbalance the designs of their enemies.

The archbishop, however, not yet sufficiently secure, proceeded a step farther. He observed, from the times, a general inclination to a French war, and wanted thoroughly to embark his sovereign in such an enterprize; rightly judging, that schemes abroad would divert him from schemes at home; and that a war upon the continent would greatly induce him to leave all quiet in his own dominions.

Thus resolved, he took an early opportunity to address the king in full parliament. In a studied harangue he proved the claim, which England had upon France, since the time of Edward the third. The neglect of that claim, he said, since that period, had by no means injured the right. He then launched out into a florid encomium upon the virtues of the king; and said, the thunder of the English nation, which had slept through two reigns, was reserved solely for his arm; and God would prosper the noble undertaking. He concluded with saying, that if his majesty should engage in this gallant enterprize, he would undertake, that the clergy should grant him a larger subsidy than had been ever granted to an English king; and he doubted not but the laity would follow their example.

Many historians have attributed the conquest of France to this speech. It is certain however, it

greatly tended to reconcile the minds of men to this enterprize, and effectually put a stop to the king's designs against the church—Such were the vile politics of the clergy of those times!

In the mean time LORD COBHAM, whose spirit in parliament had given birth to all this ferment, remained an exile in Wales, shifting frequently the scene of his retreat. In the simple manners of that mountainous country he found an asylum, which he judged it imprudent to exchange for one, which might probably prove more hazardous beyond sea.

But the zeal of his enemies was not easily baffled. After many fruitless attempts, they engaged the lord Powis in their interest, a very powerful person in those parts; and in whose lands the LORD COBHAM was supposed to lie concealed.

This nobleman working upon his tenants by such motives, as the great have ever in reserve, had numbers soon upon the watch. This vigilance the LORD COBHAM could not escape. In the midst of his fancied security, he was taken, carried to London in triumph, and put into the hands of the archbishop of Canterbury.

LORD COBHAM had now been four years in Wales, but found his sufferings had in no degree diminished the malice of his enemies. On the contrary, it shewed itself in stronger colours. Those restraints under which the clergy acted before, were now removed. The superiority which they had

obtained, both in the parliament, and in the cabinet, laid every murmur asleep; and they would boast in the prophet's language, that not a dog durst move his tongue against them.

Things being thus circumstanced, LORD COBHAM, without any divination, foresaw his fate. His fate indeed remained not long in suspense. With every instance of barbarous insult, which enraged superstition could invent, he was dragged to execution. St. Giles's fields was the place appointed; where both as a traitor, and a heretic, he was hung up in chains upon a gallows; and, fire being put under him, was burnt to death.

Such was the unworthy fate of this nobleman; who, though every way qualified to be the ornament of his country, fell a sacrifice to unfeeling rage, and barbarous superstition.

LORD COBHAM had been much conversant in the world; and had probably been engaged, in the early part of his life, in the license of it: His religion however put a thorough restraint upon a disposition, naturally inclined to the allurements of pleasure. He was a man of a very high spirit, and warm temper; neither of which his sufferings could subdue. With very little temporizing he might have escaped the indignities he received from the clergy, who always considered him as an object beyond them: but the greatness of his soul could not brook concession. In all his examinations, and through the whole of his behaviour, we

see an authority and dignity in his manner, which speak him the great man in all his afflictions.

He was a person of uncommon parts, and very extensive talents; well qualified either for the cabinet or the field. In conversation he was remarkable for his ready and poignant wit.

His acquirements were equal to his parts. No species of learning, which was at that time in esteem, had escaped his attention. It was his thirst of knowledge indeed, which first brought him acquainted with the opinions of Wicliff. The novelty of them engaged his curiosity. He examined them as a philosopher, and in the course of his examination became a Christian.

In a word, we cannot but consider LORD CORHAM, as having had a principal hand in giving stability to the opinions he embraced. He shewed the world, that religion was not merely calculated for a cloister, but might be introduced into fashionable life; and that it was not below a gentleman to run the last hazard in its defense.



THE  
LIFE  
OF  
JOHN HUSS.

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HAVING given some account of the opinions of Wicliff in England; let us follow the course of them abroad. In Bohemia particularly, we shall find they obtained great credit; where they were propagated by JOHN HUSS, Jerome of Prague, and others of less note.

It must be confessed indeed, those Bohemian reformers made little change in the opinions they found prevailing in their own church. Every step they took was taken with extreme caution; and many of the Romish writers have been led from hence to question the propriety of ranking them in a catalogue of reformers. To rail at the popish clergy, we are told, hath ever been thought enough to give a man a place in this list. But this is making outcasts indeed of these celebrated enquirers after truth. The papists burnt their bodies, and damned their souls for being protestants, and would have protestants damn their memory for being papists.

Unconcerned at the reproach, the protestants receive them with open arms, and consider them as those noble leaders, who made the first inroads into the regions of darkness; as those who held up lights, though only faint and glimmering, which encouraged others to pursue their paths.

If we consider such only as reformers, whose opinions were *thoroughly* reformed, it is hard to say where the reformation began. Our Saviour considers those as *for him, who were not against him*: much more reason have the protestants to consider these Bohemians of their party, who, for the sake of opinions, which have been since adopted by protestants, suffered the extremes of malice from papists; and who maintained principles, which would have led them, if they had not been cut off by their enemies, to a full discovery of that truth they aimed at.

JOHN HUSS was born near Prague, in Bohemia, about the year 1376, at a village called Hussines, upon the borders of the black forest; from which village he had his name.

His farther was a person in low circumstances, but took more care, than is usually taken among such persons, in the education of his son. He lived not however to see the fruit of his pains. After his death, his widow pursued his intention; and found means to send her son, though with difficulty enough even in the lowest station, to the university of Prague.

Here a very extraordinary piety began to distinguish him. Among other instances of it, a story is recorded, the truth of which is the rather to be suspected, as we meet with frequent relations of the same kind in martyrologies. As he was reading the life of St. Lawrence, we are told, he was so strongly effected with the constancy of that pious man in the midst of his sufferings, that he thrust his hand into the flame of a fire, by which he sat, and held it there, till his fellow disciple, who was sitting by him, in great terror interfered. "I had only, said (Huss) an inclination to try, whether I had constancy to bear an inconsiderable part of what this martyr underwent."

In the year 1396 he took the degree of master of arts; and, soon after, that of bachelor of divinity. In 1400 his abilities and piety had so far recommended him, that he was chosen confessor to the queen: and eight years after he was elected rector of the university.

During the course of these honours he obtained a benefice likewise. John Mulheym, a person of large fortune in Prague, built a chapel, which he called Bethel; and having endowed it in a very ample manner, appointed Huss the minister of it.

Whatever religious scruples he might at this time have had, he had thus far kept them to himself. It is more than probable he had none of consequence. The superstitions of popery reigned still, in all tran-

quility, in Bohemia; where the opinions of Wicliff, which had long been fermenting in England, were yet unknown.

In the year 1381, Richard the second of England married Ann, sister of the king of Bohemia. This alliance opened a commerce between the two nations; and many persons, during an interval of several years, passed over from Bohemia into England, on the account either of expectancies, curiosity, or business: some on the account of study. With a view of this latter kind, a young Bohemian nobleman, who had finished his studies in the university of Prague, spent some time at Oxford. Here he became acquainted with the opinions of Wicliff, read his books, and admired both him and them. At his return to Prague he renewed an acquaintance which grew into an entire familiarity, with JOHN HUSS; and put into his hands the writings of Wicliff, which he had brought over with him. They consisted chiefly of those warm pieces of that reformer, in which he inveighs against the corruptions of the clergy.

These writings struck HUSS with the force of revelation. He was a man of great sanctity of manners himself, and had the highest notions of the pastoral care. With concern he had long seen, or thought he saw, abuses among the clergy of his time, which were truly deplorable. But his diffidence kept pace with his piety; and he could not persuade himself to cast *the first stone*. He now

found that he had not been singular. He saw these abuses and corruptions dragged into open light; and it even mortified him to see that freedom in another, which he had been withheld, by a mere scruple, from exerting himself.

As to the more alarming opinions of Wicliff, though it is probable HUSS became at this time acquainted with some of them, yet it doth not *appear* they made any impression upon his mind; they were less obvious, and required more examination. From the language however, in which he always spoke of this reformer, we cannot imagine he had taken offence at any thing he had heard of him. He would call him an angel sent from heaven to enlighten mankind. He would mention among his friends his meeting with the works of Wicliff as the most fortunate circumstances of his life; and would often say, he wished for no better eternity, than to exist hereafter with that excellent man.

From this time, both in the schools, and in the pulpit, as he had opportunity, he would inveigh, with great warmth, against ecclesiastical abuses. He would point out the bad administration of the church, and the bad lives of the clergy; and would pathetically lament the miserable state of the people, who were under the government of the one, and the influence of the other.

Indeed the state of the Bohemian clergy, as all their historians testify, was at this time exceedingly corrupt. Religion was not only converted into

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a trade ; but this trade was carried on with the utmost knavery and rapacity. Avarice was their predominant vice. One of their bishops, we are told, was so sordidly addicted to it, that, being asked, what was the most disagreeable noise in nature ? he answered, that of mouths feeding at his own table. Stories of this kind are unquestionably exaggerated by the zeal of protestant writers. We may venture however to make large deductions, and yet still leave a very sufficient charge against the morals of the Bohemian clergy.

It is no wonder therefore if HUSS was heard with attention on such an argument. Indeed, all sober and ingenuous men began to think favourably of him ; and to see the necessity of exposing the clergy, were it only to open the eyes of the people, and prevent their being seduced, by vile examples.

There were, at this time, in Prague, among the followers of HUSS, two ingenuous foreigners ; who, being unacquainted with the language of the country, invented a method of exposing the pride of the Romish clergy, which fully answered their end, and was well suited to the simplicity of the times. They hung up, in the public hall of the university, two large pictures, in one of which were represented Christ and his apostles, in that humility, and modesty of attire, with which they appeared upon earth ; in the other, the pope and his cardinals, in all that flow of garment gold, and embroidery, in

which their dignity so much consisteth. These pictures, it is probable, as pieces of art, were of no value; but the contrast they exhibited was so exceedingly glaring, that among the common people they had more than the force of argument.

The schism between the two popes, which hath already been mentioned, still continued. This religious quarrel, having raged with sufficient animosity during the reigns of the two pontiffs, who gave it birth, was bequeathed to their successors. It had now maintained itself above thirty years, and had been the common firebrand of Europe, through that whole tract of time.

The cardinals had made many attempts to put an end to this confusion; but without effect: the ambition of the reigning prelates interfered. To strengthen their hands, the sacred college at length applied to some of the leading princes of Europe. Henry the fourth of England seems to have interested himself as much as any in this affair. He wrote with great spirit to Gregory the twelfth; told him, that, at a moderate computation, 230,000 men had lost their lives in this quarrel; expostulated with him for upholding it; and advised him to submit to the decision of the council, which was then assembling at Pisa.

The intention of this council, it seems, was to elect a new pope, and to make the two other popes give up their claims; which, at the time of their election, they had agreed in such circumstances to

do. Accordingly, in the year 1410 the cardinals of each party met at Pisa, where a new election was made in favour of Alexander the fifth. This pontiff, to shew his gratitude to his good friend the king of England, granted his subjects a full remission of all manner of sins, which was to be dispensed on three set days, at St. Bartholomew's in Smithfield. This was not done entirely gratis; but the indulgent pope had made the expense so very easy, that, except indeed the most indigent, all might enjoy the benefit of his absolution.

At the time of this pope's election, Huss, and his followers began to make a noise in the world. They had now gotten some of the works of Wicliff translated into the Sclavonian tongue; which were read with great attention in every part of Bohemia; and though it doth not appear, that any of the more offensive doctrines of that reformer had even yet obtained footing there; yet it is certain the established elergy had in a great measure lost that reverence, which had been hitherto paid them,

To check the growth of heresy, was the first work in which Alexander engaged. He was scarce seated in his chair, when he thundered out a very severe bull, directed to the archbishop of Prague, and it is probable, directed by him likewise; in which he orders that prelate to make strict enquiry after the followers of Wicliff; to apprehend, and imprison them; and, if necessary, to call in the secular arm.



Nor was private cause of pique wanting to engage the clergy in the severest measures. Besides the spirited language, in which Huss had always treated them, he had, on the following occasion, made himself particularly obnoxious to the whole order.

Learning having been for many years very little the taste of the Bohemian gentry, the Germans, who in great numbers frequented the university of Prague, and enjoyed, by the statutes of the founder, a fourth part of the authority in it, had, by degrees, gotten possession of the whole. This, when letters began to revive under the influence of Huss, became inconvenient. The Germans stuck together; and a Bohemian, even in a university of his own country, could meet with little encouragement in literary pursuits. Huss saw with regret these difficulties; and endeavoured with all his attention to remove them. Having put himself at the head of a considerable party, he made an application at court; and by his interest there, which with the queen especially was very great, obtained a decision, by which the authority of these strangers was abridged, and the government of the university thrown into its natural channel. The Germans, piqued at this, left Prague in a body and settled themselves in other houses of learning. Historians rate the number of these discontented students at three thousand.

This temporary evil opened the mouths of Huss's enemies. The clergy in particular took the alarm;

and immediately shewed their disgust, at seeing more weight thrown into a scale, which they had ever been desirous of rendering as light as possible. It is worth remarking, that this is the second instance in the course of a few pages, in which the herd of the Romish clergy have considered a seat of learning as an interest opposite to their own. Indeed in this case, they had more to say. HUSS, who was now sole leader of the university, had long shewn himself their avowed opponent; and if single, he had given them so much cause of alarm, he became an object of double terror supported by a multitude. They resolved therefore to make a handle of the affair of the university; and though it was purely of a literary nature, it was plausibly converted into a business of religion.

Among those who took offence at these proceedings, none took more than the archbishop of Prague. Having published the bull he had received from Rome, he soon after published a rescript of his own; requiring all, who were possessed of any of the works of Wickliff, to bring them to him. According, many copies of different parts of that reformers writing, (we are told above 200) were brought, which the archbishop immediately condemned to the flames. In this business, it was generally supposed, he acted at the same time a disingenuous, an illegal, and an unjust part. In the first place, through the ambiguity of the rescript, it was imagined, he meant only to examine the books;

to which the honest possessors of them had no objection; not doubting but such an examination would redound to the honour of their master: Huss himself tells us, that he sent in his books merely on this supposition. Besides, they thought the primate had no authority for what he had done. They knew he had none from the pope; and if the action was his own, they could not but esteem it as a very illegal stretch of power. And if it was illegal, as it appeared to be, they thought it farther, a very considerable injury. For in those days before printing was invented, books had their value: and many of these likewise were ornamented with silver in a very expensive manner. It was an unlucky circumstance too, in prejudice to the archbishop, that he was a most illiterate man. We are told he was so to such a degree, that by way of ridicule, he was commonly called *alphabetarius*, or the A, B, C doctor. As it was well known therefore he could not read these books himself, and as no examination of them had been heard of, what he had done seemed rather an attack upon learning itself, than upon the doctrines of Wicliff.

This action of the archbishop gave great offence; and Huss remonstrated against it with as much warmth, as the candour and native modesty of his temper would admit. But notwithstanding the propriety of his own behaviour, it is allowed, his followers acted with great indecency. Irritated by the loss of their books, they resolved to retaliate a

little of that spirit, in which the injury had been done. Having procured a copy therefore of the archbishop's rescript, they burnt it with great pomp and ceremony in the public street.

Kindled at this treatment, the archbishop's zeal flamed out in all its violence; and eager to do more than he had the power to do himself, he hurried to the king, and laid his complaints at the foot of the throne.

Winceslaus, king of Bohemia, whom we shall have frequent occasion to mention, was a prince, who looked for nothing in royalty, but the free indulgence of his passions. Matters of government were little his concern: and matters of religion still less. He had been educated in the best school for improvement, the school of affliction; yet he had profited little by the lessons he had there received. He had good natural parts, and great talents for business; but dissimulation was the only talent which he employed. *Temporibus insidiari* was his maxim. If he had one fixed principle of government, it was never to encourage the zealots of any party. He cajoled the archbishop therefore with that art, which was natural to him; and endeavouring to convince him of the impropriety of his own interposition, left him to manage the sectaries, as he was able.

The archbishop was thoroughly mortified at the king's indifference for religion; and as he found no redress from him, he determined to try the force of

his own authority. After mature deliberation, they prohibited Huss, by an interdict, from preaching in his chapel of Bethelhem. Huss, as a member of the university, which held immediately of the Roman see, appealed to the pope.

Alexander the fifth was now dead ; poisoned, as was commonly supposed, by an ambitious cardinal, who found the means to succeed him. This was Balthasar Cossa, who afterwards assumed the name of John the twenty third ; a man, whose vicious life was probably the only foundation of the suspicion. In his youth he had exercised piracy : but finding this profession dangerous, he retired to Bologna, where he applied himself to study. His abilities, for he was master of many useful talents, soon found a patron in Benedict the ninth ; under whom he was initiated into all the mysteries of the conclave.

John was presently made acquainted with the situation of affairs in Bohemia. Huss had preached a sermon at Prague, in which, it was thought, he had spoken lightly of oral tradition. This was immediately caught by the orthodox clergy ; and carried, among other things, in the form of an accusation to Rome. The appeal therefore, and the accusation, accompanied each other.

John seems to have had something else in his head at this time, besides religion. Without examining the affair himself, he left it to his delegate,

the cardinal de Columna; who appointed Huss a day for his appearance.

The report of this affair spread a general alarm through Bohemia; where the whole party trembled for their chief. A powerful intercession, headed by the queen herself, was made to the king, requesting his interposition. Wincellaus complied; and dispatched ambassadors to the pope, who in very pressing terms requested his holiness to dispense with Huss's personal appearance; alledging his innocence, and the dangers he would run in passing through Germany, where he had many enemies.

With these ambassadors, Huss sent his proctors; who were treated with great severity, and in the end imprisoned. This was enough to give him a warning of his fate. The irritated pope excommunicated him, as it seems, on the mere accusation of his enemies.

This treatment had no tendency to lessen the popularity of Huss. His sufferings indeed gave him only the greater influence. The people considered him as standing single in a common cause; as having paid their forfeiture as well as his own. Gratitude and compassion therefore were added to their esteem; and he never was so much the idol of popular favour, as he was now. He had his adherents too among the higher ranks. The nobility were in general disposed to serve him; and he wanted not friends even among the clergy.

As he was thus supported, we need not wonder that the disgrace he suffered sat light upon him.— We find him indeed no longer in the character of a public preacher; and some authors write that he retired from Prague. It is certain however, that, except preaching, he continued still to discharge every branch of the pastoral care. One method he used was to give out questions, which he encouraged the people to discuss in private, and to come to him with their difficulties. Many of these questions had a tendency to invalidate the pope's authority

Every day made it now plainer, that the gossellers, as the followers of HUSS were, at this time, called, had scarce received any check. The primate was wretched to the last degree. The pope's authority had appeared to be of little weight; his own of less; the king was wholly indifferent: the emperor alone remained, to whom application could be made. To him therefore he resolved to apply; but upon his journey he fell sick, and died; fretted, as was commonly supposed, beyond sufferance, at the perplexity of the affair. The archbishop of Prague was a well intentioned, weak man; under the influence of violent passions: a most unhappy composition to be intrusted with power.

The new archbishop, notwithstanding his predecessor had failed in his design of crushing this rising heresy, had the courage to make a farther attempt. He called a council of doctors; by

whom, after much debating, some articles against Huss, and his adherents were drawn up, and published in form. They were intended to lessen his credit with the people; but they produced only a spirited answer, in which Huss recapitulated what the late archbishop had done, and shewed that he had never been able to prove any heresy against him: he concluded with begging that he might be suffered to meet, face to face, any one, who pretended to bring such a charge against him, and doubted not but he should be able to purge himself, to the satisfaction of the whole kingdom of Bohemia.

Soon afterwards Huss published another piece against the usurpations of the court of Rome. To this the archbishop and his council replied: but in a manner so futile, that they did more injury to their cause, (especially where prejudice ran high against them) than even their adversaries themselves had done. They applied to the pope too for assistance, but the pope satisfied himself with exhorting the king to suppress the pestilent doctrines of Wicliff; and, if possible, to curb the insolence of Huss and his followers.

Indeed the pope had not leisure at this time to attend to controversy. His ambition had incited him to quarrel with his neighbour the king of Naples, into whose dominions he was meditating an irruption. But he fell into his own snare. He declared himself before he was well prepared; and



the wary Neapolitan taking the advantage of his ignorance in matters of war, invaded the patrimony, and dividing his forces, sat down before several of the papal towns at once. In this perplexity John had recourse to the established manner of levying troops. He dispatched legates into various parts of christendom, who were largely commissioned to grant pardons and indulgences to all who would enlist under his banners.

Among other places, one of these recruiting officers came to Prague. Winceslaus had his reasons for favouring the pope; and foreseeing that the legate would be opposed by Huss and the gospelers, forbid them by proclamation to interfere.

But the zeal of these sectaries was of too high a temper to bear controul. They thought their consciences concerned; and would have looked upon themselves as guilty, had they stood aloof, and seen the people deluded. They took every opportunity therefore of exposing the legate and his business; and of shewing the folly of trusting to the pardon of a sinful man. Huss in particular exerted himself with great spirit, and dispersed among his friends many little tracts, which assisted them with proper arguments. His activity put an entire stop to the levy.

This behaviour was greatly resented by the king; and the magistrates, who acted by his direction, ventured to seize three of the most zealous. The person of Huss was too sacred to be touched.

