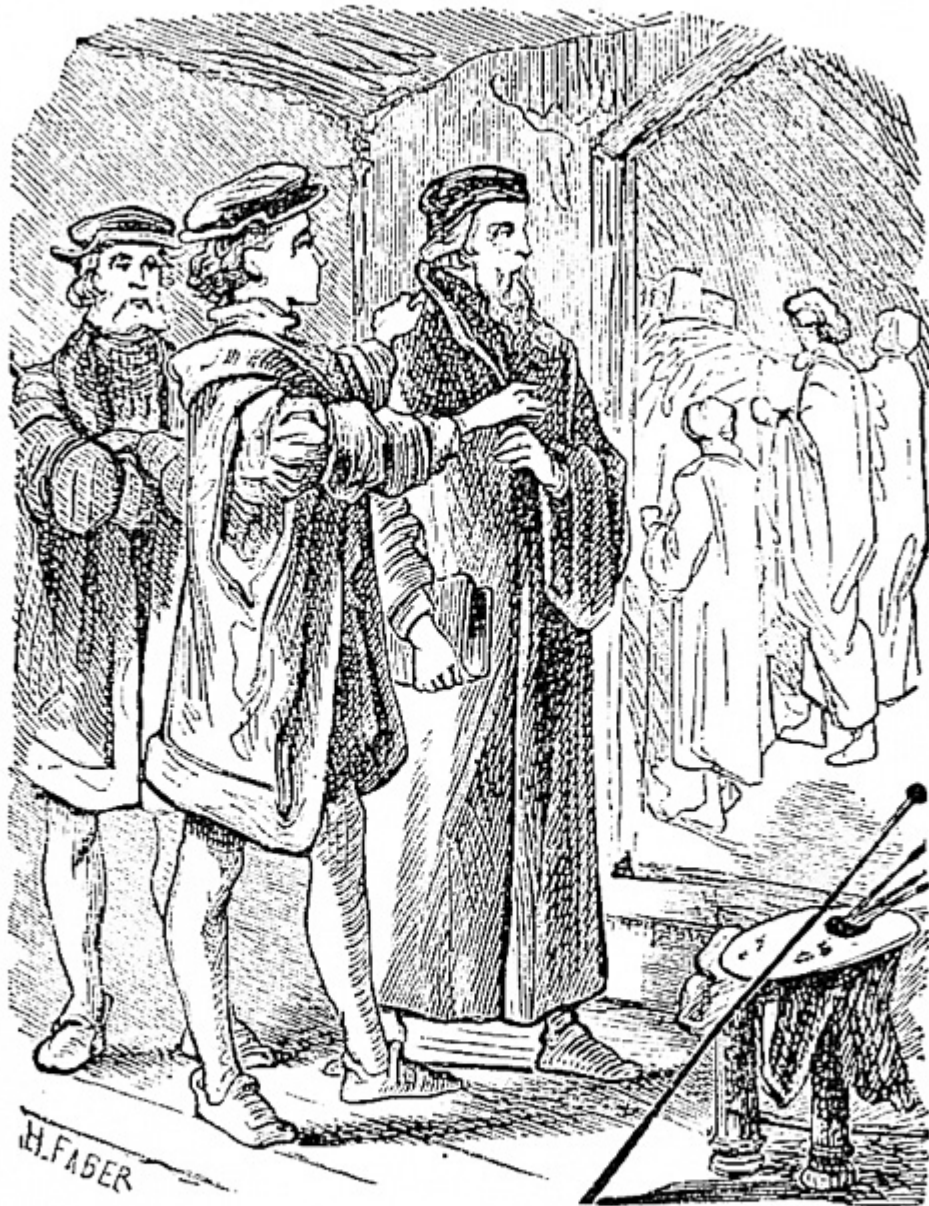




Huss and the Painter.

John Huss.

See page 24.

JOHN HUSS.

BY

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Florence H. Crowell.

JOHN HUSS.

ONCE, when I was far out
on the sea, looking from
the bows of the vessel I
saw a light a great way off.
It looked about as large as
the light of a penny candle.
“What little light is that?” I
asked.

“It is not a little light,”

the captain said, "but a very large and bright one indeed. It looks little because it shines so far."