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The imprisonment of these men threw the whole city into an uproar. The more forward of the gossellers took arms, and surrounded the town hall, where the magistrates were then sitting. With loud cries they demanded to have their companions set at liberty. The magistrates alarmed, came forward to the stairs, soothed them with gentle language, and promised that their companions should be immediately released. The people went quietly home; and the unfortunate prisoners were instantly put to death.

Huss discovered, on this occasion, a true christian spirit. The late riot had given him great concern; and he had now so much weight with the people, as to restrain them from attempting any further violence; though so notorious a breach of faith might almost have justified any measures.

This moderation was construed by the opposite party into fear. The clergy, and magistrates, who acted in concert, well knew on which side the balance of power lay: they knew that, even at the sound of a bell, Huss could have been surrounded by thousands of zealots, who might have laughed at the police of the city. When they saw them therefore, notwithstanding this force, act in so tame a manner, they easily concluded they were under the influence of fear: that the death of their friends had struck a terror into them, and that this was the time entirely to subdue them.

Full of these mistaken notions, the archbishop

waited upon the king; assuring him, that if he chose to crush the gossellers, and give peace to his kingdom, this was the time.

Wincseslaus, whatever appearances he might think it prudent to assume, was in his heart no friend to these reformers; whom he considered as a nest of hornets, which he durst not molest. While he seemed to favour, he detested them; and would have ventured a considerable stake to have freed his kingdom from what he esteemed so great a nuisance.

He heard the archbishop therefore with attention: He entered into his scheme, and in *his* spirit, but with somewhat more of temper. He knew the inveteracy of the disease would admit of palliatives only: violent medicines at least he thought improper. He resolved therefore to take some step, though not so vigorous as that the clergy dictated. After much hesitation he at last banished Huss from Prague. The late tumults were his pretence. This was the first public instance he gave of his dislike to the gossellers.

Huss immediately retired to his native place, where the principal person of the country being his friend, he lived unmolested; and was greatly resorted to by all men of a serious turn in those parts; which contributed not a little to spread his opinions, and establish his sect.

Some historians give a different account of his leaving Prague; and make it a voluntary act. It is

possible there may be some truth in both these accounts. The king might express his pleasure; which Huss might willingly comply with.

During his retreat at Hussinez, he spent much of his time in writing. Here he composed his celebrated treatise, *Upon the Church*; out of which his adversaries drew most of those objections, which were afterwards so fatally brought against him at Constance.

From this place likewise he dated a paper, entitled, *The Six Errors*; which he fixed on the gate of the chapel of Bethalem. It was levelled against *Indulgences*; against the abuse of *Excommunication*; against *Believing in the Pope*; against the unlimited *Obedience* required by the see of Rome; against *Simony*; with which he charged the whole church; and against *making* the body of Christ in the mass.

This paper was greedily received in Bohemia; and increased that odium which had been raised against the clergy. Many anecdotes also against the dignified ecclesiastics had found their way among the people; by whom they were dressed out in the most unfavourable colours. So many open mouths, and such an abundance of matter to fill them, rendered the clergy in a short time, so infamous, that few of them durst appear in public.

The politic king saw an advantage. Papist and gospeller were alike to him: he had already made an engine of one party; and he now saw a favour-

able opportunity of working with the other. In short, he thought he had the means before him of replenishing his coffers.

He told the clergy, "He was sorry to hear such complaints against them; that he was determined to put a stop to these enormities; that Bohemia would be the scandal of Christendom; that he had already done justice upon the sectaries; and that an *establishment* should be no security to *them*." His language was easily understood; and large commutations were offered, and accepted.

One thing is too remarkable to escape notice. "That tythes were mere temporal endowments, and might be resumed by the temporal lord, when the priest was undeserving," was that doctrine of Wicliff, which gave most offence in England; and, as it seems, in Bohemia likewise. It was considered by the churchmen of both kingdoms as an heresy of the most pestilent kind. On this occasion however, the king insisting upon it, the Bohemian clergy were glad to redeem their tythes by owning the doctrine orthodox. Thus the king played one party against the other; and left neither any cause to triumph. No man understood better the balance of parties, nor the advantages, which might accrue from adjusting it properly.

About the time of this contest with the clergy, we find Huss again in Prague, though it does not appear, whether the king permitted or connived at him.

Alexander the fifth, the predecessor of John the twenty third had been chosen pope, we have seen, to put an end to the schism, which raged in the Roman church; on which event it had been expected the other two popes would relinquish their claims. So they had promised at their election. But restless ambition intervened. Neither of them would give up his power; and from that time the church was governed (if such anarchy can be called government) by three popes at once. Their names were now John, Gregory, and Benedict.

With a view to close this fatal schism; to remove such disorders in the church, as had sprung up during the continuance of it; and to bring about a thorough reformation of the clergy, the emperor Sigismond, in the year 1414, convened a general council.

Sigismond, the brother of Winceslaus, was the most accomplished prince of the age in which he lived. To the virtues of a patriot he added a greatness of mind, and dignity of manner, which adorned a throne. It might perhaps be said too, that he excelled in the princely art of dissimulation: that indeed was the great foible in his character. He was himself a man of letters; and gloried in being thought the patron of learning. He had enobled, on the occasion of some solemnity, a learned doctor, who had spoken an eloquent oration. In the procession, which followed, the doctor chose rather to walk among the nobility, than among his

learned brethren. "Sir, (said the emperor observing it,) diminish not a body, which it is not in my power to replenish: the corps you have joined I can augment when I please." This prince was more successful in his negotiations than in his wars; and yet he was esteemed a better soldier, than a statesman. In his cabinet he often blundered; but rarely in his camp. His political errors were yet generally retrieved by a noble air of ingenuity, and an address which nothing could withstand. His manners were the most humane and gentle. He would often say, "when I forgive an injury, I acquire a friend." But what is very surprising in a character of this liberal cast, he was a bigot.

Besides the reasons already mentioned for calling a general council at this time, Sigismund had other motives. The Ottoman arms having lately given a severe blow to the empire, and growing daily more formidable, he was very solicitous to oppose them; and he could not so effectually do it, while Europe continued in a divided state.

This famous council was convened at Constance, one of the most southern towns in Germany, situate on the confines of Switzerland, as nearly as might be, in the middle of Christendom. Hither from all parts of Europe princes and prelates, clergy and laity, regulars and seculars, flocked together. Mr. Fox hath given us an humourous catalogue of them. "There were, (says he) archbishops

ops and bishops 346, abbots and doctors 564, princes, dukes, earls, knights and squires 16,000, common women 450, barbers 600, musicians, cooks and jesters 320." Four presidents were chosen from four nations, Germany, France, England and Italy.

Ceremonies and punctilios being settled, the consultation opened. That a reformation of the clergy was necessary, was agreed on all hands; but a debate arose, in what part of the clerical scale it should begin? While some contended it should begin a minoritis, at the inferior clergy, the emperor replied briskly, "Non a minoritis, sed a majoritis." They began therefore with the pope John. This unhappy pontiff, being convicted of many crimes, was deprived, and imprisoned. Gregory was prudent enough to give in a resignation; and escaped on easier terms. But Benedict continued long obstinate. The king of Navarre espoused his cause for some time; but that prince forsaking him, he was deprived and excommunicated. In the room of these three Martin was chosen. Thus at length was closed the great schism of the Roman church; and here too ended the reformation of the clergy; a work begun indeed with spirit; but unhappily left unfinished. But this is anticipating the affairs of the council; for the deposition of the three popes was in fact conducted leisurely with the other business of it.

The next grand design of the fathers in this council was to apply remedies to the disorders of



the church; by the disorders of the church, nothing more was meant than Wicliff's heresy; the extirpation of which took up a full moiety of the council's time. Wicliff was now dead: their rage therefore against him was ineffectual. What was in their power however they did: they reviled his memory: they condemned his tenets: they burnt his books: nay they ordered his very bones to be dug up and consumed to ashes.

Their rage however, unavailing against him, fell with double weight upon his followers. Of these Huss was the principal. Some time before the council was opened, application had been made to the emperor to bring him to Constance. The emperor engaged in the business, and sent two gentlemen into Bohemia to communicate the affair to Huss himself. Huss directly answered, "That he desired nothing more than to purge himself publicly of the imputation of heresy; and that he esteemed himself happy in so fair an opportunity of doing it, as the approaching council afforded."

Before he began his journey, he thought it proper to give notice, (which he did by putting up papers in the most public parts of Prague) that he was going to Constance; and that whoever had objections against him or his doctrine, might make them there. He provided himself likewise with proper testimonials; and what is very remarkable, he obtained one from the bishop of Nazareth, inquisitor general of heresy in Bohemia; which is

still extant. In this the bishop declares, that as far as he had any opportunity to know, (and he had had many opportunities) HUSS had never shewn the least inclination to impugn any article of the Christian faith. He procured likewise a passport from the emperor.

Thus provided, in October 1414, he set out for Constance, accompanied by two Bohemian noblemen, the barons of Clum, and Lutzenbock; who were among the most eminent of his disciples, and followed their master merely through respect, and love. Some writers say, they were required by the emperor to attend him.

Through whatever town of consequence he passed, he had the following paper posted up in some public part of it. "JOHN HUSS, B. D. is now upon his journey to Constance, there to defend his faith; which by God's help he will defend unto death. Willing therefore to satisfy every man, who hath ought to object against him, he published in Bohemia, and now doth publish in this noble and imperial city his said intention. Whoever therefore hath any error or heresy to lay to the charge of the said JOHN HUSS, be it known unto him, that the said JOHN is ready to answer the same at the approaching council."

The civilities, and even reverence, which he met with every where, exceeded his imagination. The streets, and sometimes the very roads were lined with people, whom respect rather than curi-

osity drew together. He was ushered into towns with acclamations ; and indeed passed through Germany in a kind of triumph. He could not help expressing his surprise at the reception he met with. " I thought, (said he,) I had been an outcast ; I now see my worst enemies are in Bohemia." At Nuremburgh he was received with particular distinction : the magistrates and clergy waited upon him in form ; and being convinced of his innocence and integrity, assured him they had no doubt but the council would dismiss him with honour. These instances of the respect he met with are worth mentioning, not only as they shew the veneration in which Huss was generally held ; but as they shew likewise how well disposed the Germans were, even at that early day, to a reformation. This scene was acted about an hundred years before the time of Luther. In three weeks Huss arrived at Constance ; where, no one molesting him, he took private lodgings. One of his historians tells us, with an air of triumph, that his hostess's name was *Faith*.

Soon after Huss left Prague, Stephen Paletz left it likewise ; a person employed by the clergy there to manage the intended prosecution against him at Constance. Paletz was a man of good parts, plausible morals, and more learning than was commonly found among the churchmen of these days. He had contracted an early intimacy with Huss : their studies had been nearly the same : their

opinions seldom opposite. When John the twenty-third sent his legate to Prague, to levy forces against the king of Naples, his bulls were considered as a party test in Bohemia; a kind of shiboleth, which distinguished the papist from the gospeller. Paletz having received favours from the pope, and expecting more, deliberated what he should do. In a question of *right* and *wrong*, he should have taken the *first suggestion*, which is generally that of *conscience*: in a cool deliberation interest is apt to interfere. He was guilty therefore of a common piece of self-deceit; and mistook a point of conscience for a matter of prudence. His deliberations ended as such deliberations generally do: he made a matter of prudence of it. Having thus passed the barrier, every thing else was easy.—The same prudence suggested to him, that what he had already done was insufficient; that his offence in having at all communicated with the enemies of religion was great; and that his atonement must be great likewise. He made his atonement, and with abundant zeal; and continued from that time the most forward of Huss's persecutors.

On the same errand came to Constance, on the part of the court of Rome, Michael de Cassis; a person of a less solemn appearance, but of more dextrous talents. He had been bred a churchman, and was beneficed in Bohemia, which was his native country. But his abilities had been grossly mistaken. Formed by nature for business, he had

an utter aversion to study, and the confined employment of a parochial cure. He was a subtle enterprising man, versed in the world, of courtly manners, and a most insinuating address. Finding his profession a curb upon his genius, he recommended himself to his sovereign under the title of a projector. The king of Bohemia had a gold mine in his possession; which had been long neglected, as having cost more than its produce. This mine de Cassis pretended to work at an easier expense; and dressed his tale with so many plausible circumstances, that Wincellaus was thoroughly imposed upon; and intrusted him with what money he desired, to the amount of a large sum, for the execution of his project. Whether the artist at first meant honestly, may be doubted; his project however miscarried: on which, finding himself in a perplexity, he embezzled what was left of the money, and escaped out of Bohemia. Rome was the asylum he chose. Here by an artful display of some new talents, of which he had a great variety, he obtained not only the pope's protection, but his favour; and became a very useful person in the capacity of one, who was ready for any employment, which nobody else would undertake. When it was resolved in the conclave to have Huss brought before the council of Constance, this man was tampered with. He made large promises: "He had formerly been acquainted with Huss at Prague, and knew such things of him, as perhaps

nobody else did." In short, being thought an excellent instrument for the purpose, and being well pensioned, and instructed, he set out among the pope's retinue.

When Huss arrived at Constance, he found the council almost full: the more considerable members of it were either already arrived, or arriving every day: the pope had been there some days; and held his residence in a castle near the city.

Immediately after Huss's arrival, his friend the baron de Clum notified it to the pope: whom he informed at the same time, that Huss had obtained the emperor's safe conduct, to which he begged his holiness would add his own. "If he had killed my brother, (answered John vehemently,) he should have it."

Huss depending upon his innocence, and still more upon the emperor's honour, used the same freedom of speech at Constance, which he had ever used at Prague. He supposed he should have been called upon to preach before the council; and had provided two sermons for that purpose; in one of which he made a confession of his faith; and in the other shewed the necessity of a reformation of the clergy. But the council did not put him upon preaching; which shews, as Lenfant seems to insinuate, that they were predetermined to destroy him. They were unwilling to give him an opportunity of speaking, without interruption, to the people; knowing that his noble simplicity, his doc-

time far from heretical, and the engaging sweetness of his manner, would have greatly conciliated the minds of men in his favour.

In the mean time his adversaries, particularly the two already mentioned, were indefatigable. They were continually with the leading members of the council, plotting, contriving, and concerting in what way their schemes might run the least risk of a miscarriage. Paletz took upon himself the task of drawing up articles, which he did with such acrimony, as left no room for the amendment of others. The effect of these secret negotiations soon appeared.

About the beginning of December, the bishops of Ausburg and Trent came to Huss's lodgings informing him they were sent by the pope and the college of cardinals, who were now disposed to hear what he had to urge in his defence. Huss excused his attendance. "I came voluntarily hither, said he, to be examined before the whole council; and to them only I will render myself accountable." The bishops assuming a friendly air, began to press him: and after many assurances, on their part, of the purity of their intentions, and some farther opposition on his, he at length complied.

His examination before the pope and cardinals was a mere farce. They wanted him in their power; and even still seemed irresolute how to act. Paletz pressed to have him imprisoned; and assured the cardinals he was daily increasing his party

by that unbridled liberty of speech, in which he was indulged.

While this point was debating, Huss was engaged in the following scene. As he waited in a gallery, a Franciscan came up to him; and, after many crossings, and gesticulations common among that sort of men, accosted him thus: "Reverend father, of whom the world speaketh so loudly, excuse a poor friar's impertinence. All my life long have I been inquiring after truth. Many difficulties have arisen in the course of my inquiries: some I have conquered: others have been above my abilities. Among the rest, none hath occasioned me so much perplexity, as the doctrine of the sacrament. How kindly should I take it, would you rectify my errors. I am informed, you hold, that the bread, still remains material, after the words of the consecration?" Huss told him, he had been misinformed. Upon which the Franciscan, seeming surprised, repeated his question, and received the same answer. Asking the same question a third time, the baron de Clum, who attended Huss, turned to the friar, and said with some asperity, "why, dost thou believe this reverend father would lie to thee? How many answers doth thou expect?" "Gentle sir, (said the Franciscan,) be not wroth with your poor servant. I asked but in mere simplicity, and through a desire of knowledge. May I then, (said he, addressing himself to Huss,) presume to ask,



what kind of union of the Godhead and manhood subsisted in the person of Christ?" Huss surprised at this question, said to the baron in the Sclavonian tongue, "this is one of the most difficult questions in divinity:" And then turning to the Franciscan, told him, he did not believe him to be that uninformed person whom he pretended to be. The Franciscan finding himself suspected went off with the same sanctified grimaces, with which he had approached; and the baron asking a soldier of the pope's guard, who stood near him, if he knew the Franciscan, the soldier told him, that his name was Didace; and that he was esteemed the most subtil divine in Lombardy. It afterwards appeared, that the whole was a formed scheme of the cardinals, who had sent this person to endeavour to draw some new matter of accusation against Huss from his own mouth. The story may give an idea of the unmanly artifices which were practised against him.

The friar was scarce gone, when an officer appeared with a party of guards; and seizing Huss, shewed his warrant to apprehend him. Astonished at such perfidy, the baron ran instantly to the pope, and demanded an audience, or rather indeed pushed rudely into his presence; where with great heat of language, (for he was naturally a warm man) he remonstrated against so notorious a breach of faith.

"Can your holiness, (said he) deny, that with your own mouth, you made me a formal promise, that

Huss should remain un molested at Constance &c. The pope was confounded: he sat speechless for some time: at last, he brought out by syllables, that it was the act of the cardinals; that he had no hand in the matter; that he could not help it.

In truth, the pope was an object of pity as well as blame. Foreseeing the storm, which was already gathering against him, he was looking round for shelter; and was become at this time so dispirited, so timid, and fearful of giving offence, among the cardinals particularly, from whom he had so much both to hope and fear, that he neither did, nor said any thing but what he knew would be agreeable. The baron perceiving the pope would not interfere, left him with indignation, resolving to try his influence with the other members of the council.

In the mean time Huss was conveyed privately to Constance, where he was confined in the chapter house of the cathedral, till a more proper place could be found.

Upon the banks of the Rhine, where that river leaves the lake of Constance, stood a lonely monastery, belonging to the Franciscans, the whole interest of which order was bent against Huss. Thither he was conveyed, and lodged in the lower part of a noisome tower.

Yet even here his active spirit could not rest unemployed. By the help of a single ray of light, which shone through an aperture of his dungeon, he composed many little tracts; which afterwards

found their way into Bohemia, and were in great esteem among his followers. Of these one was a comment upon the commandments; a second upon the Lord's prayer; a third was an essay upon the knowledge and love of God; and a fourth upon the three great enemies of mankind. Besides these, were some others.

1. Whilst Huss was thus employed, the baron, and many of his other friends, were labouring for his liberty. They applied separately to the leading members of the council; and addressed themselves particularly to the four presidents. All was in vain: effectual pains had been taken to frustrate their endeavours; every ear was stopped, and every avenue barred. Baffled and disconcerted, the baron was obliged to desist, full of reflections upon the horrors of ecclesiastical tyranny.

In the midst of these endeavours for the recovery of his liberty, Huss was seized with a violent disorder, probably brought on by unwholesome air. His disease increasing, his life was in question. The pope alarmed, sent his own physicians to attend him. A grand conneil was called. "What should be done? should the heretic dye, himself and his doctrine yet uncondemned, what discredit would arise to the church of Christ?" They resolved therefore to draw up articles against him, and condemn him in prison. Articles accordingly were drawn up, and a formal citation sent.

The messengers found him extended upon what

served him for a bed. He raised himself upon his arm. His eyes sunk and languid, his visage pale, and emaciated; "You see, said he, friends, my condition. Do I seem like a man fit to defend a cause in a public assembly? Go—tell your masters what you have seen. But stay; tell them likewise, that if they will only allow me an advocate, I will not fail, even in this condition, to join issue with them."

This request occasioned a new debate: All were against closing with it; but they wanted a pretext. Fortunately an old canon was produced, which forbid any one to defend the cause of an heretic. Though this was begging the question; yet it was the fairest pretence which could be found. Huss was accordingly informed, that his request should have been complied with, but the orders of holy church forbid.

While this affair was in agitation, the following event checked its progress.

John the twenty-third, from many symptoms at this time foreseeing his fate, resolved, if possible, to avoid it. He left Constance therefore in disguise, and made towards Italy; flattering himself, that if he should be able to reach Rome, he might still contrive to baffle the council. But his hopes were too sanguine. The emperor, having early notice of his flight, with a speedy arm arrested him near the Alps. He was brought back to Constance; and from that time every appearance of power fell from

him. This event put a stop to the prosecution against Huss; and his health afterwards growing better, it was for some time wholly laid aside.

The Bohemian nobility having in vain made an application to the council, applied next to the emperor. That prince, when first informed of the imprisonment of Huss, was greatly disgusted at it. So notorious a breach of faith shocked the honesty of his nature; and he sent immediate orders to Constance, where he himself was not yet arrived, to have him instantly released. But the fathers of the council soon removed his scruples; and he was, at the time of the pope's flight, so entirely devoted to their sentiments, that he formally delivered Huss into their hands. By them that unfortunate man was sent to the castle of Gottleben, beyond the Rhine, where he was laden with fetters, and at night even chained to the floor:—to such a determined height was the malice of his enemies at this time raised!

Nor was Huss the single object of their resentment. Whoever in Constance was known to be of his party became immediately obnoxious. The populace were even mad with the prejudices of their leaders; had thoroughly imbibed their spirit, and turned it into fury: so that it became dangerous not only for Huss's followers, but even for his favourers to appear in public. Seeing their presence therefore served only to exasperate, the

greater part of them withdrew from Constance, leaving their unfortunate leader to abide his fate.

In the mean time, his friends in Bohemia were sufficiently active. The whole kingdom was in motion. Messengers were continually posting from one province to another. It appeared as if some great revolution was approaching. At length a petition was sent through the kingdom, and subscribed by almost the whole body of the Bohemian nobility, and gentry. It was dated in May 1415, and was addressed to the council of Constance. In this petition, having put the council in mind of the safe conduct, which had been granted to Huss; and of their having, in an unprecedented manner, imprisoned him, before they had heard his defence; they begged a speedy end might be put to his sufferings, by allowing him an audience as soon as possible. The barons, who presented this petition were answered in brief, that no injury had been done to their countryman; and that he should very speedily be examined.

Finding however that delays were still made, they presented a second, and more explicit petition to the presidents of the four nations: and not receiving an immediate answer, they presented a third, in which they begged the release of Huss in very pressing terms, and offered any security for his appearance.

The Bohemian nobility were too much in earnest, and too instant to be wholly neglected. As care-

less an ear as possible had been thus far lent to their petitions. But their ardour was now too great to be easily checked. The patriarch of Antioch therefore, in answer to this last petition, made them a handsome speech; and in civil language informed them, that no security could be taken; but that Huss should certainly be brought to a hearing in less than a week.

When they presented this last petition to the council, they presented another to the emperor; in which they pressed upon him, with great earnestness, his honour solemnly engaged for the security of Huss, and implored his protection, and his interest with the council.

As the affair of the safe conduct, on which the aggravation of the injuries done to Huss so greatly depends, is placed in different lights by protestant and popish writers, it may not be improper to enquire into the merits of it; and to lay before the reader the principal topics of the argument on both sides of the question.

In answer to the protestant's exclamations against so notorious a breach of faith, the papists thus apologize.

“We allow, (says Mainburgh,) that Huss obtained a safe conduct from the emperor: but for what end did he obtain it? Why, to defend his doctrine. If his doctrine was indefensible, his pass was invalid. It was always, (says Rosweide, a jesuit,) *supposed*, in the safe conduct, that justice

should have its course. Besides, (cry a number of apologizers) the emperor plainly exceeded his powers. By the canon law he could not grant a pass to an heretic; and by the decretals the council might annul any imperial act. Nay farther, (says Morery,) if we examine the pass, we shall find it, at best, a promise of security only till his arrival at Constance; or indeed rather a mere recommendation of him to the cities, through which he passed: so that, in fact, it was righteously fulfilled.

To all this the protestant thus replies. Be it granted, (which is, in truth, granting too much,) that the safe conduct implied a liberty only of defending his doctrine; yet it was violated, we find, before that liberty was given, before that doctrine was condemned, or even examined. And though the emperor might exceed his power in granting a pass to an heretic, yet Huss was at this time, only *suspected* of heresy. Nor was the imperial act annulled by the council, till after the pass was violated. Huss was condemned in the fifteenth session, and the safe conduct decreed invalid in the nineteenth. With regard to the deficiency of the safe conduct, which is Morery's apology, it doth not appear, that it was ever an apology of ancient date. Huss, it is certain, considered the safe conduct, as a sufficient security for his return home: and indeed so much is implied in the very nature of a safe conduct. What title would that general deserve, who should invite his enemy into



his quarters by a pass, and then seize him? Reasoning however apart, let us call in fact. *Omni prorsus impedimento remoto, transire, stare, morari, & REDIRE liberè permittatis fibique et assis*, are the very words of the safe conduct.

In conclusion therefore we cannot but judge the emperor to have been guilty of a most notorious breach of faith. The blame however is generally laid, and with some reason, upon the council, who directed his conscience. What true son of the church would dare to oppose his private opinion against the unanimous voice of a general council?

On the first of June, the council had promised the Bohemian deputies, that Huss should be examined within the week. They said *examined*; but they meant *condemned*. In the mean time, as if they had been suspicious of their cause, all probable means were used to shake his resolution, and make him retract: but his unaltered firmness gave them no hope of effecting their purpose.

On the fifth of June it was resolved, that the articles objected to him, should be produced, and in his absence examined: when, after what they called a *fair hearing*, he should be sent for, and condemned.

There was attending the council, at that time, a public notary, whose name was Madonwitz. This man, whether struck with the iniquity of their proceedings, or in his heart a favourer of Huss, went immediately to the Bohemian deputies; and gave

them a full information of the designs of the council. - The deputies had no time to lose. They demanded an instant audience of the emperor; and laid their complaints before him.

Sigismond was at least a decent adversary. The manners of a court had polished away those rough edges of bigotry in him, which appeared so harsh in the cloystered churchman. He was greatly offended at the gross proceedings of the council; and sent them a very arbitrary message to desist. He would have nothing done, he told them, but with the defendant face to face. This message had its effect; and Huss was summoned to appear before them the next day.

The assembly was held in a large cloyster belonging to the Franciscans. Here a new scene, and of a very extraordinary kind, was presented. The first article of the charge was scarce read, and a few witnesses in a cursory manner examined, when, Huss preparing to make his defence, the tumult began. Loud voices were heard from every quarter; a multitude of questions at the same instant asked, every one speaking, and no one heard, or heard but in one universal din of confusion. From many parts even reproaches, and the most opprobrious language broke out. Such, on this occasion, was the behaviour of the famous council of Constance. No forum could produce more licentious instances of popular tumult. If an interval of less disorder succeeded, and Huss was about to offer

any thing in his defence, he was immediately interrupted: "What avails this? What is that to the purpose?" No appearance of argument was brought against him.

Such astonishing license moved, in some degree, the most dispassionate of men. "In this place, (said HUSS,) looking round him, I hoped to have found a different treatment." His rebuke increased the clamour; so that finding it vain to attempt any farther defence, he held his peace. This was matter of new triumph: "He was now confounded, silenced, by confession guilty." Luther hath given us a strong picture of this unruly assembly. "*Ibi omnes, (saith he) aprorum more fremere, setas à tergo erigere, frontem corrugare, dentesque acuere ceperunt.*"

There were some in that council, men of cooler temper, who foreseeing the ill effects of such violence, used what credit they had to check it. To divert the furious spirit, which had spread among those zealots, and to throw in so much moderation among them, as to bring them to debate calmly, was at this time impossible. All that could be done, was, to get the business postponed till another opportunity: which was at length, and with the utmost difficulty, effected.

The next morning they met again. They were hardly seated, when the emperor entered the council chamber, and took his seat at the upper end of it. The disorder of the assembly, the day

before, had greatly disgusted Sigismond; and he came now prepared to awe them into a more decent behaviour. His end was in part obtained. Mere decency was at least observed. It would be tedious to enter into a full detail of what passed upon this occasion: what follows is a summary of it.

The examination was opened by Du Cassis; the first article of which exhibited a charge against Huss for denying the real presence. This was proved by a Dominican, from a sermon which Huss had preached at Bethlem. He had only to answer, that he had always held the true catholic doctrine; which was a known truth among his friends; for he had ever believed transubstantiation.

He was next charged in general with maintaining the pernicious errors of Wickliff. To this he answered, that he never had held any error, which he knew to be such; and that he desired nothing more than to be convinced of what errors he might inadvertently have fallen into. Wickliff's doctrine of tythes was objected to him; which, he owned, he knew not how to refute. It was further proved, that he had expressed himself against burning the books of Wickliff. To this he answered, that he had spoken against burning them in the manner practised by the late archbishop of Prague, who condemned them to the flames without examining them. He was farther charged with saying, that he wished his soul in the same place where Wic-

Huss's was. This expression, he owned, he had made use of; which afforded matter of great mirth to his hearers.

The next article charged him with sedition, in exciting the people to take arms against their sovereign. But of this charge he entirely exculpated himself. Nothing indeed could be proved against him, but that in a sermon, by no means temporising, he had exhorted his hearers in the apostle's language, *to put on the whole armour of God.* This very frivolous charge gives us the most adequate idea of the malice of his enemies..

The next article accused him of forming dissensions between the church and the state; and of ruining the university of Prague. The former part of the accusation alluded to a dispute between the pope and the king of Bohemia, which Huss was said, though unjustly, to have fomented; the latter part, to the affair of the Germans, which hath already been placed in its proper light. An examination of Huss on these few articles employed the first day.

The council rising, he was carried back to prison. As he passed by the cardinal of Cambray, who sat near the emperor, the cardinal stopping him, said, "I have been informed, you have heretofore boasted, that unless you had chosen it yourself, neither the king of Bohemia, nor the emperor could have forced you to Constance." "My lord cardinal, (answered Huss,) if I said any thing of

this kind, I said it not in the strong terms, in which it hath been represented to you. I might possibly speak gratefully of the kindness of my friends in Bohemia." Upon this the baron de Clam, who never left him, with a noble firmness, told the cardinal, that if what he had heard had been said, it was only the truth: "I am far from being, (said he,) a person of the greatest consequence in my own country: others have stronger castles, and more power than I have; yet even I would have ventured to have defended this reverend father a whole year against the utmost efforts of both the princes you have mentioned."

The emperor then turning to Huss, told him, that he had given him his safe conduct, which he found was more than was well in his power, that he might have an opportunity to vindicate his character. "But depend upon it, (said he) if you continue obstinate, I will make a fire with my own hands, to burn you, rather than you shall escape."

To this zealous speech Huss answered, in few words, that he could not charge himself with holding any opinions obstinately; that he came thither with joy rather than reluctance; that if any better doctrine than his own could be laid before him in that learned assembly, he might see his error, and embrace the truth. Having said this, he was carried back to prison.

His examination did not end here. He was called before the council again; and many articles,

not fewer than forty, were brought against him. The chief of them were extracted from his books; and some of them by very unfair deduction.

The following opinions, among many others, which gave offence were esteemed most criminal: "That there was no absolute necessity for a visible head of the church; that the church was better governed in apostolic times without one; that the title of holiness was improperly given to man; that a wicked pope could not possibly be the vicar of Christ; that he denied the very authority on which he pretended to act; that liberty of conscience was every ones natural right; that ecclesiastical censures, especially such as touched the life of man, had no foundation in scripture; that ecclesiastical obedience should have its limits; that no excommunication should deter the priest from his duty; that preaching was as much required from the minister of religion, as alms giving from the man of ability; and that neither of them could hide his talent in the earth without incurring the divine displeasure." Paletz and the cardinal of Cambrey were the chief managers of this examination.

Besides these opinions, most of which were proved and acknowledged, he threw out many things in the course of his examination, which were eagerly laid hold on; particularly against the scandalous lives of the clergy of every denomination; the open simony practised among them, their luxury, lewdness, and ignorance.

opportunities would give him new spirits, and raise a second commotion worse than the first. As to the fate however of this unhappy man, be that as it may hereafter be determined; at present, let me only add, that an authentic copy of the condemned articles should be sent into Bohemia; as a ground work for the clergy there to proceed on; that heresy may at length be rooted up; and peace restored to that distracted country."

The emperor having finished his speech, it was agreed in the council to allow Huss a month longer to give in his final answer. With the utmost difficulty he had supported himself through this severe trial. Besides the malice of his enemies, he had upon him the paroxysm of a very violent disorder. On this last day he was scarce able to walk, when he was led from the council. His consolation in these circumstances was a cold and hungry dungeon, into which he was inhumanly thrust.

His friend, the baron, attended him even thither; and with every instance of endearing tenderness, endeavoured to support him. The suffering martyr wrung his hand; and looking round the horrid scene, earnestly cried out, "Good God! this is friendship indeed!" His keepers soon after put him in irons; and none but such as were licensed by the council, were allowed to see him.

The generous nature of Sigismund, though he was not unversed in the artifices of the cabinet, abhorred a practised fraud. The affair of Huss,



amidst all the casuistry of the council, gave hint-keen distress; and he wished for nothing more ardently, than to rid his hands of it with honour. On the other side, his vanity and his interest engaged him to appear the defender of the catholic cause in Germany. If he suffered Huss to be put to death one part of the world would question his honour: if he interfered with a high hand in preserving him, the other part would question his religion. The perplexity was great; from which he thought nothing could relieve him, but the recantation of Huss.

To obtain this, he tried every mean in his power. He had already endeavoured to intimidate him with high language, which he had used, both in the council, and in other places. But this was ineffectual. He had now recourse to soothing arts. The form of a recantation was offered; in which Huss was required only to renounce those heresies which had been fairly proved. But he continued still inflexible. Several deputations were afterwards sent to him in prison; and bishops, cardinals, and princes in vain tried their eloquence to persuade him,

Sigismond seeing the conclusion to which this fatal affair was approaching, might probably have interested himself thus far, as thinking he had been too condescending to the council. The flame also, which he saw kindling in Bohemia, where he had high expectations, and was willing to preserve an

interest, might alarm him greatly. He had gone too far however to recede; and knew not how to take Huss out of the hands of the council; into which he had given him with so much zeal and devotion.

In the mean time Huss remained master of his fate; and shewed a constancy which scarce any age hath excelled. He amused himself, while it was permitted, with writing letters to his friends, which were privately conveyed by the Bohemian lords, who visited him in prison. Many of these letters are still extant. The following which is the substance of one of them, may be a test of that composed piety and rational frame of mind, which supported him in all his sufferings.

“My dear friends, let me take this last opportunity of exhorting you to trust in nothing here, but to give yourselves up entirely to the service of God. Well am I authorized to warn you not to trust in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them. God only remaineth stedfast.—What he promiseth, he will undoubtedly perform. For myself, on his gracious promise I rest. Having endeavoured to be his faithful servant, I fear not being deserted by him. Where I am, says the gracious promiser, there shall my servant be. May the God of heaven preserve you! This is probably the last letter I shall be enabled to write. I have reason to believe I shall be called upon to-morrow to answer with my life. Sigismund hath in all things acted deceitfully. I pray God forgive.

him! You have heard in what severe language he hath spoken of me.”

The month, which had been allowed by the council, being now expired, a deputation of four bishops came to receive his last answer, which was given in the same language as before.

The sixth of July was appointed for his condemnation; the scene of which was opened with extraordinary pomp. In the morning of that day, the bishops and temporal lords of the council, each in his robes, assembled in the great church at Constance. The emperor presided in a chair of state. When all were seated, Huss was brought in by a guard. In the middle of the church, a scaffold had been erected; near which a table was placed, covered with the vestments of a romish priest.

After a sermon, in which the preacher earnestly exhorted his hearers to *cut of the man of sin*, the proceedings began. The articles alledged against him were read aloud; as well those, which he had, as those which he had not allowed. This treatment Huss opposed greatly; and would gladly, for his character's sake, have made a distinction: but finding all endeavours of this kind ineffectual, and being indeed plainly told by the cardinal of Cambray, that no farther opportunity of answering for himself should be allowed, he desisted; and falling on his knees, in a pathetic ejaculation, commended his cause to Christ.

The articles against him, as form required, hav-

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ing been recited, the sentence of his condemnation was read. The instrument is tedious; in substance it runs, "that JOHN HUSS, being a disciple of Wicliff of damnable memory, whose life he had defended, and whose doctrine he had maintained, is adjudged by the council of Constance (his tenets having been first condemned) to be an obstinate heretic; and as such, to be degraded from the office of a priest; and cut off from the holy church."

His sentence having been thus pronounced, he was ordered to put on the priest's vestments, and ascend the scaffold, according to form, where he might speak to the people; and, it was hoped, might still have the grace to retract his errors. But HUSS contented himself with saying once more, that he knew of no errors, which he had to retract; that none had been proved upon him; and that he would not injure the doctrine he had taught, nor the consciences of those who had heard him, by ascribing to himself errors, of which he had never been convinced.

When he came down from the scaffold, he was received by seven bishops, who were commissioned to degrade him. The ceremonies of this business exhibited a very unchristian scence. The bishops forming a circle round him, each adding a curse took off a part of his attire. When they had thus stripped him of his sacerdotal vestments, they proceeded to erase his tonsure, which they did by clipping it into the form of a cross. Some wri-

ters say, that in doing this, they even tore and mangled his head; but such stories, are unquestionably the exaggeration of protestant zeal. Their last act was to adorn him with a large paper cap, on which, various, and horrid forms of devils were painted. This cap one of the bishops put upon his head; with this unchristian speech, "hereby we commit thy soul to the devil." Huss smiling, observed, "It was less painful than a crown of thorns."

The ceremony of his degradation being thus over, the bishops presented him to the emperor. They had now done, they told him, all the church allowed. What remained was of civil authority. Sigismund ordered the duke of Bavaria to receive him, who immediately gave him into the hands of an officer. This person had orders to see him burned, with every thing he had about him.

At the gate of the church a guard of 800 men waited to conduct him to the place of execution. He was carried first to the gate of the episcopal palace; where a pile of wood being kindled, his books were burned before his face. Huss smiled at the indignity.

When he came to the stake, he was allowed some time for devotion; which he performed in so animated a manner, that many of the spectators, who came there sufficiently prejudiced against him, cried out, "what this man hath said within doors we know not, but surely he prayeth like a Christian."

As he was preparing for the stake, he was asked whether he choose a confessor? He answered in the affirmative; and a priest was called. The design was to draw from him a retractation, without which, the priest said, he durst not confess him. "If that be your resolution, said Huss, I must die without confession: I trust in God, I have no mortal sin to answer for."

He was then tied to the stake with wet cords, and fastened by a chain round his body. As the executioners were beginning to pile the faggots around him, a voice from the crowd was heard, "turn him from the east; turn him from the east." It seemed like a voice from heaven. They who conducted the execution, struck at once with the impropriety, or rather prophaneness of what they had done, gave immediate orders to have him turned due west.

Before fire was brought, the duke of Bavaria rode up, and exhorted him once more to retract his errors. But he still continued firm. "I have no errors, said he to retract: I endeavoured to preach Christ with apostolic plainness; and I am now prepared to seal my doctrine with my blood."

The faggots being lighted, he recommended himself into the hands of God, and began a hymn, which he continued singing, till the wind drove the flame and smoke into his face. For sometime he was invisible. When the rage of the fire abated his body half consumed appeared hanging ove

the chain; which together with the post, were thrown down, and a new pile heaped over them. The malice of his enemies pursued his very remains. His ashes were gathered up, and scattered in the Rhine; that the very earth might not feel the load of such enormous guilt.

From this view of the life and sufferings of Huss, it is hard to say what were the real grounds of the animosity he had raised. His creed unquestionably was far from being exactly orthodox; yet it is plain how very ill able his adversaries were to gather from it offensive matter enough for an accusation. He believed transubstantiation; he allowed the adoration of saints; he practised confession; he spoke cautiously of tradition, and reverently of the seven sacraments; and whatever latitude he might give himself on any of these articles, it was not more than had been often taken, inoffensively taken, by Gerson, Zabarelle, and other spirited divines of the Roman church.

Besides, the great pains the council took to avoid a public question, and the great confidence with which Huss desired one, are presumptions very strong in his favour.

It is the opinion of Lenfant, that the great cause of his condemnation was his introducing Wicliff's doctrine into Bohemia; and chiefly perhaps that offensive part of it, which struck at the temporalities of the clergy. And indeed this is extremely probable from the whole conduct of the council;

for though it is apparent, that he never adopted the entire system of that reformer; yet his principles, it is certain, would have led him much farther, than they had hitherto done; and the fathers of the council being aware of this, seem to have determined though at the expense of justice, to crush an evil in its origin, which appeared teeming with so much mischief.

Besides this, there seems to have been another cause for that unabated prejudice, which ran so high against him. The warmth, with which he treated the corruptions of the clergy, and the usurpations of the church of Rome, was a crime never to be forgiven by the ecclesiastics of those times; and added the keenest edge to their resentment. But as this was an unpopular cause to appear in, it is plain they wanted to have it believed their resentment arose upon another account. This seems to have been the foundation of a speech, attributed by Varillis to cardinal Perron; "My learned friends, (he would say,) you cannot employ your time worse, than in giving the world any account of the affairs of Huss."

His life however was the severest satire upon the clergy. It was a mirror, which reflected their distorted features. In him they saw the true ecclesiastic, and the real christian, characters so different from their own. Gentle and condescending to the opinions of others, this amiable pattern of virtue was strict only in his own principles. The



opinions indeed of men were less his concern than their practice. His great contest was with vice; and he treated the ministers of religion with freedom, only as he thought their example encouraged, rather than checked, that license, which prevailed. The great lines in his character were piety, and fortitude. His piety was calm, rational, and manly: his fortitude nothing human could daunt. The former was free from enthusiasm; the latter from weakness. He was in every respect an apostolical man. "From his infancy, (says the university of Prague, in a voluntary testimonial) he was of such excellent morals, that during his stay here, we may venture to challenge any one to produce a single fault against him.

As to his parts and acquirement, he seems to have been above mediocrity; and yet not in the highest form, in respect of either. A vein of good sense runs through all his writings; but their distinguishing characteristics are simplicity and piety. In one of Luther's pieces we have the following testimony in their favour. "In a monastic library, (says that reformer,) a volume of Huss's writings fell in my way; which I seized with great eagerness, surprised that such a book had escaped the flames, and desirous to know something of the opinions of that heresiarch. But who can express my astonishment, when I found him by many degrees the most rational expounder of scripture I had ever met with. I could not help crying out;

what could occasion the severity with which this man was treated ! yet as the name of HUSS was so detestable ; and as a favourable opinion of him was so utterly inconsistent with a Christian's faith, I shut the book, and could find comfort only in this thought, that perhaps he wrote these things, before his fall ; for I was yet ignorant of what had passed at the council of Constance."

To preserve the memory of this excellent man, the sixth of July was, for many years, held sacred among the Bohemians. A service, adapted to the day, was appointed to be read in all churches ; and instead of a sermon, an oration was spoken in commendation of their martyr, in which the noble stand he made against ecclesiastical tyranny was commemorated ; and his example proposed as a pattern to all Christians.