When he told me how far off it was, then I said no more about "a *little* light," for I thought how very large it was to be seen at all over so many miles.

In a country far away, and many hundred years ago, was born the man of whom I shall

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now tell you. The country was Bohemia, in Europe; the time five hundred and one years past; the man, JOHN HUSS.

John Huss is like the light seen at sea—he shines afar. But he is not like that light in growing less with long distance, for his name grows brighter all the time.

John took his last name from the place where he was

born—the small, poor village
of Hussinetz,

What do you think his
name meant?

I will tell you, and if it
seems funny I give you all
leave to laugh, for it will be
the only funny thing in this
book. The lives of the Re-
formers were not funny lives;
they were serious and earnest.

Huss, in the Bohemian
tongue, means “goose.” John

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Huss, then, is John Goose, and Hussinetz is “Goose-town.” John Goose, of Goose-town, would be an uncommonly funny direction on a letter, sure enough !

John often in his writings alluded to his name. He would say, “I am a poor and humble man, and I have a poor and humble name, yet even if I am a *goose*—and such men of my time do count

me—yet do I feel that I have in my heart the love of God, and I have been given wisdom from above; and of this I write and speak.”

You see, John Huss was neither ashamed of his name nor of his poverty.

John's parents were very poor; they were day-laborers; they lived in a hovel; they could neither read nor write.

Two nurses rocked the cra-

dle of John Huss—one was Ignorance, the other Superstition. One knows nothing at all—the other believes what is foolish and wicked. Ask your mother to explain this.

From a childhood of such poverty and meanness, John Huss rose to be one of the greatest men in the world. He rose by two things—by learning and by goodness. He studied constantly. He

kept his life pure, and even his enemies were forced to say of him that he was a good man.

A man who hated Huss could only write about him, "He is tender and gentle to the poorest. His pale face is mild and sweet. His life is hard and simple. No reproach can come on his conduct. His manners are quiet and stern. By these things

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the hearts of men are drawn after him, and when he opens his lips they listen as if one spoke from heaven.”

When a very young man, Huss became a master in the great school of Prague. A year or two after, he was put among the wisest teachers of the day. When he was thirty-nine he became preacher to the queen of Bohemia, and for his goodness, honesty and

plain speaking the queen loved and honored him.

Three years after he was chosen to be the queen's priest, John Huss began to go about Bohemia, preaching to the people in their own language instead of Latin.

The people of Bohemia were noted above others for their sound minds and love of learning. Many good men who had been persecuted in England

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and in France fled to Bohemia for shelter, and by teaching the doctrines of the Bible to the people had prepared their minds to listen readily to such preaching as they heard from Huss.

Other priests preached in Latin. They said,

“Mind us; we know everything.” “Mind the pope; he is to you in the place of God.” “Don’t read the Bible; you

are too stupid to know what it means.” “If you sin, give us a little money and we will forgive you.”

Now when Huss first began to preach he had not read much of the Bible, but he had something better than the other priests. He could say,

“We men are all liable to err, but look to God to teach you what is right.” “Hear the voice of God speaking in

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your hearts.” “Fear to sin, my friends, for money cannot wipe out sin, and sin is hateful to God.”

The people liked this.

“Ah, this does us good; this will make us better men,” they said.

And now, as John Huss was trying to serve God and do all the good he could, God sent him more light—sent him the Bible.

Two young men came from England to Prague. Huss loved to entertain strangers, and asked them to stay at his house—first out of charity, but soon he came to love them. When they got well acquainted, they came to him with some written books.

“Here is something good,” they said. “These are the books of Wickliffe, the Englishman.”

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“I don’t want them,” said Huss.

“Read them,” said the young men.

“They are vile heresy, I am told,” replied Huss.

“Read them,” they said.

“I cannot understand them.”

“God will give you light,” said the Englishmen.

Huss took the books and read. They sent him to the

word of God. He took his Bible and read. He fell on his knees and prayed.

God gave him light. He saw that there is but one God and one Mediator between God and men—Jesus only.

Here was new life to Huss.

One day the young men said to him,

“ You are very good to us. We wish to make you a return.”