In some places large fires were lighted in the evening, upon the mountains, to preserve the memory of his sufferings ; round which the country people would assemble, and sing hymns in his praise.

A very remarkable medal was struck in honour of him, on which was represented his effigies, with this inscription, CENTUM REVOLUTIS ANNIS DEO RESPONDEBITIS ET MIHI. These words are said to have been spoken by him to his adversaries, a little before his execution ; and were afterwards applied by the zealots of his sect, as prophetic of Luther ; who lived about an hundred years after him. The story carries with it an air of irrational zeal ; and seems calculated only for the credulous.

THE  
**LIFE**  
OF  
**JEROME OF PRAGUE.**

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WE find very little relating to the early part of the life of this reformer. As he was a zealous follower of Huss, and united with him in all his schemes; the actions, in which they were jointly engaged, are ascribed by historians to Huss, as the more eminent leader. In general however, we find his youth spent in an eager pursuit of knowledge; which he sought after in all the more considerable universities of Europe; particularly in those of Prague, Paris, Heidelburgh, Cologne, and Oxford.

At Oxford, which seems to have been the last seat of learning, which he visited, he became acquainted with the works of Wicliff; and being a person of uncommon application, he translated many of them into his native language; having with great pains made himself master of the English.

It is probable he had conceived an esteem for Wicliff, before he went to Oxford. At his return to Prague, he professed himself an open favourer of him; and finding his doctrines had made a con-

siderable progress in Bohemia, and that Huss was at the head of that party, which had espoused them, he attached himself to that leader.

Huss was glad of so able an assistant in his great work of reforming the clergy: for JEROME was inferior to none of his time, in point either of abilities, or learning; superior certainly to his master in both. Huss was however better qualified as the leader of a party; his gentleness, and very persuasive manner conciliating the minds of men in his favour: whereas JEROME, with all his great and good qualities, wanted temper.

Of this we have some instances; one indeed very flagrant. He was disputing with two monks about reliques, whom he accidentally met on the banks of the Muldaw; and finding himself more warmly opposed than he expected, he seized one of them by the middle, and threw him into the river. The monk recovered the shore; but was in no condition to pursue his argument. So JEROME triumphed by the strength of his arm. Whether this story be a fact, as indeed Lenfant speaks very dubiously of the truth of it, we have however no reason to doubt, that JEROME was not principally concerned in those passionate doings, which have been mentioned in the life of Huss.

We find little more recorded of JEROME, till the time of the council of Constance. When Huss went thither, JEROME, we are told, very pathetically exhorted him to bear up firmly in this great

trial; and in particular to insist strenuously upon the corrupt state of the clergy; and the necessity of a reformation. He added, that if he should hear in Bohemia, that Huss was overpowered by his adversaries, he would immediately repair to Constance; and lend him what assistance he was able.

He promised only what he fully intended. He no sooner heard of the difficulties, in which his master was engaged, than he set out for Constance; notwithstanding Huss wrote very pressing letters, insisting upon his putting off the design, as dangerous, and unprofitable.

He arrived at Constance, on the 4th of April, 1415; about three months before the death of Huss. He entered the town privately; and consulting with some of the leaders of his party; whom he found there, he was easily convinced, that he could be of no service to his friend; he found the council would not so much as give him an hearing; and that open violence was the only argument they used. He heard likewise, that his arrival at Constance had taken air; and that the council intended to seize him.

As this was the situation of things, he thought it prudent to retire. Accordingly the next day he went to Iberling, an imperial town about a mile from Constance; whether he fled, says Reichenthal, with such precipitation, that he left his sword behind him. Reichenthal was an officer, employed

by the council, to give an account of all strangers, who came to Constance.

From Iberling JEROME wrote to the emperor, and professed his readiness to appear before the council, if that prince would give him a safe conduct. But Sigismond had the honesty to refuse. JEROME then tried the council; but could obtain no favourable answer.

In this perplexity he put up papers in all the public places of Constance, particularly upon the doors of the cardinals houses, in which he professed his readiness to appear at Constance, in the defence of his character, and doctrine, both which he heard had been exceedingly defamed; and declared, that if any error should be proved against him, he would with great readiness retract it; begging only that the faith of the council might be given for his security.

These papers obtaining no answer, he set out upon his return to Bohemia. He had the precaution to carry with him a certificate signed by several of the Bohemian nobility then at Constance, testifying, that he had used all prudent means in his power to procure a hearing.

But he did not thus escape. At Hirsaw he was seized by an officer of the duke of Sultzbach; who though he acted unauthorised, made little doubt of the council's thanks for so acceptable a service.

Reichenthal hath given us a more particular account of this matter. "At a village upon the bor-

ders of the black forest, (saith that strenuous defender of the council,) JEROME fell accidentally in company with some priests. The conversation turning upon the council of Constance, JEROME grew warm; and among other severe things, called that assembly the *school of the devil*, and a *synagogue of iniquity*. The priests, scandalized at this language, gave immediate information of it to the chief magistrates of the place, who arrested JEROME, and put him into the hands of the duke of Sultzbach." This story hath by no means an improbable air; as it is rather characteristic; though Lenfant treats it as a fable.

The duke of Sultzbach, having gotten JEROME in his power, wrote to the council for directions. The council expressing their obligations to the duke, desired him to send his prisoner immediately to Constance. The elector palatine met him, and conducted him in triumph into the town; himself riding on horseback, with a numerous retinue, who led JEROME, in fetters, by a long chain after him.

He was brought immediately before the council. Here a citation was read to him; which, it was said, had been posted up in Constance, in answer to the papers, which he had sent from Iberling; and he was questioned about his precipitate flight from that town. To this he answered, that he had waited a reasonable time for an answer to his paper; but had never heard of any such answer till

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that moment. He added, that if he had heard of it, he would have returned to Constance, though he had been upon the confines of Bohemia.

Great was the clamour which ensued on this declaration. So eager was every mouth to open upon him, that the impartial spectator saw rather the representation of the baiting of a wild-beast, than a wise assembly enquiring after truth. Nothing indeed more disgraceth the popish cause, than the gross indecency, which, in a manner was authorized on these solemn occasions. A good cause hath never recourse to tumult,

Among those, who clamoured loudest against **JEROME**, we find a person, whom we are unwilling to see mixing in such a scene of disorder; **John Gerson**, chancellor of the university of Paris, one of the most learned, as well as the most knowing men of his time, but without that candour which usually attends knowledge. With great acrimony he reproached **JEROME** for the novel opinions he had introduced in Paris, while he studied there. **JEROME** answered with equal spirit, that it was hard to object opinions of so long a date; that it was well known the disputations of young students were meant rather as the exercise of genius, than as strict disquisitions of truth; that no exceptions at the time, had been made to the opinions which he had maintained; so far from it, that he had been honoured with a degree; but that however, if the chancellor would make his objections, he



would be ready either to defend or retract what he had said.

As the chancellor was about to reply, an inundation of furious language broke in upon their discourse. The rectors particularly of the universities of Cologne, and Heidelburgh, following the track of Gerson, made lamentable complaints of the pestilent heresies which JEROME had maintained in those places; one of them in particular dwelt much upon an impious idea he had given of the trinity, comparing it to water, snow and ice. JEROME had no opportunity of answering. A thousand voices burst out from every quarter, "Away with him: burn him: burn him."

This confusion continued nearly the space of half an hour. JEROME stood amazed at the gross indecency of the scene. As soon as he had collected himself, and could in any degree be heard, he looked round the assembly with a noble air, and cried out aloud, "Since nothing can satisfy you but my blood, God's will be done!"

Thus ended his first hearing. He was carried from the assembly into a dungeon, under the custody of a guard, till it could be determined how to dispose of him.

As he was sitting here, ruminating upon his approaching fate, a voice struck him, calling out in these words, "Fear not, JEROME, to die in the cause of that truth, which during thy life, thou hast defended." JEROME looking up to a dark

window, from whence the voice seemed to come, cried out, "Whoever thou art, who deignest to comfort an abject man, I give thee thanks for thy kind office. I have indeed lived defending what I thought the truth: the harder task yet remains, to die for its sake: but God, I hope, will support me against flesh and blood."

This conversation alarmed the guard, who rushing in discovered the offender. He appeared to be that Maddonwitz, whose services to Huss have already been mentioned.

The affair was used as a pretence for more severity against JEROME, who was immediately conveyed to a strong tower, where his hands being tied behind his neck, he was left to languish, we are told, in that painful posture, during the space of two days, without any aliment, but bread and water.

These severities, and others, which were inflicted upon him, were intended to force a recantation from him; a point which the council exceedingly laboured. Nothing, in the way either of promising or threatening, was omitted, which it was thought, might be effectual to that end.

His confinement brought upon him a dangerous illness; in the course of which he sent pressing instances to the council for a confessor. This afforded a proper occasion to work upon him; and he was given to understand, upon what terms he might be gratified. But he remained immovable.

The next attempt upon him, was immediately after the death of Huss. The circumstances of that affair were laid before him, and the fatal example pressed home in the most affecting manner. JEROME listened without emotion; and answered in such resolute language, as afforded little hopes of his sudden conversion.

His constancy, however, at length gave way. Flesh and blood could not support him longer. The simple fear of death he withstood; but to endure imprisonment, chains, hunger, sickness, and even torture, through a succession of many months, was too great a trial for human nature. But though he fell in this conflict, yet he fell not, till he had made a noble stand. He was three times brought before the council; and having as often withstood the fury of intemperate zeal, retired master of himself, to the horrors of his dungeon.

On the eleventh of September his judges first had hopes of his recantation. He began to waver; and talked obscurely of his having misunderstood the tendency of some of the tenets of Huss. Promises and threatenings were now redoubled upon him; and the twentieth was appointed for a more ample confession of his heresies. He was sounded the night before; but not being yet brought to a proper flexibility, another day was appointed. That fatal day was the twenty-third of September; when he read aloud an ample recantation, of all the opinions he had maintained, couched in words.

directed by the council. In this paper he acknowledged the errors of Wicliff, and of Huss, entirely assented to the condemnation of the latter, and declared himself, in every article, a firm believer with the church of Rome.

Having thus acted against his conscience, with a heavy heart he retired from the council. His chains were taken from him; but the load was only transferred from his body to his mind. Vain were the caresses of those about him; they only mocked his sorrow. His prison was now indeed a gloomy solitude. The anguish of his own thoughts had made it such.

Paletz, and Du Cassis, who were the chief managers against him, as they had been against Huss, soon observed this change. His recantation, they said publicly, came only from his lips; and they determined to bring him to a second hearing. It is probable they acted in this business only an under part. The pretence for a new trial was a new accusation; some Carmelite friars, just arrived from Bohemia, having laid before the council many strong articles against JEROME, which had not yet appeared. Paletz taking up the affair, seconded the Carmelites with great zeal: others again, as the scheme had been laid, harangued on different articles.

The managers however of this business soon found, they were likely to meet with a warmer opposition than they had imagined. The cardinals

particularly of Cambray and Florence, and others, who had been appointed judges by the council in the cause of JEROME, exclaimed loudly against a second trial. "He hath submitted, (said they) to the council; he hath acknowledged his errors in particular, as well as in general, what can we expect more? Hitherto we have acted with credit: let us stop here, and not suffer an intemperate zeal for truth to carry us beyond the bounds of justice."

Whether the love of justice was the only motive with these cardinals may be questioned. It is probable they were influenced by motives of policy also. The death of Huss had occasioned a greater commotion in Bohemia than had been foreseen. Nothing was heard in the streets of Prague, but clamour against the council, which was every where represented as an assembly of persecutors. The council, it seems, had written a letter, in very smooth language, to palliate the affair of Huss: but it had little effect. On the contrary, the principal Hussites, (for by that name the party became now distinguished,) assembled in the church of Bethalem, where they decreed the honour of martyrdom to their master. They went farther: they sent a letter to Constance; in which, having given ample testimony to the merits of Huss, they reproached the council with his death; expressing at the same time their devotion to the see of Rome, when the confusion, with which it was distracted, should be at an end. This letter was signed by fifty-four of

the first nobility in Bohemia, and Moravia: some Polish lords too subscribed it. Nor was it thought that Winceslaus himself, though no way attached to the cause of Huss, had interfered in checking the disturbance occasioned by his death. It is certain, he had taken great offence at the council for the affront, which he thought they had put upon him; and wanted only an opportunity of shewing them how much he was offended.

From the determined spirit of this letter, it was easy to observe the seeds of fire scattered in Bohemia, which a single breath might excite into flame; and how general this conflagration might become, it was impossible to foresee. All well wishers therefore to the peace of Christendom, thought it prudent to refrain from counsels of an inflammatory kind.

Among these, it is probable, were the cardinals just mentioned: who laboured, with what address they were able, to prevent a second trial. But their endeavours were ineffectual. A torrent of zeal and bigotry bore down all opposition. Even the learned Gerson joined in this unmanly clamour; and with great indecency employed his pen, as well as his tongue, upon the occasion. A treatise of his was made public, in which he shewed how little stress could be laid upon the recantation of heretics. To such an height ran dissention on this occasion, that the cardinal of Cambrai was even



reproached in public, with having taken money from the king of Bohemia.

He, and his colleagues, finding themselves unable to stem so furious a tide, at length gave way to it. They entered their protest however against these violent proceedings, and laid down the commission, with which the council had intrusted them. It was immediately taken up, with the general approbation of all the zealot party, by the patriarch of Constantinople; who having sufficiently shewn his spirit in the affair of Huss, was considered as a man prepared to go any lengths.

While these things were in agitation, a full half year elapsed; during which time JEROME'S enemies had influence enough to continue his confinement, till some end should be put to the affair.

It was not till the May of the year 1416, that JEROME was called again before the council. He had long been apprized of the design of bringing him to a second trial, upon some new evidence which had appeared. This, amidst all his distresses, was his great consolation; and he rejoiced at an opportunity of acknowledging publicly that shameful defection, which hung so heavy upon him.

A little before the day of trial, he was informed, that prætors were appointed, by whom he might urge his defence. But he insisted positively upon making no defence in any form, unless the council would give him an audience; and let him answer

for himself. This after much difficulty, and long debating, was at length allowed.

When he was brought to an audience, he was charged with various articles; the chief of which were, his adherence to the errors of Wicliff; his having had a picture of that heretic in his chamber, arrayed in the common ornaments of a saint—his counterfeiting the seal of the university of Oxford in favour of Wicliff; his despising the authority of the church after excommunication, and his denial of transubstantiation.

On all these articles of accusation, and what others of less moment were objected to him, he answered with great spirit. "That he thought well of Wicliff, and of his doctrine, he said, he scrupled not to own; but that he thought him infallible, as seemed to be insinuated, was false, that many of his books he had never seen; and that he could not subscribe in all points to those he had; but that in general he believed many errors had been laid to his charge, of which he was innocent; for he was too wise a man, he said, to be the author of gross absurdities, many of which his enemies had inserted in his creed. With regard to his having had a picture of Wicliff in his possession, he said, it was very true; and that he had the pictures likewise of many other learned men; but he remembered not, he said, that Wicliff's portrait was dressed in any saint like ornaments; that as to the charge of his having counterfeited the seal of the university of



Oxford, he had seen, he said, a testimonial under that seal, in favour of Wicliff, which he had been made to believe was authentic: he owned too, that he had read it publicly; but that as to his having counterfeited either the seal, or the instrument, he was totally innocent of the charge; and it rested upon his opponents to prove the allegation. This affair of a false testimonial made much noise, it seems, at that time. But from the general temper of the university it is probable, the instrument was authentic; and the evidence of history confirms its authenticity. Finally, JEROME declared solemnly, that he had never despised the authority of the church: he could prove, he said, that he had used every probable method in his power to be reconciled to it; and that lastly, he had never, either in conversation, or writing, opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Having thus protested his innocence, he gave the council a circumstantial detail of his coming to Constance; and of all that had since befallen him. Then raising his voice, and expressing himself first with some asperity against his accusers, he told them, he was now going to lay himself more open to them, than he had yet done. He then, with great emotion, declared before the whole assembly, that the fear of death only had induced him to retract opinions, which from his heart he maintained; that he had done injustice to the memory of those two excellent men, John Wicliff,

and John Huss; whose examples he revered; and in whose doctrine he was determined to die. He concluded with a severe invective against the clergy; the depravity of whose manners, he said, was now every where notorious.

It may truly be lamented, that the whole of his speech, on this occasion, hath not been preserved. It is said to have been a model of true eloquence. The minds of his hearers were so captivated with it, that, in spite of themselves, they were attentive. Once or twice he was interrupted; but the interrupters paid severely for their impertinence: they were soon lashed into confusion by the acrimony of his language, and the spirit with which he spoke. So collected was he, so entirely master of himself, and of every topic on which he discoursed, that it seemed as if heaven had indulged him on this solemn occasion, in the exertion of more than natural powers. It is said, that many in the council, while he was speaking, became so prejudiced in his favour, that they sat with a dread upon them, lest he should utter something which might throw him beyond a possibility of obtaining mercy.

His speech however was not calculated to move pity. On the same day, or a few days after sentence passed upon him, by which he was condemned for having held the errors of Wickliff; and of apostatizing. He was immediately, in the usual style of popish affectation, delivered over to the

civil power. As he was a layman, he had no ceremony of degradation to undergo. The same sort of cap was put upon his head, with which Huss had been adorned; and so attired he was led to execution.

When he came to the place, he could not but smile to see the malice of his enemies appearing in a shape too grotesque for so serious an occasion. The post, to which he was chained, was hewn, it seems, into a monstrous, and uncouth figure of Huss, and ornamented into a ridiculous likeness of him.

A little before the fire was kindled, he told the people, that he believed the established creed, and that he knew not for what he suffered death, unless because he had not subscribed to the condemnation of Wicliff, and of Huss; which he could not do with a safe conscience; because he firmly believed them both to be pious men.

The wood beginning to blaze, he sang an hymn, which he continued with great fervency, till the fury of the fire scorching him, he was heard to cry out, "O Lord God! have mercy upon me! have mercy upon me!" And a little afterwards, "Thou knowest how I have loved thy truth." The wind parting the flames, his body, full of large blisters, exhibited a dreadful spectacle to the beholders; his lips continued still moving, as if actuated by intense devotion. During a full quarter of an hour, he discovered the signs not only of life, but of intellect. Even his enemies thought the rage of his

judges pursued him too far, when they saw his wretched coverlet, and the other miserable garniture of his prison, by their order, consumed in the fire after him; and his ashes, as those of Huss had been, thrown into the Rhine.

From this account of the trial, and death of JEROME, it seems as if the leading members of the council were determined, at any rate, to put him to death. We cannot otherwise see the reason of their bringing him to a second hearing. They had already obtained a triumph over him. A second trial made that again doubtful, which his recantation had decided in their favour. But it hath been the notorious practice of the church of Rome, in her dealings with capital offenders, to put them first to shame, and afterwards to death.

Among those, who have treated of the death of JEROME, none hath done him more honour than Poggè the Florentine. The anecdotes of him preserved by this writer have not yet been laid before the reader. As Poggè, was not only a man of some eminence, but an adversary likewise to the cause of JEROME, his testimony is of too much consequence to be kneaded with the mass of other authorities; and will appear to most advantage by itself.

This eminent person had been bred in the court of Rome; and having been secretary under two popes, was well instructed in its designs. Here too he had every opportunity of gratifying his in-

clination for study; and was versed alike in business, and in letters. He had a taste for poetry also; and gained great credit by some satirical compositions, which he published in the early part of his life. To his other praises he added that of an historian. His history of Florence is esteemed an elegant at least, though a partial composition. But the world is most indebted to him as an antiquarian. To his industry we owe many noble remains of antiquity, which he redeemed from that obscurity, in which barbarism had involved them; particularly the works of Quinctilian; which he had the happiness to find complete in a ruined monastery.

In what capacity he attended the council we have no account. As he relates matter of fact only, it is of little consequence. The examination, and death of JEROME, of which he was an eye witness, affected him in so strong a manner, that he gave a full account of both to his friend Aretin at Rome, as the most extraordinary events he had met with, during his residence at Constance. The reader will consider his letter on this occasion, as a portrait warm from the life; and, if not a finished picture, at least a very spirited sketch. It was written originally in Latin. The following is not meant as a literal translation. Those circumstances, with which the reader hath been already made acquainted, in the course of the narrative, are omitted.

*A letter from Poggè of Florence to Leonard  
Arctin.*

“In the midst of a short excursion into the country, I wrote to our common friend: from whom, I doubt not, you have had an account of me.

Since my return to Constance, my attention hath been wholly engaged by **JEROME**, the Bohemian heretic, as he is called. The eloquence, and learning, which this person hath employed in his own defence are so extraordinary, that I cannot forbear giving you a short account of him.

To confess the truth, I never knew the art of speaking carried so near the model of ancient eloquence. It was indeed 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 constancy of his whole behaviour. It grieved me to think so great a man was labouring under so atrocious an accusation. Whether this accusation be a just one, God knows: for myself, I enquire not into the merits of it; resting satisfied with the decision of my superiors. But I will just give you a summary of his trial.

After many articles had been proved against him, leave was at length given him to answer each in its order. But **JEROME** long refused, strenuously contending, that he had many things to say

previously in his defence ; and that he ought first to be heard in general, before he descended to particulars. When this was over-ruled, "Here, said he, standing in the midst of the assembly, here is justice ; here is equity. Beset by my enemies, I am already pronounced a heretic : I am condemned, before I am examined. Were you Gods omniscient, instead of an assembly of fallible men, you could not act with more sufficiency. Error is the lot of mortals ; and you, exalted as you are, are subjects to it. But consider, that the higher you are exalted, of the more dangerous consequence are your errors. As for me, I know I am a wretch below your notice : but at least consider, that an unjust action, in such an assembly, will be of dangerous example."