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“I am your debtor—you brought me good books to read,” replied Huss.

“Still, let us show our gratitude.”

“And what will you do?” asked Huss.

“The walls of your hall are bare and ugly. If you please, we will paint a large, beautiful picture on each wall.”

“And what will your pictures be about?” asked Huss.

“Leave us to choose,” said the young men.

They began at the hall, and painted on one side many days. A beautiful picture grew under their fingers. It was a picture of our Lord Jesus going up the hill toward Jerusalem, poor in dress and meek in countenance, with only a few poor fisher-friends and some beggars following him.

On the other wall they painted a progress of the pope through Rome. On the pope's head was a triple crown ; his robe was velvet and silk, edged with fur ; his chariot and his horses were like a king's. Behind him came a long train of rich men and priests. His head was held high, and his face was hard and proud.

When the pictures were done, " Come," said the young

men, “see our pictures; they are finished.”

Huss looked in silence from one wall to another.

At last the painters spoke:

“This is your Jesus, and this is your pope. See the difference! How much greater is the servant than his Lord! Is the pope like Christ, the lovely and lowly? Ought he not to be like Christ if he follows him? Oh, Huss, we tell

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you your pope is a false man
and an Antichrist!”

“ I like your pictures, but I
do not like what you say about
the pope,” said Huss.

“ Does not the pope hate
the Bible and keep it from the
people ?” asked the English-
men. “ Did he not burn those
books of Wickliffe which hold
the truth ?”

“ He did all this,” said
Huss, “ and he was wrong.

But I love the Bible; I love the books of Wickliffe; and I shall tell the people to read the Bible.”

The pictures made so much trouble among the people of the city, some of whom liked them and some not, that the Englishmen were obliged to leave Prague.

The bishop ordered all the copies of Wickliffe's books to be burned. He told Huss he

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must not praise them, but Huss would not obey the bishop. Huss went about Bohemia preaching. He told the people that the burnt books were good books—no lies, but teaching God's pure truth. He would talk to the people like a father, saying, "Oh, my dear Bohemians, I love you—I love your souls. Give yourselves to God; pray to Jesus, and not to saints. Prove your-

selves men, and read the Scriptures as many as have them"—for copies of the Bible or parts of it were very scarce then.

The king was not a very bad man. He was weak, and would not stand up boldly for the right, but he was not cruel, and he did not want to have his people punished for reading what books they liked. The king liked Huss, and tried

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to keep the bishop from being cruel to him. The bishop took away some of the books that Huss had and burnt them. He said Huss must not preach and the people must not go to hear him. The king laughed at this. The pope said the bishop was right, and they drove Huss out of the Church and cursed him.

In spite of all the words of priests and bishops, the people

came to hear Huss preach. They obeyed his teachings, and all over the country men were turning to God—the rich and the poor reading, hearing and praying together.

Huss wrote books, and they were copied and scattered about. The bishop and his friends wanted to get them and burn them.

There was a little church called the Chapel of Bethle-



Huss at the Stake.

John Huss.

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hem, where Huss preached, telling of Jesus the only Saviour, the Babe born in Bethlehem.

The pope ordered Huss to come to Rome to be tried for heresy. The king^s told Huss not to go to Rome or he would be put to death.

The people of Bohemia wept about Huss, praying him not to go. Now, though Huss was willing to go, and not afraid to

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die, he yielded to king and people and stayed in Bohemia, preaching.

By this time many of the knights, soldiers and noblemen had become believers in the doctrine taught by Wickliffe and Huss, and had begun to read the Bible and to believe that we ought to obey God rather than the pope—not pray to angels; and that Jesus, and not the Virgin

Mary, is the Mediator between us and God.

These views spread into Germany, and among the French, English and Germans living at Prague; and the teachings of Huss became to all these nations like seed sown in good soil, which sprung up by and by in Calvin, in Luther and in Coligny, of whom I will write for you; and in Wishart, Knox and

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Tyndale, of whom you have read already.

Drop a seed of wheat into good ground and it will shoot up in a long stalk, and a head of many—perhaps a hundred—grains, all come from one little grain which you buried in the ground. Now, if you dig to look for that seed which you planted, you will find it dead and gone, but it has lived again in all that stalk

and head of wheat. So Huss was to die and be seen no more, but his good life and his good words were to rise up and live in hundreds of people in many lands and nations all over Europe.

People got so excited over Huss that they even quarreled about him in the streets. This worried the king, who asked him to leave the city of Prague and go into the country.

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Huss did so. In the country he spent his time writing many good books.

A great council was now to meet in Germany, where the pope and Romish priests and bishops were to be, and the emperor of Germany sent for Huss to come before them to tell what he believed and why he believed it.

The king was brother to the emperor. He wrote to him

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that he feared the council would kill Huss.

“Never!” said the emperor. “My life for his. They shall not touch him. I give my word of honor that no harm shall come to him, but he shall go back safely to Prague.”

He also wrote this promise, called a “safe-conduct,” and signed his name as emperor of all Germany to it.

Then the king of Bohemia

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told Huss he might go, and sent three noblemen — who loved Huss—with him.

All through Bohemia the people came out in crowds to see Huss and hear him speak, and they prayed aloud for blessings and safety for him.

His entrance into the large cities was like the coming of a king or a great general.

The bishops sent men before to tell the people not to

notice Huss or listen to him, but the people would run after him and hear the words of truth.

At last, Constance, the city where the council sat, was reached. Some men there said to Huss,

“Why did you come? They will kill you.”

“They cannot,” replied Huss; “I have the safe-conduct of the emperor.”

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“The emperor will not keep his word,” they said.

“Not keep his word!” cried Huss. “I, a poor, plain man, would not break my word. And will a king, who is to set an example to thousands of men, break his? You are mistaken.”

“Ah,” said these men, “you have no idea what a king will do when he gets into the hands of the pope.”

At the council they first gave Huss a paper, with a great many false statements written on it, of wicked things which bad men said he had spoken.

“I never said these things,” said Huss.

“Oh, you did—you did!” cried the false witnesses.

Huss said to his friends,

“Sinners bore false witness of Jesus my Lord. No won-

der, then, if they do the same by me.”

“Run away from this place or you may be killed,” said some fearful friends.

“I am here to do the will of God,” replied the good man.

The pope and the priests sent a band of soldiers to guard the house where Huss lived, for fear the friends he had would take him away; and the pope said plainly that

he never would let Huss go free or return to Bohemia. The three noble friends of Huss, who came with him, went to the pope and to the emperor to complain of this treatment.

“He has a safe-conduct,” they said.

“I do not care for that,” said the pope ; but the emperor got red in the face.

This pope’s real name was

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Baltassar Corsa. He had been a pirate when a young man, and had not got over his evil ways. It does not take very good stuff to make popes.

After two weeks they threw Huss into a damp dungeon, without bed, fire or windows. This made the emperor angry. He was afraid the Bohemian people might go to war, and he ordered Huss to be taken from prison. But the bishops

said “No!” and the emperor yielded, and let them keep Huss in this doleful place.

In prison, Huss grew very ill, and nearly died from bad treatment — the food and air being not fit for a brute. The doctors had him carried out of his prison to a house, and he got better.

No sooner was he better than the bishop of Constance got him, put him in a worse

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dungeon, and chained him to the walls with irons on his feet and hands. Huss was sick and alone, but his heart was strong in God. He looked to heaven as his final home, and was ready to die for the Lord Jesus, as many good men have died.

From Christmas until summer-time Huss lay in prison. Then they brought him before the council, and there, instead

of a quiet questioning and hearing, they abused him and called him names, and quarreled together, until Huss plainly told them he had never been in such an uproar.

“Did you say,” roared a bishop, “that if you were in Bohemia, we could not keep you in prison?”

“Even so, for I have good and strong friends in my own country,” said Huss.

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“ You lie !” shouted this polite bishop.

“ Huss lies not,” said one of his noble friends, standing up, “ for in my land my castle and many more would defend him.”

Here the emperor got up and said to Huss that he hoped he was no heretic, but would obey the council, ask pardon for what he had preached, and go home quietly.

The emperor had never spoken to Huss before, and the simple, honest man was so confused that he did not understand what was said, and replied,

“I do humbly thank you, sire, for your ‘safe-conduct.’ I know it is good, and I trust to it to protect me.”