This, and much more, he spoke with great elegance of language, in the midst of a very unruly and indecent assembly : and thus far at least he prevailed ; the council ordered, that he should first answer objections ; and promised that he should then have liberty to speak. Accordingly, all the articles alledged against him were publicly read ; and then proved ; after which he was asked, whether he had ought to object ? It is incredible with what acuteness he answered ; and with what amazing dexterity he warded off every stroke of his adversaries. Nothing escaped him : his whole behaviour was truly great and pious. If he were indeed the man his defence spoke him, he was so far :

from meriting death, that in my judgment, he was not in any degree culpable. In a word, he endeavoured to prove, that the greater part of the charge was purely the invention of his adversaries, Among other things, being accused of hating and defaming the holy see, the pope, the cardinals, the prelates, and the whole estate of the clergy, he stretched out his hands, and said, in a most moving accent, "On which side, reverend fathers shall I turn me for redress? whom shall I implore? whose assistance can I expect? which of you hath not this malicious charge entirely alienated from me? which of you hath it not changed from a judge into an inveterate enemy? It was artfully alledged indeed! Though other parts of their charge were of less moment, my accusers might well imagine, that if this were fastened on me, it could not fail of drawing upon me the united indignation of my judges."

On the third day of this memorable trial, what had past was recapitulated; when JEROME, having obtained leave, through with some difficulty to speak, began his oration with a prayer to God; whose divine assistance he pathetically implored. He then observed, that many excellent men, in the annals of history, had been oppressed by false witnesses, and condemned by unjust judges. Beginning with profane history, he instanced the death of Socrates, the captivity of Plato, the banishment of Anaxagoras, and the unjust sufferings of many others. He then instanced the many



worthies, of the old Testament, in the same circumstances, Moses, Joshua, Daniel, and almost all the prophets; and lastly those of the new, John the baptist, St. Stephen and others, who were condemned as seditious, prophane or immoral men. An unjust judgment, he said, proceeding from a layic was bad; from a priest, worse; still worse from a college of priests; and from a general council, superlatively bad. These things he spoke with such force and emphasis, as kept every one's attention awake.

On one point he dwelt largely. As the merits of the cause rested entirely upon the credit of witnesses, he took great pains to shew that very little was due to those produced against him. He had many objections to them, particularly their avowed hatred to him; the sources of which he so palpably laid open, that he made a strong impression upon the minds of his hearers; and not a little shook the credit of the witnesses. The whole council was moved; and greatly inclined to pity, if not to favour him. He added, that he came uncompeled to the council; and that neither his life nor doctrine had been such, as gave him the least reason to dread an appearance before them. Difference of opinion, he said, in matters of faith had ever arisen among learned men; and was always esteemed productive of truth, rather than of error, where bigotry was laid aside. Such he said was the difference between Austine and JEROME; and

though their opinions were not only different, but contradictory, yet the imputation of heresy was never fixed on either.

Every one expected, that he would now either retract his errors, or at least apologize for them: but nothing of the kind was heard from him: he declared plainly, that he had nothing to retract. He launched out into an high encomium of Huss; calling him a holy man; and lamenting his cruel, and unjust death. He had armed himself, he said, with a full resolution to follow the steps of that blessed martyr; and to suffer with constancy whatever the malice of his enemies could inflict. "The perjured witnesses, (said he) who have appeared against me, have won their cause: but let them remember they have their evidence once more to give before a tribunal, where falsehood can be no disguise."

It was impossible to hear this pathetic speaker without emotion. Every ear was captivated; and every heart touched. But wishes in his favour were vain; he threw himself beyond a possibility of mercy. Braving death, he even provoked the vengeance which was hanging over him. "If that holy martyr, (said he, speaking of Huss,) used the clergy with disrespect, his censures were not levelled at them as priests, but as wicked men. He saw with indignation those revenues, which had been designed for charitable ends, expended upon pagantry and riot."

Through this whole oration he shewed a most amazing strength of memory. He had been confined almost a year in a dungeon: the severity of which usage he complained of, but in the language of a great and good man. In this horrid place he was deprived of books and paper. Yet notwithstanding this, and the constant anxiety, which must have hung over him, he was at no more loss for proper authorities; and quotations, than if he had spent the intermediate time at leisure in his study.

His voice was sweet, distinct, and full: his action every way the most proper either to express indignation, or to raise pity; though he made no effected application to the passions of his audience. Firm, and intrepid he stood before the council; collected in himself; and not only contemning, but seeming even desirous of death. The greatest character in ancient story could not possibly go beyond him. If there is any justice in history this man will be admired by all posterity. I speak not of his errors: let these rest with him. What I admired was his learning, his eloquence, and amazing acuteness. God knows whether these things were not the ground work of his ruin.

Two days were allowed him for reflection; during which time many persons of consequence, and particularly my lord cardinal of Florence, endeavoured to bring him to a better mind: But persisting obstinately in his errors, he was condemned as an heretic.

With a cheerful countenance, and more than stoical constancy, he met his fate; fearing neither death itself, nor the horrible form, in which it appeared. When he came to the place, he pulled off his upper garment, and made a short prayer\* at the stake; to which he was soon after bound with wet cords, and an iron chain; and inclosed as high as his breast with 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 sang an hymn, which the violence of the flame scarce interrupted.

Thus died this prodigious man. The epithet is not extravagant. I was myself an eye witness of his whole behaviour. Whatever his life may have been, his death, without doubt, is a noble lesson of philosophy.

But it is time to finish this long epistle. You will say I have had some leisure upon my hands: and to say the truth, I have not much to do here. This will, I hope, convince you, that greatness is not wholly confined to antiquity. You will think me perhaps tedious; but I could have been more

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\* *Flexis genibus veneratus est patrem* (saith the original.) This certainly must have been a false interpretation of his praying with his face turned towards the stake. But other historians, on Pogge's authority, have taken up the notion, that he prayed to the stake.

prolix on a subject so copious. Farewell, my dear Leonard."

*Constance, May 20.*

Such was the testimony borne to an adversary by this ingenuous papist. His friend Aretin was less candid. "You attribute more, says he, to this man, than I could wish. You ought at least *write* more cautiously of these things." And indeed, it is probable, Poggè would have written more cautiously, had he written a few days afterwards. But his letter is dated on the very day on which JEROME suffered, and came warm from the writer's heart. It is sufficiently plain, what Poggè himself thought of the council, and its proceedings. His encomium on JEROME, is certainly a tacit censure of them.

THE  
LIFE  
OF  
ZISCA.

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IN the lives of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, we have seen great instances of the violence and injustice of the council of Constance. That bigotted assembly appeared ready to embrace any measures, and to run any lengths, to establish the tyranny of the church of Rome. The life of ZISCA exhibits those scenes of disorder and ruin, which might be expected as the natural consequences of such furious zeal.

The real name of this eminent person was John de Trocznow. The epithet ZISCA was given him from his having lost an eye; that word, in the Bohemian language, signifying one eyed. He was a native of Bohemia; born of a good family, remarkable rather for its credit, than its wealth.

In the early part of his life ZISCA was introduced to Winceslaus, whom he served in the capacity of a page: but being tired of a subjection to the capricious and trifling humours of that prince, he gave up all expectations from royal favour, and left his

country, with a resolution to seek his fortune abroad. His intention was to enter into some military service; having from his earliest youth discovered a strong inclination to the profession of arms.

He lived some time in Denmark, and afterwards in lower Saxony; but we find him not in any employment, till the breaking out of the wars with Poland, against the knights of the Teutonic order.

The Poles embracing christianity earlier than their neighbours, suffered from some of them a sort of national persecution. The irruptions of the Prussians were particularly formidable; with which hardy people they waged a long and unsuccessful war. At length finding themselves reduced, they called to their assistance the knights of the Teutonic order; by whose alliance being strengthened, they soon brought their enemies to terms.

To recompense these foreigners, or more probably to fulfil a previous engagement, they allowed them to settle in Poland, and distributed lands among them. But the Poles had soon reason to repent of their civility. These insolent inmates made early encroachments upon their benefactors; and matters proceeding to extremity, a bloody war broke out. Neither side had much reason to boast, till the year 1410; when the knights suffered a total defeat: their grand master was killed, and their whole army very severely handled.

ZISCA, who had entered, at the beginning of the

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war into the service of the king of Poland, distinguished himself greatly in this battle. He led a battallion in that wing, which first turned the fortune of the day. The king presented him with a purse of ducats for his services; and accompanied his liberality with a badge of honour.

The Polish generals however not pursuing their victory as they ought, the knights so far collected themselves, as to enter with a good face into negotiation. A treaty was soon afterwards concluded; and ZISCA finding his sword of no farther use in Poland, returned into Bohemia; where we meet him again, notwithstanding his former prejudices, in the court of Winceslaus; and in office about his person.

Upon the tragical fate of HUSS, which threw all Bohemia into confusion, no one felt more acutely than ZISCA. He did not however vent his indignation, like others, in clamour and threatening language; it sat in a melancholy gloom upon his brows and sunk into his heart. The king, we are told, seeing him, from a window of the palace, walking in a thoughtful posture, asked him, upon what serious subject he was meditating? "Upon the bloody affront, answered ZISCA, which your majesty's subjects have suffered at Constance." "It is true, replied Winceslaus; but, I fear, it is neither in your power, nor in mine, to revenge it." This circumstance, we are told, first inspired ZISCA with



a resolution to assert the religious liberties of his country.

Besides the affair of Constance, he wanted not other motives to incite him to this enterprize. Though a man of no great knowledge in matters of divinity, he had sagacity enough to see the necessity of a thorough reformation in the discipline of the church. He had conceived likewise a steady dislike to the clergy; founded more upon the corruption of their lives, than of their doctrine. We are told too, he had personal cause of resentment; a favourite sister having been debauched by a monk.

But with whatever zeal ZISCA and his friends were animated in private, in public they observed a commendable temper. While the council still sat, they had hope that some healing expedient might be found. Were the fathers there assembled in earnest, it was impossible, they imagined, but something would be done to remove abuses, and allay distempers, become now so flagrant and alarming. They resolved however to wait the event.

With these vain hopes they were deluded, till the dissolution of the council, in the beginning of the year 1418. Their eyes were now fully opened. That great assembly of christian bishops, from the result of whose councils, a full reformation of all abuses was expected, were so far from answering those sanguine hopes, that they left things very little better than they found them; many things worse, as sanctified by a new authority.

“ Thus ended, (says the impartial Lenfant, in the conclusion of his history,) the famous council of Constance ; in which it cannot be denied, but that some things were done truly commendable, though that assembly by no means answered the general expectation of the world. It condemned men, who at worst were only somewhat too forward in their zeal against abuses, which all serious men acknowledged, and which even the council itself disapproved. It spared errors likewise, which certainly tended to the destruction of all true religion. But what placed it in the worst light, were the feeble efforts it made towards a reformation of the clergy ; though it is evident, from the testimony of all writers, that the reformation of the clergy was the avowed, and principal end it had in view.”

The council being dissolved, the heads of the reforming party in Bohemia knew what they had now to expect. They knew they had nothing to depend upon for the preservation of their religious liberties, but their own strength, and spirit.

If any hope of favour from the court of Rome still remained, it was wholly dissipated by a letter, which the new pope, Martin the fifth, sent into Bohemia, soon after his election. This letter was directed to the Hussites, whom he charges with many and great heresies. In particular, he tells them, they had trampled upon the statutes of the saints, and the ceremonies of the church ; that they had celebrated the feats of John

Huss, and Jerome of Prague; that the sacrament under both species had been administered among them; and, in one word, that the church was never worse treated under Nero, than it had been by them. He still however gives them hopes of favour, if they would return again within their ancient pale; but threatens, if they continued obstinate, to cut them off entirely from the church, and give them as a prey to their enemies.

Martin not resting his cause entirely upon this letter, sent the cardinal Dominichi, as his legate, into Bohemia. This minister soon informed himself of the temper of the country; and, after a short and fruitless negociation, wrote letters to the pope, and to the emperor Sigismond, (who claimed the crown after Winceslaus, and was of course greatly interested in the affair,) acquainting them, it was in vain to expect any submission from that country, through means, less effectual than open force.

During this negociation, the heads of the reforming party, foreseeing the evil at a distance, concerted measures for their safety. In the summer of the year 1418 they had a general meeting at the castle of Wisgrade; the design of which was, to deliberate on the best means of preserving the liberties of the church of Bohemia. They had no reverence for the pope; and very little for the emperor: with their own sovereign they were desirous of keeping terms. Their first resolution therefore was to sound the inclination of Winceslaus,

that capricious prince having yet given them no certain evidence either of his favour or aversion. With this view, they sent deputies to the king; who in the name of the assembly, acquainting him with the increasing numbers of their sect, requested the use of more churches.

Winceslaus was surprised rather at the spirit in which the request was made, than at the request itself. He was dissatisfied, as much as they were, with the affair of Constance; but he chose to have the resentment due upon that occasion to appear as coming from himself; and he had no inclination, at this time, to show it. On the other hand, here was a violent party, which would take no denial; whose strength he knew as well as his own comparative weakness; and though it was hard for a monarch to receive law from his subjects, (for he could not but consider their request as a demand,) yet the remembrance of past misfortunes had taught him to put many restraints upon himself.

Agreeable to this perplexity, and to the darkness of his own character, he answered the deputies evasively. He was greatly inclined, he said, to favour them; but disapproved passion and tumult. He required them therefore to rely upon his honour; and as a pledge of their good intentions, to deposit their arms with him.

With this answer the deputies returned. It was by no means satisfactory; and the more violent were for breaking all measures forthwith. The

debates of these fierce spirits becoming tumultuous, ZISCA suddenly starting up, cried out, gentlemen, "I have long known the king, and am thoroughly acquainted with his temper: arm yourselves and follow me." Thus attended he stood before Wincseslaus: "Behold, (said he,) a body of your majesty's faithful subjects; we have brought our arms, as you commanded: shew us your enemies: and you shall have reason to acknowledge, that our weapons can be in no hands more faithful to you, than in those, which hold them." In a capricious, unprincipled mind, a sudden evasion hath often the weight of argument. It had on this occasion. Struck with the heroic language, and appearance of these brave men, the king cried out, "Take your arms, gentlemen, and use them properly." This action first recommended ZISCA to the confidence of his party; and gave an earnest of those strokes of policy, which his mind, fruitful of expedients, was afterwards found so capable of displaying.

The restraint however, which Wincseslaus put upon the reformers was soon removed. Tired with the past, and dreading the future, which he saw approaching in a storm, that unhappy prince at length gave way to the anguish of his spirit, and sunk under a weight of grief. His death was accelerated by a violent fit of passion, in the agony of which he expired; leaving it a contest among historians, whether the man or the prince was more contemptible in his character.

Upon the death of Wincellaus, the crown of Bohemia was claimed, as hath been said, by his brother the emperor Sigismond. This claim made an entire change in the system of the reformers. They now saw their civil, as well as religious liberties in danger; and came to an unanimous resolution to oppose the emperor at the hazard of their lives. They were persuaded they had a constitutional right to elect their own prince; and against Sigismond they had many objections. The share he had in the business of Constance had rendered him odious to the whole reforming party. But his avowed principles in favour of the court of Rome, were the grand obstacle.

On the other hand, the friends of the emperor, at the head of whom was the queen dowager, who had been appointed regent, took measures to support his title. They proclaimed him at Prague; administered oaths to those in office about the court; and removed such as were thought ill affected to his government.

The reformers, unwilling to give the queen any advantage by their delay, took arms without farther hesitation; and chusing ZISCA their general, declared war against all the adherents of the emperor, and upholders of the tyranny of the church of Rome.

The regular clergy felt the first effects of this commotion. These, wherever found, ZISCA treated with sufficient severity. "Let us, said he, en-

couraging his men, drive these fatted hogs from their sties."

The queen regent alarmed at these proceedings, wrote an account of them to the emperor; intreating speedy aid, and assuring him, the insurrection was by no means trivial.

Sigismond was, at that time, engaged in an expedition against the Turks; and could not immediately, without some discredit, turn his arms towards Bohemia. The queen, thus left to herself, exerted a spirit proportioned to the emergence; and drawing together what troops she was able, strengthened the works of Prague, and shut herself up in it with a good garrison. She was well assured, however, the city was not wholly hers, the new town being chiefly inhabited by reformers. With great skill therefore she fortified all the avenues, which led from one town to the other; and in particular the bridge over the Muldaw.

The standard of the reformers having been erected only a few weeks, ZISCA found himself at the head of 40,000 men; a body of troops less formidable for their numbers, than for their martial ardour. Well knowing that action is the life of a tumultuary army, he took the field without delay; and finding himself in want of garrisons, for almost every fortress in the kingdom was in the hands of the imperialists, he resolved to open the campaign by the siege of Pilsen. This town lay conveniently for him, as it was in the midst of a country

greatly devoted to his interest. Here his troops first signalized their courage. Though few of them had seen action before, they mounted the wall like veterans; and after a short dispute became masters of the fortress. ZISCA having added to its works, put a garrison into it, and made it a place of arms.

From hence he sent out parties, and took in the castles, and strong holds in the neighbourhood: so that in a little time he found all the south west part of Bohemia in his hands; and his army greatly increased by these conquests.

While ZISCA was thus employed, his friends in Prague were endeavouring their utmost to make themselves master of that city. Notwithstanding the watchful eye, which was continually upon them, they had their private meetings; and having formed a scheme, they made a desperate attempt to pass the Muldaw, where that river divides, at the isle of St. Benedict. The encounter was sharp and bloody: the imperialists however maintained their post.

The reformers, not discouraged, made their next attempt upon the bridge. Here they fought with incredible firmness, and with more success. Five days, and five nights, with little intermission, the dispute lasted: during which time, both parties as may be imagined, suffered greatly; and some of the fairest buildings of the town, particularly the great council chamber were destroyed. The re-



farmers at length carried their point; and the imperialists took shelter in the castle.

The emperor was now alarmed in earnest. He withdrew his troops suddenly from the confines of Turkey, and making hasty marches towards Bohemia with part of his cavalry, appointed his army to follow his route.

At Brin in Moravia he halted; and being greatly desirous of bringing matters to a fair accommodation, sent deputies to Prague to treat of peace.

At the head of these deputies was Gaspar Selic, one of the most accomplished statesmen of his time. His father was a German, and his mother an Italian. From these he inherited the good qualities of each people; the solidity of the one; the insinuating manners of the other; and the characteristic foibles of neither.

This artful minister put the emperor's affairs into a hopeful train. He managed all parties with such dexterity, convincing them how much it was their interest to coalesce; that he soon brought on a treaty. As a preliminary, ZISCA gave up Pilsen, and all the other fortresses he had taken. He seems indeed to have been influenced by the citizens of Prague; who, having seen their town miserably harrassed in the late commotions, were already weary of the dispute.

In this hopeful way were the affairs of the emperor, when an unhappy letter, which he wrote to the magistrates of Prague, ruined all. In this let-

ter, after congratulating them on the prospect of a speedy peace, which he mentions as an event equally advantageous to all parties, he tells them, he hopes, they shall never have occasion to repent the confidence they had placed in him; and promises to govern, after the model of his father, the emperor Charles. Whether by governing after the model of his father, Sigismond meant only in civil matters, which is most probable; or whether he insinuated his intention with regard to religion, it is certain he expressed himself either negligently or imprudently. It was presently caught up and propagated among the reformers, whose watchful ears were alarmed by the least sound of danger, that the emperor had at last dealt honestly with them; that he had now shewn his full intention; that he could not even keep on the disguise, till he had them fairly in his power; but, they thanked God, they had yet time to take other measures.

If any thing was wanting, after this imprudent letter, to ruin the interests of Sigismond in Bohemia, his impolitic behaviour afterwards completed the work. Having put the treaty of Prague, as he hoped, on a good footing he went to Breslaw; where, it seems, the spirit of ZISCA had diffused itself; and the citizens had shewn some zeal in his cause. They opened their gates however to the emperor; and received him with great appearance of devotion. Sigismond, instead of taking these half formed subjects under his protection, and ca-

ressing them with tenderness, was improperly advised to make a strict enquiry after the authors of the late disturbances, many of whom he treated with severity enough. The impolitic monarch was unacquainted with the spirit of these men: he had not yet learned, that persecution in no shape could subdue them; and that nothing could work upon them, but gentle treatment, and great toleration.

The conduct of Sigismond at Breslaw was an alarm bell from one end of Bohemia to the other. Not a man but was ready to take arms. "What! shall we see ourselves tamely slaughtered like sheep? Let us shew this haughty tyrant, that we are not yet victims destined to his knife."

The high spirit, which was thus raised among the reformers, soon shewed itself in action. Their first attempt was on the castle of Prague; of the town they were already in possession. This strong fortress was maintained for the emperor by Zincho, a German officer, in whom the queen had great confidence. But he deceived her expectation. ZISCA, who knew the governor's foible, bid so high for his virtue, that he became master of the castle without striking a blow.

Sigismond by this time saw his errors; and had only left, if possible, to retrieve them. The hopes of peace, he observed, had greatly dissipated the tumultuary army of the reformers. He resolved therefore to attack them with what troops he had about him, which consisted only of a few regiments

of horse, the gross of his army not being yet arrived; and, if possible, to crush them, before they could well associate.