This reply made the emperor very red in the face.

The guards rushed up, and,

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seizing his chains, began to drag him off like a wild beast. The Bohemian nobleman came to him with tears in his eyes, clasped him tenderly in his arms, and said,

“Noble professor, sacrifice your life sooner than give up the truth!”

That was a good, brave word.

“I will—I will!” replied Huss, smiling.

When Huss was next brought before the council, he said,

“I am willing to do all that is right. I am neither proud nor obstinate. Show me the right, and I will do it; tell me the truth, and I will believe it.”

“And what truth will you believe?” they asked.

“That which agrees with the Bible,” said Huss.

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“You must recant or die!”
cried the bishops.

“And what shall I take
back?” asked Huss.

“All that you preached,”
said the bishops.

“I cannot, for it is truth,
and needful to the salvation
of souls,” said the brave man.

“You shall be burned to
death,” said the bishops.

Then two men who had
spoken against Huss began

to be sorry. They burst into tears, and, falling on their knees before him, took his hands and begged to be forgiven.

“I forgive you, and I hope God will,” said Huss, kindly.

Then the bishops, seeing that Huss was not to be frightened out of doing right, began to coax him.

“If you will give up the Bible and deny all that you

JOHN HUSS.

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have preached, we will give you a carriage and two horses, two servant-men and a good deal of money, and in two years' time we will make you a bishop !”

These were fine offers, but Huss said,

“ I cannot sin against God. Shall I take the world for my soul? Oh no, I cannot ! Let me live and die the servant of God !”

“Let him die, then!” shouted all the priests.

One of the bishops was now turned to be his friend, because he saw that Huss was so true and honest. He went to him in prison, and even with tears begged him to give up to the council and not be put to death. Huss wept.

“How good is God to make you my friend!” he said. “I love you, but do not ask me to

JOHN HUSS.

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destroy my soul. May God teach you, sir.” Then he kissed the bishop, saying, “Go, I am quite ready to die for my Lord.”

You remember, dear children, how wicked Jews and soldiers put on our Saviour a crown and a purple robe, mocking him. In some such way was Huss treated. The priests brought him to a great church with much pomp of

procession. Then they accused him of dreadful sins.

“Of these I am not guilty, but I do read and love the Bible,” said Huss.

“Now this day you shall die!” they said.

It was his birth-day, and he was forty-two years old.

Huss turned to the emperor, saying, boldly,

“You gave me a safe-conduct!”

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“I cannot help it,” said the weak and wicked emperor, looking down.

The priests now put on Huss a long dress, painted in red and black, like flames of fire.

“Jesus wore a scarlet robe of mockery,” said Huss.

Then they put on his head a paper cap, with horrible figures on it and the words “Arch heretic!”

“Jesus wore a crown of thorns for me,” said Huss; and then he fell on his knees, crying out, “Lord, forgive these men!”

They took him to an island in the river, a great crowd following and a guard of soldiers about him; and they chained him to a stake, piling wood and hay about him.

“Lord, in thee do I put my trust! O my Rock, into thy

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hands I commend my soul!"

said Huss, loudly.

He got on his knees to pray, but the cruel priests made him get up from his knees. He then stood up, but still kept on praying.

He asked that he might have a strong and steadfast soul, so as to bear that death of pain and shame at the stake. He said that Christ wore heavy bonds, and he

would gladly wear a chain for Christ's sake.

When they lit the wood, he began to sing. He did not sing but a moment, for God sent his angels to bear the soul of the martyr into glory, where his foes could hurt him no more.

The priests burned up his clothes and his books, and even gathered up the earth and ashes about the place

JOHN HUSS.

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where he died and threw them in the river Rhine, thus destroying every part of his earthly body. But they could not destroy his soul, which even now was with God and his blessed angels in that home which Jesus has gone to prepare for all them that believe and trust in him.

Lately, people who love his memory have put a great monument there to his name,

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JOHN HUSS.

to help the nations remember his good life. And years after sprung up men, like Luther and Calvin, who taught the very truths for which Huss died.

John Huss died in the year 1415, at Constance.