But ZISCA, sufficiently upon his guard, retreated before his unskilful enemies into a mountainous and rocky country, where he knew their horse would only be an incumbrance to them. Having thus chosen his ground, he drew up his small army, which was composed entirely of infantry, in a very advantageous manner; and on the nineteenth of August, 1420, presented himself to the enemy.

The imperialists saw their danger, but knew not how to avoid it. To fight on horseback was impracticable: to retreat, barely possible. Dismounting they formed on foot. But ZISCA seconding his conduct with his bravery, fell on them with such irresistible fury, that they were immediately thrown into confusion; and were all either cut in pieces on the spot, or slaughtered in the defiles.

The fabulous writers of those times attribute this victory to a very improbable device of ZISCA. He ordered the women, we are informed, who attended his camp, to strew their handkerchiefs and aprons in the front of the army, in which the spurs of the imperialists being intangled, the reformers had an easy victory.

ZISCA, whose army daily increased, pursuing his conquest, appeared suddenly before Ausca. This town had little favour to expect, having always treated the reformers with more than usual

severity; at the instigation chiefly of Ulric, the governor, a man of a savage disposition. The formality of a siege not suiting the circumstances of ZISCA, he made a general assault; and after a sharp dispute carried the town. He gave orders, the same day to set it on fire, and level it with the ground; leaving behind him a monument of his vengeance, ill becoming the cause in which he fought. The unhappy Ulric, falling into his hands, was put to an ignominious death.

ZISCA employed the short respite, which his enemies, at this time allowed him, in fortifying a camp. Though the summer was wearing apace, yet he had reason to expect the emperor would lie quiet only till he had collected his troops. The push, he doubted not, would be vigorous; and if any sinister event should await him, he foresaw, that all would be ruined, if he had no retreat. Pilsen he had given up: Prague indeed was in his hands; but Prague was a divided town; too extensive for a garrison, and too populous.

Near Bechin, the provincial town of its circle, about 40 miles south of Prague, an arm of the Muldaw, winding round a craggy hill, forms a peninsula, the neck of which is scarce thirty feet broad. The hill itself is accessible on one side only. This was the place which ZISCA chose for his camp; a place, which nature had nobly fortified to his hand. The declivity he assigned to his companions, on which they pitched their tents; at

the summit he erected his own; inclosing the whole with a good rampart; and fortifying the neck of the peninsula with a broad ditch, and two strong towers. In time these tents became houses, his own pavilion a castle, and the ramparts and ditches, impregnable walls. To this fortress he gave the name of Tabor, alluding to the hill on which it stood. It makes, at this day, an appearance in the maps of Bohemia.

While ZISCA was employed in this business, he had intelligence, that a body of imperial horse lay in the neighbourhood, observing his motions. He took his opportunity, and surprising them at midnight, surrounded the village in which they were quartered; and made the whole party, consisting of a thousand men, prisoners of war.

The action was trifling, but had consequences, which ZISCA did not foresee. He had long wanted a body of horse, which, in the necessity of his affairs, he had never been able to raise; and thought the suits of armour and horses, which on this occasion, fell into his hands, were a very valuable prize, as they might become a good foundation for a body of cavalry; without which he never afterwards took the field. He was himself an excellent horseman, fond of horses, and of the management of them; and if in any one part of the general's duty he laid himself more particularly out, it seems to have been in that of forming his cavalry.

The attention of ZISCA, was, at that time, for

a few days engaged in a very extraordinary manner. An enthusiastic Picard; or, as others call him, a Fleming of the name of Picard, leaving his own country, and passing the Rhine, wandered into Bohemia. On his journey, he had drawn many followers of both sexes after him; whom he deceived by a strange volubility of rhapsody; and pretences to a power little less than almighty; of which he seemed to give many very surprising instances. Whatever his impostures were, they were sufficiently adapted to the credulity of his followers; with whom, and such proselites as he gained in the country, he seized an island upon the Muldaw, not far from Tabor, where he settled in the form of a society.

Here he began to unfold his doctrines; which differed little from those of the old Adamites, and were in a high degree impious and detestible. He declared himself the son of God, called himself Adam, and professing he was sent to revive the law of nature, made his religion to consist chiefly in the entire disuse of cloaths, and in the free indulgence of promiscuous lust. The children thus born, were accounted free; all mankind besides were considered as slaves.

These vile sectaries soon became a general pest. Among their other horrid extravagancies, they made an excursion into the country, and put to the sword not fewer than 200 of the peasants:

“they were slaves, and did not deserve the breath of God.”

ZISCA being now at leisure, was easily wrought on by the desires of the country, to extirpate these execrable wretches. The peasants furnishing boats, he invaded the island; and the Adamites, except a few, who died in arms, were all taken. They were equally involved in guilt, and, after a very summary form of justice, were all put to death.

While ZISCA was thus engaged, the emperor was making preparations for a more formidable attempt than he had yet made. Roused by the late successes of his antagonist, he began now to think the affair grew serious; and having drawn together his whole force, and pressed into his service a body of Silesians, he entered Bohemia, on the side of Glatz; which town, with many other places, submitted. In a few days, he arrived before Prague, and encamped within half a league of the city. As he had many friends in the place, he chose to make his first effort in the way of negotiation.

Upon the earliest news of the emperor's march, ZISCA, with an equal army, was in motion. He was secretly glad to hear, that Sigismund had made an attempt on Prague; not doubting but he would be obliged to waste the remaining part of the summer in a fruitless siege. It was matter therefore of equal concern and astonishment to him, to see from the heights, as he approached



the town, the emperor's standard erected on the castle. He was soon informed, that Sigismond had followed the example, which himself had set; and upon a good understanding with the governor, had found the means of introducing 4000 men into that fortress, the evening before. He was informed too; that the Imperialists had made an attempt upon the town that morning, and were in hopes of mastering it, before relief should arrive.

ZISCA had now an opportunity of displaying his great talents. Upon reflection he began to hope, that if the town only could hold out, he might yet, by an after-game, recover all. Being acquainted with every defile, and spot of ground in the neighbourhood, he harrassed the Imperialists with continual alarms, beat them from their works, seized every post as they deserted it, and allowing them only a very disadvantageous field of battle, which it had been ruin to accept, obliged the whole body of them at length to retire into the castle. He had now completed half his work: what remained was as expeditiously performed. With great art and industry he so entirely blockaded the place, that the emperor in the same instant saw the necessity, and the impracticability of a retreat.

Sigismond was now in great perplexity. Pent-up in straitened quarters, with a numerous garrison, no magazines provided, and no prospect of relief, he had nothing before him, but famine and pestilence; or, what he dreaded as much as either,

the vengeance of ZISCA, who would certainly make him pay the utmost price of the advantage he had gained. Full of these racking thoughts, he put on however an air of composed dignity, which no man could better assume: and to divert the melancholy of those about him, and intoxicate the imaginations of the soldiery, he ordered himself to be crowned king of Bohemia. This vain piece of pageantry was performed by the archbishop of Prague, who had thrown himself under his protection. The marquis of Brandenburg, the elector of Saxony, and the archduke of Austria, who served under Sigismond, assisted at the ceremony.

ZISCA'S joy, upon this happy crisis of his affairs, passed the bounds of his usual moderation. "Now, my friends, he would say to his officers, it is ours to give law. From this glorious day, let Bohemia boast the establishment of her liberties." In the mean time he omitted nothing of his accustomed vigour. His works were carried on with unabated ardour: he visited every post himself, and hourly expected, as the reward of his labours, that his prey would fall into his hands.

But ZISCA'S conduct, able as it was, was ineffectual. Sigismond summoned all his fortitude; and knowing he had nothing to depend on but the edge of his sword, in circumstances, which would have added strength to the feeble, he determined to hazard all upon one desperate push. He had

the best intelligence, from his friends in the city, of all that passed in ZISCA's quarters; which he suddenly attacked at midnight, with all his forces, where he was well informed the post was weakest. The Taborites, by which name ZISCA's adherents began now to be distinguished, were not surprised. Both sides fought, like men, who had their religion, and liberty at stake. The imperialists in the end prevailed by mere superiority of numbers; and opened the pass, before any reinforcement could arrive.

The rising sun discovered the slaughter, and horrible confusion of the night; and did full credit to the bravery of the Taborites, who with a handful of men had resisted an army: and ZISCA, though unfortunate, made such an impression upon his enemies, by the firmness of his troops, as was never afterwards forgotten.

Some authors relate, that Sigismund escaped by means of a very extraordinary stratagem. He got together a quantity combustibles, in which he mixed a drug of such a nature, that when fired, it emitted a most pestilential stench. The smoke of this, say these writers, being driven in the faces of the enemy, occasioned them immediately to abandon their post. This improbable tale seems to have arisen, from the emperor's making his attack under the cover of smoke; or invented from a belief, that ZISCA could not be conquered by any ordinary means.

The post, which the imperialists had thus forced, was not far from the camp of the Taborites, which was the head quarters of ZISCA. Prompted by his success, the emperor came to a speedy resolution, at day break, to endeavour to force this likewise. Not satisfied with an escape, he now strove for mastery; and encouraging his men still covered with dust, and blood, he led them to the ascent, on which ZISCA lay encamped. "Yonder, cried he, lye your provisions." The Hungry veteran pressed on; the camp, thinned by numerous outposts, was instantly entered; and the Taborites could only die in its defence. As we are not informed that ZISCA was in the action, it is probable he was in some other quarter at the time of the attack.

This was a cruel stroke upon him. His hopes were now entirely blasted. A favourable opportunity had been wrested from him; his camp had been destroyed, and his baggage plundered. But these were trivial losses. Another opportunity might offer; his tents and baggage might easily be replaced. But the loss of his credit in arms he dreaded as an irreparable loss. His being thought invincible, he well knew could only support his cause; and he had sufficient reason to fear, that if his troops esteemed him less the favourite of heaven, than they had hitherto done, they would instantly desert. These were the mortifying reflections, which accompanied his retreat.

In the mean time Sigismond made the utmost of his advantage. The principal of ZISCA's post he seized ; and, returning to his old enterprise, blocked up the city. Here division reigned. The emperor's party was strong ; but ZISCA's prevailed to keep the gates shut : and such was the extreme disorder of the place, and the rancour, which appeared on both sides, that sober men had just grounds to fear the worst from the success of either.

While Sigismond was thus engaged in the siege of Prague, ZISCA was employed in recruiting his army ; in which he had better success than he expected. The spirit of his adherents was of too high a temper to be cooled by one sinister event. The quarrel was important. Their interests were deeply embarked ; and there was no reason yet to give up all for lost. They fully confided in their general ; and seemed to make it a point to shew that confidence by their activity in raising troops. So that in fact before ZISCA could feel his loss, it was repaired.

Sigismond had now lain six weeks before Prague, harrassed daily by the army of ZISCA, which seemed to have recovered fresh spirits from its defeat. The posts of the imperialists were attacked ; their foraging straitened ; and their provisions cut off. Once Sigismond had the mortification to see a considerable part of his troops defeated, and very roughly handled. His supplies too from Germany

came in more leisurely than he expected. These things abated greatly that eagerness with which he began his design. But an event soon afterwards totally discouraged him.

Near Prague stood a craggy hill, which ZISCA, thinking it a post of advantage, had seized and fortified. From this eminence he greatly annoyed the emperor; so that Sigismund at length found, he must either give up all hopes of taking the city, or make himself master of this post. His efforts were ineffectual; the post was stronger than he supposed, when he attempted force; better guarded, when he attempted surprise. One effort more he was determined to make. With this view he sent the marquis of Misnja with a large body of men, sufficient as he thought, to force it. The marquis met with little to oppose his march. The Taborites, except a few cautious skirmishers, lay close in their trenches. The Imperialists, misjudging this the effect of fear, ascended with the more presumption. They now approached the craggy part of the top, overcome with toil; when on a sudden the Taborites leaping out, with loud shouts, from every part of the intrenchments, fell on them with all the fury of impatient ardour. Amazement checked the Imperialists, and the first shock obliged them to give ground. They would have retreated, but their able adversary had made sure work, their retreat was intercepted. They had only to chuse the manner of their death. On

one hand were the swords of an enraged foe; on the other a precipice. The whole affair was instantly decided; and before mercy could take place, scarce an object of mercy remained. The marquis himself, with a few of his followers, escaped.

This terrible disaster, by which the emperor lost near one third of his army, reduced him to the necessity of raising the siege. He gave all necessary orders by sunset; and, at the close of the evening, drew off his troops in silence, without a drum or trumpet, accompanied with all those signs of mute dejection, and terrors of alarm, which commonly attend disgraced armies. ZISCA pursued his rear; but with little advantage, the emperor conducting his retreat in a very masterly manner.

Thus ended this momentous affair; in which great military skill, and great courage had been shewn on both sides. So equal indeed the contention had been, that it is hard to say, whether Sigismund deserved more praise by obliging ZISCA to raise the siege of the castle or ZISCA by obliging him to raise the siege of the town. Undistinguishing fame however blew her trumpet over the banners of the successful hero; and gave ZISCA that full glory, which his noble adversary should have divided with him.

Such was the first summer of the war; in which ZISCA sufficiently tried his strength, and found the courage of his men proportioned to any service. He had the satisfaction likewise of finding himself,

notwithstanding his many losses, at the head of a greater army when he closed, than when he opened the campaign.

Early in the spring, of the next year, 1421, ZISCA took the field; and began this campaign, as he had begun the last, by destroying all the monasteries, which he met with in his march. His design was upon the castle of Wisgrade, a strong fortress near Prague, where Sigismond had placed a numerous garrison. He endeavoured first to take it by storm; but losing many men in the attempt, and seeing little likelihood of succeeding in that way, he turned the siege into a blockade.

The magazines of the besieged in a little time growing scanty, and their very horses being now consumed, they began to think of a capitulation; and proposed to deliver up the castle within so many days, if the emperor did not relieve it. The condition was accepted, and the time being nearly elapsed, ZISCA had intelligence, that Sigismond was approaching with his army. He put himself immediately in a posture to receive him; and sent advice of his march to Prague. The Taborite party there instantly taking arms, posted themselves according to ZISCA's direction, in some defiles, through which the imperialists were obliged to pass. Sigismond, not expecting hostilities from that quarter, and having his eye fixed on ZISCA, fell into the snare. It was a massacre, rather than a battle; and the emperor escaped with a remain-



der of his army, only because his enemies were too much fatigued to urge the slaughter farther. The severity of this action fell chiefly upon the Hungarian, and Moravian troops; whose officers, the prime nobility of their respective countries, distinguishing themselves with great spirit, if any distinction could be made in such confusion, were almost entirely cut off. Some writers give the credit of this action to ZISCA in person. He retreated, we are told, at the emperor's approach; and in the security of the night returning, attacked his camp with such fury, as soon ended the contest.

The emperor, thus maimed, was in no condition to keep his appointment with the castle of Wisgrade; which immediately surrendered upon the news of his defeat. This was the most valuable acquisition which ZISCA had made, no garrison in those parts holding a larger territory in devotion.

ZISCA was now at leisure to attend a little to the work of reformation; a work which he had exceedingly at heart. For himself, though he was more a soldier than a divine; yet he had in general an utter detestation of the supremacy of the court of Rome, and a high esteem for the memory of Huss. What he aimed at therefore was to give a form, and settlement, to the opinions of that reformer. With this view he consulted those especially, for whom he knew Huss had ever had the highest regard; and shewed he could, on this occasion,

exert as much prudent caution, as on other occasions he had exerted vigour and activity.

While ZISCA was thus employed in establishing a church, like the Jews in Ezra's time, he kept his sword continually drawn. Sigismond, though he durst not fairly meet him, would harrass him with constant alarms. Nor was ZISCA, in his heart, displeased at these frequent visits. "It is friendly, said he, in the emperor, to keep our swords from rusting in their scabbards."

Indeed ZISCA had less to fear from the enemy than from inaction. Danger was the great central force, which drew men to him; and his authority rose in proportion to the fears of the multitude. Of course, he dreaded no artifice like a false peace. He well knew how easily the minds of the people were deluded; and he wanted those necessary means of keeping a body of men together, which his adversary possessed; a military law, and a military chest. Mere native authority stood in lieu of both.

He had an evil too of another kind to contend with. The Bohemian clergy were in general, beyond conception, ignorant: and too many of those, who came over to the reformed opinions, brought nothing with them, in support of the new cause they had adopted, but an inflamed zeal against the pope, and the emperor. Not a few of these bigots followed the camp of ZISCA; and having great influence upon the people, which they were forward,

on all occasions, to shew, they frequently interfered with his schemes, and opposed his measures. A festival, or a fast day, was improper for action; the east side of a town was never to be attacked; an encampment was to be formed, and an army drawn up, as nearly as could be in the form of a cross. These were in general, points not only of moment, but of indispensable necessity.

Indeed Zisca had never more occasion for his address, nor, upon any occasion, more shewed it, than in the management of these misguided zealots. In trifles he conformed, with great deference, to their humours, that he might with a better grace remonstrate in matters of importance. The influence however which he had from the first over the soldiery, settled by degrees into a confirmed authority; and in proportion as more weight was thrown into his scale, the other ascended. The clergy had besides made themselves so contemptible in many instances, that even the common soldiers began to detect their folly. History takes notice of a ridiculous accident, which contributed not a little to destroy their credit. They had expressed their dislike to a piece of ground, where Zisca lay encamped; and with great haughtiness, had ordered the intrenchments to be razed. The chief, unwilling to relinquish a situation, which was very advantageous, with equal firmness persevered. But he was given to understand, that all remonstrance was to no purpose; that fire would:

certainly the next day descend from heaven upon that accursed spot; and that he must instantly decamp, unless he chose to see his men burnt alive before his face. This dreadful prediction of divine wrath spread an alarm through the camp, which ZISCA had not influence to withstand; the soldiers scarce waited for orders: the tents were instantly torn up, and the ground entirely deserted. In the morning, when every one expected to see the devoted spot overwhelmed with a tempest of fire, such a deluge of rain fell, as if sent on purpose to turn the prophesy into ridicule. The troops were ashamed of their folly in listening to such teachers: and it became a common jest in the army, that the prophesies of their clergy, and the completion, were as opposite to each other, as fire and water. In the infancy however of his affairs, these people had given great disturbances to ZISCA; whose usual method was, when he observed any symptoms of uneasiness in his camp, to spread alarms, and draw his men into action. He thought it imprudent to suffer the quarrel to languish, till the full establishment of peace; and when the enemy did not find him employment he found it for himself; making expeditions into the country, and destroying the castles, and strong holds, wherever he became master.

One of these expeditions almost proved fatal to him. He was incamped before the town of Rubi, which he had almost reduced to extremities.

As he was viewing a part of the works, where he intended an assault, an arrow shot from the wall struck him in the eye. The wound being thought dangerous, the surgeons of the army proposed his being carried to Prague, where he might have the best advice. In reality they were afraid of being cut in pieces by the troops, if he should die under their hands. When his removal to the capital was resolved on, it was difficult to check the contest among the soldiers, who strove for the honour of carrying their wounded general. At Prague the arrow was extracted; which being barbed, tore out the eye with it; and it was feared, the fever which succeeded might prove fatal to him. His life however, though with difficulty, was saved.

He was now totally blind: his friends therefore were surprised to hear him talk after his recovery, of setting out for the army; and did what was in their power to dissuade him from it. But he continued resolute: "I have yet, said he, my blood to shed; let me be gone." He suffered himself however to undergo the affected formality of being intreated by a deputation from the army; and enjoyed the pleasure of hearing the soldiers, in tumults around his quarters, cry aloud, "they would throw down their arms, unless their general were restored."<sup>2</sup>

In the mean time Sigismund had lain quiet: at least his army, since its defeat before Wisgrade, had appeared in no shape in Bohemia, but in that

of scouting parties. This calm in the emperor's quarters was only the lowering stillness of a rising storm. Sigismund had been making preparations during the summer. At Nuremburgh he convened the states of the empire. Here, in full convention, (for, it seems, no prince except the elector of Treves was absent,) he opened to them his embarrassed circumstance; and entreated them for the sake of their sovereign, for the honour of the empire, and in the cause of their religion, to put themselves in arms. His harangue had its effect. Proper measures were concerted; and the assembly broke up, with an unanimous resolution to make this audacious rebel feel the full weight of the empire; and that the blow might fall the more unexpected, it was resolved to defer it till the end of the year; when it was hoped, that Zisca might the more easily be surprised, as great part of his troops left him in the winter, and returned again in the spring.

The campaign, as that chief imagined, was now over, when he was suddenly alarmed with the report of these vast preparations: and soon after with the march of two powerful armies against him; one of which was composed of confederate Germans, under the marquis of Brandenburgh, the archbishop of Mentz, the count palatine of the Rhine, and other princes of the empire; the other of Hungarians and Silesians, under the emperor himself. The former were to invade Bohemia on the west: the latter on

the east. They were to meet in the middle: and as they effected to give out, would crush this handful of vexatious sectaries between them. At the head of such a force, the emperor could not avoid being sanguine.

They who are acquainted with the nature of armies intended to march in concert, know the difficulty of making such unwieldy bodies observe those exact laws of motion, which prudent generals trace out in councils of war. Some unforeseen event generally creates some unavoidable difficulty.

It happened thus on the present occasion, Sigismond, disappointed in a contract for forage, was obliged to defer his march. He was retarded too by the Austrian and Hungarian nobility, who entering as volunteers into his service, and being suddenly called upon, had not gotten their equipages and dependants, without which their dignity could not take the field in such readiness as it was thought they might have had them.

The confederate princes, in the mean time, began their march; and were already advanced a considerable way in Bohemia, before they heard of the emperor's disappointment. Sigismond gave them hopes, that he would presently join them, and advised them to form the siege of Soisin. They intrenched themselves accordingly, and began an attack, for which they were not in the best manner provided, against what was then esteemed one of the strongest fortresses in Bohemia. The be-

sieged laughed at their vain effort, and kept their usual guard; while wet trenches, an hungry camp, the severities of an inclement winter, and above all, the emperor's delay, introduced mutiny into the tents of the besiegers, and dissention into their councils.

In this situation were they ready to catch any alarm, when ZISCA approached with his army.— The very sight of his banners floating at a distance was sufficient. They struck their tents, and retreated with precipitation; burning the country as they fled; and cursing the emperor's breach of faith.

About the end of December, a full month after his appointed time, the emperor began his march. As he entered Bohemia, he received the first account of the retreat of the confederates. He determined however to proceed. He was at the head of a gallant army, the flower of which were 15,000 Hungarian horse, esteemed, at that time, the best cavalry in Europe, led by a Florentine officer of great experience. The infantry, which consisted of 25,000 men, were provided, as well as the cavalry, with every thing proper for a winter's campaign.

This army spread terror through all the east of Bohemia; ZISCA being still in the west pursuing the Germans. Wherever Sigismund marched, the magistrates laid their keys at his feet; and were treated with severity or favour, according to their merits in his cause.



His career however was presently checked.—**ZISCA** with speedy marches approached; and threw a damp upon him in the midst of his success. He chose his ground however as well as he was able; and resolved to try his fortune, once more, with that invincible chief.

No general paid less regard to the circumstances of time and place than **ZISCA**. He seldom desired more than to come up with his adversary: the enthusiastic fury of his soldiers supplied the rest. There was not a man in his army who did not meet his enemy with that same invincible spirit, with which the martyr meets death; who did not in a manner press to be the foremost in that glorious band of heroes, whom the almighty should destine to the noble act of dying for their religion. Such were the troops, which the ill fate of Sigismund brought him now to encounter.

On the thirteenth of January, 1422, the two armies met, on a spacious plain, near Kamnitz.—**Zisca** appeared in the centre of his front line; guarded, or rather conducted by a horseman on each side, armed with a poll ax. His troops having sung an hymn, with a determined coolness drew their swords, and waited for the signal.

**ZISCA** stood not long in view of the enemy. When his officers had informed him, that the ranks were all well closed, he waved his sabre round his head, which was the sign of battle.

Historians speak of the onset of **ZISCA**'s troops,

as a shock beyond credibility; and it appears to have been such on this occasion. The imperial infantry hardly made a stand. In the space of a few minutes they were disordered beyond a possibility of being rallied. The cavalry made a feeble effort; but seeing themselves unsupported, they wheeled round, and fled upon the spur. Thus suddenly was the extent of the plain, as far as the eye could reach, spread with disorder; the pursuers and the pursued mixed together, the whole one indistinct mass of moving confusion. Here and there might be seen, interspersed, a few parties endeavouring to unite; but they were broken as soon as formed.

The routed army fled towards the confines of Moravia; the Taborites, without intermission, galling their rear. The river Igla, which was then frozen, opposed their flight. Here new disasters befel them. The bridge being immediately choaked, and the enemy pressing furiously on, many of the infantry, and in a manner the whole body of the cavalry attempted the river. The ice gave way; and not fewer than 2000 were swallowed up in the water.

Here ZISCA sheathed his sword, which had been sufficiently glutted with blood; and returned in triumph to Tabor, laden with all the spoils, and all the trophies, which the most complete victory could give.

The battle of Kamnitz having put ZISCA in pea-

ceable possession of the whole kingdom of Bohemia, he had now leisure to pay a little more attention to his designed establishment of a church.

He began now to abolish, in all places, the ceremonies of the popish worship. Prayers for the dead, images, holy water, auricular confession, holy oil, sacerdotal vestments, fasts, and festivals, all these things he totally forbid. The pope's name he erased from all public instruments; and denied his supremacy. Merit alone, he said, should give distinction among the priests of Bohemia; and they should gain the reverence of the people by the sanctity of their lives, not by their luxurious manner of living. Church yards were forbidden also; as they had been brought into use, he thought, only to enrich the clergy. Purgatory too was expunged from the articles of belief.

From these things we may judge how much farther Huss would, in all probability, have carried reformation, if he had had it in his power: for we may consider ZISCA, as acting by his authority, and doing nothing, but what was consonant to his express doctrine; or might by fair inference be deduced from it.

We have no reason to suppose this military reformer had any bigotry in his temper: he seems not to have shewn any inclination to force the consciences of any differing sect; but to have left men at liberty to like or dislike, to unite with him, or leave him, as they thought best. Nor was he by

any means arbitrary in his impositions; but consulted his friends, and fixed on nothing, but what found at least a general concurrence. He had the misfortune, notwithstanding this moderation, to give great offence to many of the Bohemian reformers.

A variety of sects is the natural consequence of religious liberty; and mutual animosity is too often the consequence of a variety of sects. The mischief is not, that men think differently, which is unavoidable; it is, their refusing others that liberty, which they take themselves. To restrain therefore the bad effects of bigotry, the prudent legislator protects an establishment; and whatever toleration he may allow to sectaries, (and the wisest hath generally allowed the most,) he will however keep such a restraint upon them, as may preserve the tranquility of the whole.

Among the several sects, for there were several, which the reformation produced in Bohemia; one only was able to dispute the point of superiority with the Taborites. It was that of the Calixtins, so called from a word in the Latin language, which signifies a cup. They administered the Lord's supper, it seems, in both kinds; but in other points receded less from the church of Rome, than any other Bohemian reformers.

The seeds of animosity had long been sown between this sect, and the Taborites; but each was restrained by its fears of external danger. -When

an appearance of greater tranquility succeeded; and ZISCA, taking the opportunity, began to innovate, and form the scheme of an establishment, he soon found how warm an opposition he was likely to meet with from the Calixtins, whose party was by no means contemptible. These sectaries, who were chiefly confined to Prague, and its district, (and being the more embodied, could act with the greater force) were highly offended at being less taken notice of, than so considerable a party, in their own eyes, should have been. Their clamour soon began, and in language sufficiently warm: "here, said they, is a reformation indeed! instead of weeding and pruning the Lord's vineyard, as ought to have been done, the fence is totally taken away, and the wild boar of the wood is suffered to root it up. The church of Rome, however culpable in many respects, is at least decent in its worship: but the present system of reformation hath not even decency to boast of." From violent language, they proceeded, in the usual progression, to violent actions."

John the Pœnonstratensian, (so called from an order of monkery, in which he had spent a novitiate) was the principal abettor of the Taborite party in Prague; He was a man of family, fortune, and character; all which conspired to give him influence. This person considering ZISCA, during the present unsettled state of Bohemia, as the leader, from whom he was properly to look

for instructions, employed his whole interest in favour of that chief; and endeavoured to introduce the same regulations at Prague, which ZISKA had established in other parts of the kingdom.

The principal magistrates of Prague were Calixtins; and unhappily men of little temper. It doth not appear, that John had discovered any unbecoming zeal; yet he soon found, that he had given great offence; and had sufficient reason to fear, that if he brought himself within the shadow of a law, that law would be made to crush him.

Late one evening, he and nine others, all chiefs of the Taborite party, were sent for, by the magistrates, to the council chamber, upon a pretence of settling something with regard to public peace. They came without scruple; but found, on their entrance, an assembly which they little expected; a court sitting in form; before which they were immediately arraigned. The chief magistrate, without further ceremony, acquainted them, that in all states it had been the practice, upon emergent occasions, to dispense with the formalities of law; that their behaviour had been such, as very greatly endangered the tranquility of the city; that sufficient matter for the most public trial could be brought against them; but that it was rather chosen for the sake of peace, to proceed against them in this more private way.

Vain were all remonstrances against these lawless proceedings; witnesses were immediately cal-

led; and the facts alleged being proved, sentence of death was hastily passed upon them; and they were as hastily hurried into an inner court of the building; where, without any of the usual circumstances of decency, they were put to death.

It was impossible that so horrid a massacre however privately transacted, should escape the public knowledge. By noon the next day it was known in all parts of the city. Some authors mention its being discovered in a very extraordinary manner. The blood which ran in streams from the headless trunks of these unfortunate men, having been forgotten in the confusion of the action, made its way through the drains into the street, and proclaimed aloud the horrid deed. The populace by whatever means acquainted with the affair, were immediately in an uproar: all parties were scandalized: even the Calixtins were too much confounded to make resistance; while the Taborites took an ample revenge. They were not now actuated by those mild virtues, which Huss had discovered on a like occasion. The spirit of the times was changed. They assembled with loud clamours before the houses of the magistrates; forced open the doors; dragged them from their concealments; and hauled them into the streets; where, having exposed them as spectacles, and reproached them with their crimes, they put them to a cruel death.

When the tumult of this affair was over, and men began to think coolly upon the matter, the

Calixtins plainly saw how much injury their cause had suffered. It was true, that outrages had been committed on both sides. But the scale was by no means equal. The world would certainly be most forward to condemn the aggressor; and a manifest distinction would be made between an act of magistracy, and an act of mere popular fury. They concluded therefore, that the breach between them and the Taborites was irreparable; and that it was impossible for them to live happily under any government, in which ZISCA presided.

These were the sentiments of the senate of Prague; in which assembly, after long deliberation, it was resolved to send deputies to the grand duke of Lithuania, and to offer him, in the name of the capital of Bohemia, the crown of that kingdom. The duke accepted their offer; and immediately sent troops to support his title.

This fatal dissention was looked upon as the expiring pang of the liberties of Bohemia. It was not doubted but the emperor would seize this favourable opportunity; and having suffered the two parties thoroughly to weaken themselves, would suddenly crush them both. It happened otherwise. Animated as these sectaries were against each other, they were still more so against the common enemy. ZISCA indeed satisfied himself with protesting against the resolutions of the senate of Prague; and, bearing, with his accustomed firmness, the ingratitude of his country, lay quiet in his camp at



**Fabor**: while the Calixtins, in concert with the Lithuanians, seeing themselves unmolested by him, began immediately to act against the emperor.

This party affected now to take the lead in all public affairs. But their success was not answerable to their presumption. The first enterprise they attempted was the siege of Charlestone, a fortified post, where the emperor had found an opportunity to introduce a garrison of 400 men. Before this place, which was by no means considerable, they consumed, full six months; and at length gave up the affair. The garrison, during the whole siege, held them in the utmost contempt. Having taken some prisoners, in a sally, they hung one of them over the wall, where the assault was fiercest, with a fly-flapper in his hand, intimating, that this was sufficient to baffle the utmost efforts of the besiegers. **ZISCA**, in the mean time, sat by, a calm spectator of what passed. There were some distempers, which, he thought, best cured themselves; and he considered this disorder as one of them. He knew the Calixtins had among them no leader of any capacity, in military affairs especially; and he doubted not but they would soon feel the bad effects of ill concerted measures.

Indeed the Calixtins were not a little chagrined at the disgrace they had suffered before Charlestone. The success of the invincible **Zisca**, from whose auspices they had now withdrawn them-

selves, was, on this occasion, an unpleasing retrospect: but they had soon severer cause for reflection.

On the frontiers of Hungary Sigismund had a conference with the king of Poland; the subject of which was the ill usage he had received from the duke of Lithuania. Sigismund pushed the affair with so much force of argument, and insinuating address, that upon a proper application from his sovereign, the duke gave up his title to the crown of Bohemia, and withdrew his forces. It is probable he had now leisure to see things in a different light; and could discern more thorns than flowers scattered in the path way to a throne; which he had not before observed, while dazzled with the glare of royalty. The Calixtins thus deprived of foreign aid, immediately sunk into their former insignificance. They became the objects also of that contempt of which the world is commonly so liberal upon the baffled schemes of imprudence and folly.

ZISCA in the mean time, was in full credit with his party, and was earnestly requested to assume the crown of Bohemia himself, as a reparation for the insult he had received. No one in the kingdom, they assured him, had the power, if he had the inclination, to make the least opposition; and as for the emperor, they hoped he would soon be induced to drop his claim. But ZISCA, whom even his enemies neither tax with avarice; nor ambition;

steadily refused. "While you find me of service to your designs, said the disinterested chief, you may freely command both my councils, and my sword; but I will never accept any established authority. On the contrary, my most earnest advice to you is, when the perverseness of your enemies will allow you peace, to trust yourselves no longer in the hands of kings; but to form yourselves into a republic; which species of government only can secure your liberties."

It was near Christmas 1422, when the Lithuanian army evacuated Bohemia. Sigismond was solicitous to have this impediment removed before the spring, when he proposed to open a very active campaign. He had made, as usual, great preparations; and intended once more to enter Bohemia with two separate armies. With this view, he set the marquis of Misnia at the head of a considerable body of Saxons, which were to penetrate by the way of Upper Saxony; while himself, at the head of another army, should enter Moravia, on the side of Hungary. His design was, when he had overrun that country, which, upon the matter, was wholly in the interest of Zisca, to join the marquis in the centre of Bohemia. This was Sigismond's last effort; upon which he had exhausted his whole strength. It is surprising indeed, how he had thus far found resources in this ruinous and destructive war; considering him already in some degree impoverished by an expensive expedition

against the Turks. But the amiable Sigismund could do, what the authority of the emperor could not have done. So insinuating were his manners, so gentle and affable his behaviour, that he won the hearts of men, and drew them as he pleased. Had not religion opposed, nothing could have withstood the claim of this accomplished prince to the crown of Bohemia.

On the other side, ZISCA was not backward in his preparations. He had some time before sent Procop, an excellent young officer, to command in Moravia; in whom he had entire confidence, and to whose management he wholly intrusted the military affairs of that country; recommending to him particularly a cautious behaviour, and measures merely defensive.

Procop was a citizen of Prague, of ordinary parentage; but his sprightliness and beauty recommending him in his childhood to an affluent family, he had been adopted into it. His new father spared no expense in his education; and having given him the best which his own country afforded, sent him to travel into Spain, Italy, and other parts of Europe. After a considerable stay abroad, he returned home, a very accomplished person. The religious war soon after breaking out, he attached himself, as his inclination led him, to the fortunes of ZISCA; under whom, he not only expected to learn the rudiments of war, his favourite study, but resolved to practise them likewise, in the service

of his country. From the moment he entered a camp, he gave himself up entirely to his profession; in the knowledge of which he made a rapid progress. ZISCA soon discovered the uncommon talents of his young pupil; employed him frequently in matters, which required courage and punctuality; and at an age when men seldom arrive at the command of a regiment, set him over a province. His abilities indeed were such, that ZISCA was in little pain about Moravia; at least he hoped, that Procop would be able to keep the emperor employed, till he himself should return from the frontiers of Saxony; whither he marched, with all his force, upon the first notice of the enemy's preparations.

The marquis had not yet taken the field. ZISCA, to strike a terror into his troops, ravaged his borders; and boldly, in the face of his army, sat down before Ausig.

Ausig is a strong town situate upon the Elbe, nearly where that river leaves Bohemia. It had always shewn a particular attachment to the emperor; and was recommended by him in strong terms, together with the bridge in its neighbourhood, to the protection of the marquis. It was a sensible mortification therefore to that general to see an enemy already at its gates; and he determined to risk all, rather than leave it a prey.

ZISCA, who carried on his works with his usual vigour, had brought the siege to its last stage, when the marquis appeared at the head of a great

army, and offered him battle. ZISCA, whose maxim it was, never to decline fighting, accepted the challenge, though he had many difficulties to encounter. The marquis had a superior army, and ZISCA was obliged still more to thin his troops by leaving a large detachment to observe the town. The Saxons besides were advantageously posted, having taken possession of a rising ground, which secured their flanks. A strong wind also blew in the faces of the Taborites; which greatly weakened the flight of their arrows, while it added new force to those of the enemy.

But ZISCA had little confidence in missile weapons. His whole line, with their poll-axes and sabres, in their accustomed manner, made an impetuous attack upon the enemy. The Saxons, receiving them in good order, stood firm, and gave them a very severe check. This was a reception wholly unknown to the Taborites; who had ever been used to bear down all before them; and in these new circumstances, were at a loss how to act. They retreated some paces as if astonished at the novelty of the thing. This critical moment the Saxons should have seized while the blast, yet fluttering in the sails, seemed to hesitate, on which side to give the swell. Had they moved forward at this instant, it is probable the Taborites had never recovered from their surprise. But instead of a general charge, they stood motionless; looking upon the enemy, as if they had done enough by

not suffering themselves to be beaten. ZISCA, little less than inspired, had a complete idea of the whole affair; and being conducted to the front line, which stood yet unbroken, he cried out as he rode along, "I thank you my fellow soldiers, for all your past services, if you have now done your utmost, let us retire." This noble rebuke stung them to the soul. Every veteran gnashed his teeth with indignation, grasped his sword, and pressed forward; closing, hand to hand, with the enemy, in the true temper of determined courage.

The combat, thus renewed, became soon unequal. For some time the Saxons still maintained a feeble fight. Four of their principal officers, endeavouring to restore the battle, were cut in pieces at the head of their dismayed battalions. The whole army soon after, in every part, gave ground: a retreat, a rout, a massacre succeeded. The carnage of the field was terrible. Not fewer than 9000 Saxons were left dead upon the spot. ZISCA is taxed, however justly, with great cruelty, after all resistance was over. It is certain he never bought a victory so dear.

From this scene of blood he recalled his troops to new fields of glory. "We must sleep to night, cried he, within the walls of Ausig." Thither the triumphant army carried the news of their victory. ZISCA would grant no conditions; the governor was allowed half an hour to deliberate, whether he would surrender at discretion, or to take the consequence. He chose the safer measure: and

the Taborites were quietly in their quarters in Ausig before the close of the evening. These two great events consecrated the 22d of April, for many years in Bohemia.

The next day ZISEA ordered the town to be dismantled; that it might no longer be a receptacle to his enemies: He broke down likewise the stately bridge over the Elbe; to cut off, as much as possible, all communication with Saxony.

Having thus settled every thing in the east of Bohemia, where he had been kept longer than he expected, and having freed that country even from the apprehension of danger, he returned with his victorious army to the assistance of Procop.

That general had sufficient business upon his hands. The emperor appeared early upon the frontiers of Moravia; and after some irregular motions, sat down before Pernitz,

Procop with his little army attended all his movements; and practised with admirable skill those lessons, which he had just received. He was confined however to the minutiae of war; he could not hurt, he could only tease, his unwieldy adversary. If the emperor offered him battle, his Parthian brigades, unincumbered with baggage, retreated suddenly to the mountains. If the emperor returned to his former enterprise, Procop was instantly in his rear; and being acquainted with the country, beset every avenue to his camp with so much judgment, that Sigismond was obliged to send large detachments, and often to run great haz-



and in procuring provisions. In a word, Procop shewed himself, during the whole campaign, a complete master of defensive war; and gave the emperor such a check, as he little expected from so inferior a force.

In the mean time the town behaved with equal spirit. Sigismond had now lain eight weeks before it, and had not yet made the least impression either upon the walls, or the garrison; though he had endeavoured his utmost, by his engines and his menaces, to shake both. He was obliged therefore to submit to his ill fortune; and, drawing lines round the place, contented himself with straitening its quarters, and shutting it up by a blockade.

In this design he was again unfortunate. He had reduced the town to great extremity, when, by one of those mastery strokes, which may deceive the greatest captain, Procop drawing his attention to another quarter, forced his lines in an unsuspected part, and threw succours into the place.

This was a severe blow to Sigismond. His work was entirely to begin a new; the summer was wearing apace; the Saxons were totally defeated; and ZISCA was returning with a victorious army. Agitated by these reflections; and having nothing in prospect but new disasters; he gave up his design, and retreated. Thus was Bohemia delivered once more from the fear of her enemies; and her champion, after a short, but active campaign, was allowed to sheath his sword.

The news of Sigismond's retreat met ZISCA near Prague. As the troops, having made forced march-

es from Ausig, had been harrassed with intolerable fatigue, he thought it proper to give them a few days rest. He incamped therefore within three leagues of Prague; and attended by a small body of horse, took up his own residence in the city. He had not been at Prague since the late disturbances, and hoped, by his presence, to dissipate what might still remain of ill humour in the minds of the inhabitants. He was however mistaken. His presence, instead of restoring harmony, appeared plainly to give new offence. He soon had flagrant instances of the distaste of the people; which he had the magnanimity to disregard, still expecting it would wear off. On the contrary, it increased daily, discovering itself in the most gross affronts, and at length in the most violent outrages.

At a very unseasonable hour, somewhat after midnight, he was alarmed by an officer of his guard who entering his chamber, with a disturbed countenance, acquainted him, that he had no time to lose, that the perfidious townsmen were preparing to seize him. ZISCA asking a few questions, and receiving such answers, as left him little room to doubt, immediately got on horse back; ordering at the same time, a hasty trumpet to sound *to horse*, through the quarters. The troops, which consisted of about 400 men, repaired directly, with such circumstances of disorder, as may be imagined, to the great square. Not a man knew the cause of this sudden alarm. While they stood enquiring one of another, and each forming such conjectures,

as his imagination suggested, their ears were suddenly struck with the sound of bells, which burst instantaneously from every tower of the city, in one general peal. Immediately on the signal, they were attacked by multitudes of people, crowding through every avenue and street; but in that tumultuary manner, which plainly discovered a disconcerted scheme. The Taborites, placing their farther, as they commonly called ZISCA, in the centre, formed round him, as the exigence would allow; and defended themselves with great firmness. Indeed the enemy made no extraordinary efforts; they seemed contented with blocking up the avenues of the square, and throwing a few weapons, which did little execution. If any approached nearer, and attempted a ruder assault, a few horsemen were ordered to ride in among them; who generally drove them back some paces. But this was only the reflux of a tide, which presently returned.

In the mean time day light appeared; and shewed the Taborites the desperate circumstances of their situation. ZISCA, who was exactly informed of every thing, having called his officers about him, resolved (as the only expedient in the present exigence) to endeavour to force a way through the high street, which led to the camp.

In consequence of this resolution, a vigorous attack was made. The citizens were presently beaten off; and the Taborites gallantly fought their way through all opposition.

In the middle of the street their impetuosity re-

ceived a check. There a barricado had been begun, the hasty work of that tumultuous morning. The materials indeed had been rather brought together, than put into form. It served however to retard the violence of ZISCA. Many of his soldiers were obliged to dismount, to clear the passage; and could not afterwards recover their horses: all order was broken; and, the enemy closing on every side, a scene of great confusion ensued.

At length the fortune of ZISCA prevailed. With the loss of some men, though of fewer than might have been expected, he forced the barricado, and made his way to the gate.

Here the enemy endeavoured to form a second time; and a new scene of tumult followed. But the gate was at length burst open; and ZISCA, at the head of his little troop, sallied out in triumph. He was pursued by all the force, that could be brought out against him; which consisted of some thousands; against whom he maintained a flying fight with such intrepidity, as made none of them very forward to close in upon him. His dismounted troopers, who had been of so much service in opening a passage, were now of equal disadvantage in retarding his march: notwithstanding which, the order of it continued unbroken.

In the midst of this victorious retreat, an unforeseen accident almost proved fatal to him. The enemy were making one of their boldest efforts, when, ZISCA being separated from his company in the confusion of the attack, his horse, undirected, plunged

into a morass. His person being conspicuous, he was presently surrounded; and a furious contest ensued; in which the Taborites were victorious; and had the good fortune to recover their fainting general.

The route, which the Taborites took, led across a fair plain, or rather valley, environed with rising grounds, which, approaching each other, at the farther end, formed a narrow pass. Here ZISCA, who had been miserably harrassed along the plain, and had more open country beyond the defile, determined to make a stand; thinking his desperate circumstances a sufficient apology for the appearance of rashness. Having drawn up his little troop, therefore with all the advantage which accrued from his situation, he presented himself to the enemy; who did not decline an engagement.

Historians relate this battle with very improbable circumstances. We are told, that ZISCA not only gained the victory, but that he put to the sword above 3000 of the enemy. It is not unlikely, that if the slaughter from the beginning be taken into the account, the Calixtin party might lose that number. It is certain however, that ZISCA made good his retreat; and arrived in safety at his camp.

Great was the consternation in Prague, when the fugitives from this unfortunate attack returned without their prey. The Calixtin party at first intended to have crushed ZISCA without disturbance; not doubting but the dissipation of his sect would follow. When that was found impracticable, they determined, at any rate, to crush him. Their

fraud and force being equally ineffectual, they saw themselves in desperate circumstances. They had provoked a very powerful enemy, whom they could not withstand; and from whom they had every thing to fear. The die however was thrown; and they must accommodate their game as they were able.

In the mean time ZISCA, calling his troops together, acquainted them in form with the whole transaction; and having raised in them such sentiments of indignation as he wished to inspire, he immediately struck his tents, and like the injured Roman of old, marched directly to the city, and incamped under its walls.

Before he attempted force, he sent in a trumpet, requiring, in very stern language, that the advisers, and chief instruments of the late villainous assault should be put into his hands. But the guilt of that action was so universal, that it was impossible to say, who was involved the deepest. Instead of complying therefore with the order of ZISCA, the miserable inhabitants chose rather to try persuasive arts; endeavouring by every method to soften the chief, and move the compassion of the troops. Intreaties, promises, and prayers were addressed by the magistrates to ZISCA; while the populace, from the walls, made the same earnest application to the soldiers. Some pleaded kindred, or alliances, or the rites of hospitality affectionately performed. Many with tears deplored their wretched fate; protesting before God and man, that they had no hand in the late commotion: while numbers, who

had a right to the protection of ZISCA, from their adherence to his cause, were describing their doors, and houses, or agreeing upon secret marks, and pledges, by which they might escape the impending vengeance; intreating, at the same time, one for a friend, another for a son, or near relation, whom his unhappy fate had involved in the general guilt.

But ZISCA continued stern and immoveable. He was persuaded the Calixtin party could by no means, be depended on; and that they would never unite in any friendly league. He determined therefore to take this opportunity of leisure from his other enemies, to subdue them thoroughly; assuring himself, that till this should be effected, the accomplishment of his great designs would remain incomplete.

The troops were more flexible. They considered not the affair with the foresight of their chief; and having only before their eyes the present scene of distress, began to murmur at the work, in which they were engaged; and at the severity of him, who had engaged them in it. "They would not be the instruments of the destruction of a city, which was the glory of their country. Their general might seek other ministers of his vengeance. They would offer their lives a willing sacrifice against the unjust attempts of their enemies; but no one should oblige them to take up arms against their brethren."

These whispers soon reached the ears of ZISCA, the first seditious whispers he had ever heard. His orders he found hourly less punctually obeyed;

he was accosted with insolent speeches, as he passed along the lines; and mutinous tumults gathered about his tent. In a word, he saw the contagion spreading apace; and the immediate need of a remedy. Calling his troops therefore together, he endeavoured, to assuage the rising mutiny, by shewing them the necessity of severe measures. The Calixtins had now twice, he told them, almost ruined the common cause; and would be ready to ruin it again on any future occasion. The emperor, he said, was always on the watch; and would be glad to widen their misunderstandings, and take the advantage of them. For himself, he had no intention, he told them, to lay the city in blood and desolation. All he proposed was to make himself entire master of it; and when he had it in his power, he would listen to the suggestions of pity, and would temper severity with mercy.

“ This, my fellow soldiers, said he, concluding his speech, is my intention: but if it shall seem more agreeable to you to act with greater lenity; if you shall chuse to reach out to these bloody men even an unlimited mercy, I shall consider myself only as your minister: and whether you chuse war or peace, I am ready with my utmost power to second that choice. One thing only let me request, for the sake of all our mutual labours, and mutual glories, let me request, that these unhappy divisions among us may cease; and that whether we sheath our swords, or keep them drawn, the world may know, that we are united in our councils, as



well as our arms; and that ZISCA, and his companions, have only one common cause."

In such soothing language did the prudent chief address himself to the prejudices of his soldiers. His speech had the desired effect. They who did not hear it, caught the fire from those who did.—The whole army was instantly animated with a new spirit; and the camp rang with professions of obedience, and acclamations of praise.

It was now near sunset; too late to take the full advantage of the ardour of the troops. Orders therefore were given for an assault early the next morning. Every thing was prepared. The regiments, in their several stations, rested upon their arms; and ZISCA retired to his tent, big with the thoughts of the succeeding day. Many were the reflections he made; and many the compunctions he felt, when he thus found himself upon the point of laying waste the capital of his country. But the liberties of Bohemia urged him upon this harsh service.

As he was ruminating on these things, it being now past midnight, a person was introduced to him by the officer of his guard, who earnestly desired a private audience. ZISCA presently knew him to be the celebrated Roquesan; an ecclesiastic, who, from the meanest circumstances of birth and fortune, had raised himself, by his great talents, to have the most personal consequence of any man in Prague. Roquesan came a deputy from his fellow citizens, now reduced to the lowest despair. They had good intelligence from ZISCA's camp; and well

knew the fatal resolution of the preceding evening.

Of what passed between these two chiefs, on this occasion, we have no particulars. Roquesan however insisted on such arguments, as over powered the resolution of ZISCA, and a thorough reconciliation took place. An anonymous French historian, who wrote the life of ZISCA, mentions terms of agreement; but as these are unlikely, and, as far as appears, unauthorised, it is of little moment to insert them. It is probable, that ZISCA would not so easily have been brought to a reconciliation, had not the late mutiny among his troops given a new turn to his counsels.

While these things were acting at Prague, the distressed Sigismond was in great perplexity. The battle of Ausig had greatly shaken that constancy, which had thus far supported him. Six times, in three campaigns, he had been vanquished in the open field; his towns had been ravished from him, and his provinces laid waste. He acknowledged the superior talents of his adversary; and was quelled by that noble and unconquered spirit, which animated the cause of liberty. The late dissention had, in some degree, revived his hopes: but he was scarce informed of the circumstances of the quarrel, when he was informed of the reconciliation likewise. Every ray of hope therefore being now excluded, he submitted to his hard fate; and resolving on any terms, to give peace to his bleeding country, sent deputies to ZISCA, requesting him to sheath his sword, and name his conditions;

offering him, at the same time, for himself, what might have satisfied the most grasping ambition.

ZISCA was equally desirous of a reconciliation. He had taken up arms with a view only to obtain peace, and was heartily glad of an occasion to lay them down. He returned a message to the emperor, full of that respectful language, with which the great can easily cover enmity; though at the same time breathing that spirit, which became a chief in the cause of liberty.

After a few couriers had passed, a place of congress was appointed; and ZISCA set out to meet the emperor, attended by the principal officers of his army. It gave Europe a subject for various conversation, when this great man, whom one unfortunate battle would have reduced to the condition of a rebel, was seen passing through the midst of Bohemia, to treat with his sovereign, like a sovereign, upon equal terms.

But ZISCA lived not to put a finishing hand to this treaty. His affairs obliged him to take his route through a part of the country, at which the plague at that time raged. At the castle of Priscow, where he had engaged to hold an assembly of the states of that district, the fatal contagion seized him, and put an end to his life, on the 6th of October 1424, at a time, when, all his labours being ended, and his great purposes almost completed, (such was the course of providence) he had only to enjoy those liberties, and that tranquility, which his virtue had so nobly purchased.

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Some authors write, that, being asked by those around him, a little before his death, where he would have his remains deposited? he answered where they pleased, that it was indifferent to him, whether they were thrown out to the vultures, or configned to the tomb.

We are informed too, that upon his death bed he ordered his skin to be made into a drum; "The very sound of which, added he, will disperse your enemies." It is probable this speech is a mere fiction: such vaunting, agreeing ill with that reserved character, which ZISCA had ever maintained. Morery indeed tells us, that the drum was actually made; that it was used in battle by the Taborites; and that it had the full effect expected from it; though at the same time, with a ridiculous gravity, he informs us, that he doth not suppose it was owing to any supernatural power, with which that instrument was endowed. The whole seems an idle tale. It may even be questioned, whether the skin of a body in that morbid state, which the plague occasions, is capable of being cured: or if it were, we can hardly imagine, that any people could be so infatuated, as first to manufacture, and afterwards to carry about with them the remains of an infected carcase.

The best accounts inform us, that he was buried in the great church at Czaslow in Bohemia; where a monument was erected to his memory, with an inscription to this purpose:

HERE LIES  
JOHN ZISCA ;

*Who having defended his country against the encroachments of Papal Tyranny, rests in this hallowed place in despite of the Pope.*

The greatest, indeed the only stain on the character of ZISCA, is his cruelty. Of this his enemies make loud complaints ; and his friends, it must be confessed, are very ill able to clear him. Against the popish clergy, it is certain, he acted with great severity. Many of them he put to death, and more he banished ; plundering and confiscating their possessions, without any reserve.

They who are most inclined to exculpate this rigour, persuade us, that he considered these ecclesiastics not as heretics, but as civil offenders ; as men, who were accountable for all the blood, which had been spilt in Bohemia ; and on whose heads the justice of an injured nation ought deservedly to fall.

But the best apology perhaps may be taken from the manners of the age, in which he lived. In those barbarous times, and among those barbarous nations, rough nature appeared in its rudest form. Friends and enemies were treated from the heart, without that gloss of decency, which arts, and civility have introduced.

Some allowance also may be made for the peculiar violence, which naturally attends civil dissensions ; in which every injury is greatly heightened, and every passion immoderately moved.

Upon the whole, ZISCA was by no means ani-

mated with that true spirit of Christianity, which his amiable master, Huss, had discovered on all occasions. His fierce temper seems to have been modelled rather upon the old Testament, than the new; and the genius of that religion in a great degree to have taken hold of him, which in its animosities called down fire from heaven.

His capacity was vast; his plans of action extensive; and the vigour of his mind in executing those plans astonishing. Difficulties with him were motives. They roused up latent powers, proportioned to the emergence. Even blindness could not check the ardour of his soul; and what was said of the Grecian Timoleon, under the same misfortune, (whose character indeed he resembled in many instances) may with equal justice be applied to him; *banc calamitatem ita moderate tulit, ut neq; eum querentem quisquam audierit, neq; eo minus privatis, publicisq; rebus interfuerit.* His military abilities were equal to what any age hath produced; and as such they are acknowledged by all historians. Nor do we admire him less as a politician. If the great man was seen in the conduct, and courage; which he discovered in the field; he was equally seen in governing, by his own native authority, a land of anarchy; and in drawing to one point the force of a divided nation.

Nor was the end, which he proposed, unworthy of his great actions. Utterly devoid both of ambition and avarice, he had no aim but to establish, upon the ruins of ecclesiastical tyranny, the civil and religious liberties of his country.

THE  
CONCLUSION  
OF THE  
*BOHEMIAN AFFAIRS.*

HAVING thus brought the affairs of the Bohemian reformers to a glorious issue under ZISCA, it may be proper, to continue the narration, in few words, till this great struggle between the contending parties was decided.

After the death of ZISCA, the flames of war kindled anew. It is probable, the emperor, on this great event, might suspend, and finally break off the treaty, expecting better conditions.

Procop, who had so greatly distinguished himself in Moravia, and was esteemed the ablest of ZISCA's generals, naturally took the lead after his decease. This chief sustained the character he had acquired. Indeed the Taborite armies were now so formed, and disciplined by the care, and abilities of ZISCA; so inured to all the difficulties of their profession, and so formidable to their enemies, that the reputation of future generals was in a great measure ZISCA's due; who had laid a foundation, on which even inferior talents might successfully build.

But Procop had talents to form a scheme, which fortune had given him only to complete. Yet he

had still great difficulties to encounter. To the old enemies of his cause a new one was added. The pope, incited by the clamours of the religious, reared his holy banners; and a formidable army under a cardinal general, was sent into Bohemia. But his eminence shared the fate of all his predecessors in this war; and the Bohemian arms triumphed, wherever they were opposed.

To the military inventions of ZISCA, Procop added an improvement of his own. He introduced armed chariots into his lines; which served as a sort of moving rampart; through the interstices of which his troops charged and retired at pleasure. On other occasions, his chariots would take a sudden wheel, and inclose whole battallions of the enemy; which, thus environed, were destined to certain slaughter. He found them still more useful in his ravaging excursions. They served, at the same time, as a defence to his marauders, and as waggons to carry off the plunder.

Procop had now continued in arms six years. His campaigns, though not distinguished by those illustrious actions, which had marked the campaigns of ZISCA, were however generally successful. He had not indeed those opportunities of performing splendid actions. The emperor, wasted by his vast expenses, had of late suffered the war to languish; hoping to procure those advantages from repose, which he could not force by his arms. He was well acquainted with the mutual animosities of the Taborites and the Calixtins, who agreed in no-



thing, but in opposing him : and he thought a little leisure, as it had hitherto done, might ripen their dissensions. Procop, he knew, was an able general ; but he had a mean opinion of him, as a politician, as a man either of temper, or address to assuage or manage the rage of parties. Upon the whole, he had reason to hope, that time might produce some happy crisis in his favour. That crisis now approached.

In the year 1431, the council of Basil assembled. Hither the Taborites were invited with a profusion of civil language. But they received the summons with great indignation. It was the universal cry, "That general councils were general pests ; that they were called only in support of ecclesiastical tyranny ; and that no credit was due to such partial conventions."

Procop however, with a magnanimity which could not brook the imputation of refusing a challenge of any kind, determined to attend the council : and when his friends urged the danger ; and advised him at least to secure himself by a sufficient passport ; they only made him the more resolute in his purpose : "Passport ! cried he, need we other than our swords ?"

Thus resolved and accompanied by Cosca, another leader of the Taborites, he set out, at the head of a regiment of horse. The whole city of Basil came out to meet so extraordinary a deputation. Every one was earnest to compare the faces of these gallant heroes with the actions they had

performed; and saw, or thought they saw, something more than human in those countenances, the very appearance of which had put armies to flight. The two deputies were received by the magistrates at the gate of the city; and the fathers of the council (so great a change, since the times of Huss, had the influence of power produced) paid them such honours, as were paid only to crowned heads. After many conferences, which ended in attaching them the more firmly to their own opinions, they returned into Bohemia.

The council however had an aftergame to play. Upon the departure of the Taborite chiefs, they sent deputies, chosen from the most eminent of their body, into Bohemia; who had in charge (out of the great regard the council had for the Bohemians, and their earnest zeal to draw them to the true faith) to discuss those points at full leisure in Prague, which the multiplicity of affairs would not allow at Basil. This was their pretence: their real design was, to divide the Bohemians; and to kindle again the old animosity, which had so nearly proved fatal to both parties.

The business was carried on with that singular address, for which the court of Rome hath ever been remarkable in negotiations of this kind; and was at length, by the assiduity of these good cardinals, brought to a happy issue. A great party, under Mignard, a man of courage and abilities, appeared in arms against Procop; and the fury of civil discord began to rage in all its violence.

The Taborites had now ample occasion to regret the clemency, which had formerly been shewn at Prague; and remembered, with compunction of heart, how often their great chief would insist, that no peaceful settlement could be obtained, till the factious spirit of that city should be subdued. But it was now too late for reflection.

Procop however, unconcerned, at the head of veterans, whose valour he had known during ten campaigns, met his adversary with assurance of success. "You have not now, my fellow soldiers, cried he, disciplined Imperialist, and hardy Saxons to oppose. Those hostile banners belong to troops enervated by city luxury; and inspired by faction, instead of courage. You have only to begin the attack: their own guilty consciences will do the rest."

The cautious Mignard felt, with secret joy, the prognostics of success: he saw the confidence of his impetuous enemy; and with the address of a more experienced leader improved it fully to his own advantage.

On the plains of Broda this fatal quarrel was decided. Here the Taborite army, drawn by their ardour into insuperable difficulties, after a well fought day, was exterminated. Here fell the gallant Procop, vainly endeavouring to restore a broken battle; and with him fell the liberties of his country.

The battle of Broda opened an easy way to the succession of Sigismond. The Calixtin party hav-

ing gratified their revenge, now paid the price. Reduced by their victory, they were no longer in a condition to oppose the emperor. Conquerors, and conquered submitted to his yoke; and he was crowned peaceably at Prague, amidst the acclamations of his enemies.

It would be unpardonable ingratitude in a protestant writer not to acknowledge the lenity, which attended this sudden revolution. Sigismund, with a magnanimity, which few princes could exert, (it would be invidious to ascribe his behaviour to meaner motives) entered Bohemia, not as a conquered province, but as a patrimony, which had descended to him quietly from his ancestors. Such of the Taborites as had escaped the carnage of that fatal day, consisting chiefly of a few thin garrisons, in all about 6000 men, he took under his protection; suffered them to live peaceably at Tabor; and shewing them favour beyond any of the Bohemian reformers, (many of whom met with rougher usage) allowed them with unparalleled generosity, the use of their own religion.

Some years after, Eneas Sylvius, residing with a public character, in Bohemia, had the curiosity to visit Tabor. The account he hath left us of the remains of this brave people is not a little entertaining. The reader will make allowance for the zeal of a popish writer.

Returning, says he, to Prague, our route brought us near Tabor, which we had all an inclination to visit: but not knowing what sort of reception we

might meet with, we sent a messenger to acquaint the magistrates of the town with our names and our intentions. We had a very obliging answer; and the principal inhabitants came out to meet us. But so wretched a set of people I never saw. Their dress was rude, beyond what is commonly seen among the lowest vulgar; some of them were clad even in skins. They rode on horseback; but their horses, and furniture were of a piece with their dress. Their persons too were just as extraordinary: scarce one of them, but was disfigured by some frightful maim. One wanted an eye, another an arm, a third a leg. Their reception of us was equally void of every appearance either of form or politeness. In their rude manner, however, they offered us each a trifling present; and brought us, by way of refreshment, wine and fish. We then entered the town. Over the gate stood a statue of Zisca; and near it an angel holding a cup; as an emblem of their maintaining the doctrine of the two species. Their houses were very ordinary; built chiefly of clay, and wood; no regularity, no form of streets; but every house standing by itself. The insides however were better furnished than the outsides seemed to promise: they were enriched with the spoils of conquered provinces; which, to the everlasting disgrace of the emperor Sigismond, were never restored. In their great square stood various forms of military engines; with a view, as we suppose, to strike a terror into the neighbouring country: though the people were

become quite pacific, applying themselves only to husbandry, and mechanic arts. In this square too stood their temple, as they call it; a wooden structure, scarce superior to a country barn. Here they preached to the people: here they expounded their doctrines; here stood their unconsecrated altar; and here even the holy sacrament was administered. Their priests were unornamented, except by beards of an immoderate length. Tythes were entirely disallowed. The clergy had no property. They were supplied with all necessaries, in kind, by the people. Images were wholly forbidden. No prayers to saints were permitted; no holi-days; no set fasts; no canonical hours. Half the sacraments were discarded. Religious houses were abominations. Their baptismal font was unconsecrated. Their dead buried in unhallowed ground. They were punctual however in their attendance upon divine service; and had very severe penalties to enforce a reverence to it.

The next day, upon our departure, the magistrates of this wretched town came again to wait upon us, and returned us thanks for our visit. Their speech, on this occasion, had more of politeness in it than their appearance seemed to promise.

*FINIS.*



