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# POLAND AND RUSSIA.

A LEGEND OF KOSCIUSKO.

BY

J. MICHELET.



1853

TRANSLATED FOR THE

POLISH DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY,

BY

W. J. LINTON.

*Michaletski*

LONDON:

J. Watson, 3, Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row,

1853.



## LETTER

FROM J. MICHELET TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE  
POLISH DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

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CITIZENS!

You are pleased to ask me for an authorization to translate into English my *Legend of Kosciusko*. I give it you with all my heart. However feeble and incomplete this little book may be, it is not unworthy of the honour you do it; it contains many truths.

I efface not a line of it and I maintain its results. Based upon facts, and on the yet more valuable avowals of the friends of Russia, they remain unshaken and nothing has given them the lie.

1. Russian statistics, seriously copied by so many credulous authors, are calculated falsehoods. It is very difficult to know exactly even the population of the towns: it is incessantly fluctuating, through continual migrations. It is absolutely impossible to know that of the country parts; there are in the forests villages of which the government does not even know the names. What is more astonishing, which is also acknowledged by those who most exalt Russia, is that her government never knows very exactly the real numbers of the army. The agents and officers, who make a gain out of the provisions, are but too much interested in exaggerating to it the effective force of the troops.

2. Deceiving us as to the numbers, they deceive us also as to the moral and material condition of the nation. This condition has deeply changed during the last thirty years: a frightful change which is no less than a monstrous return from serfdom to slavery. To believe that the moral condition, the faith, remains the same in the midst of such a revolution, one must be completely ignorant of human nature. A German government,

cruel and pedantic, has broken Russia; and by government, I do not mean only the executive, I mean the steward of the lord, his overseer, his man of business. Enfranchisement is a ridiculous word; it is a change of stick. <sup>a</sup> To become the serf of the Tsar, is to make one's lot the worse. Thence the despair, thence the increasing want of forgetting and brutifying one self, and the abuse of spirituous liquors, which undermine this race, attacking it in its force and very vitality, as the historian Karamsine has already predicted in his confidential memoirs addressed to the Emperor Alexander.

3. May it be said, with all this, that Russia is not redoubtable? She is infinitely so, on account of her enormous mass, of the iron frame which binds this mass, of the patient machiavelism which directs it, of the very inertness of a nation so far gone in death. The West has life, and the contradictions, the dissidences, the difficulties of life. Russia, which is death, has nothing of all that. If she does not strike, she poisons. A profound definition has been given of her: 'Russia is the cholera.'

4. Will the German, Mongol, and Byzantine tsarism, which so cruelly breaks the Slavonian spirit in Russia, deceive the Slavonians of Turkey and the Danube? We will not believe it. What is strongest among the Slavonian populations is their hatred of the Germans. The tsar, as the ally of Austria, reminds them but too well that he is of German race.

Will the young world, which is growing in the shadow of the inoffensive government of Turkey, be so impatient of suicide as to invoke with enthusiasm the government of the knout? That is not probable.

God be thanked! the position is very clearly revealed. Russia has violently denounced Russia by her insolent precipitation. That old hat of a Menshikoff has left us in no doubt about that. If the great Western

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<sup>a</sup> By enfranchisement the Author means such an enfranchisement as is intended by the Russian government, the passing from servitude under a Lord, to that of the Crown; and not that social reform which the Russian democrats propose, which consists in rendering the commune unconditional proprietor of the land it cultivates, and so making it thoroughly independent of any lords, whether lord or tsar, and abolishing all their rights and claims upon it.

Powers, so warned, let this hat advance a line they will for ever have given up the controul of human affairs.

If they do nothing, at least let them leave others to do, and let them not bind Turkey; let them permit the sacred banner to float before her army, the standard of Poland, of Hungary, of Italy. They will see the look of the slave-armies in front of the White Eagle which they thought they had slain, and their attitude when they behold appearing on the Balkan the spectre of Right. . . .

Poland armed anew, restored and resuscitated Poland, purged of the feudal spirit and become a powerful democracy, at the gate of the Russian world, is the only guarantee in which Europe can behold her surety. I will say more: it is the best chance of enfranchisement for Russia, that which could best aid her to break the yoke of the Germans who now crush her.

Far from desiring an eternal war between Poland and Russia, we have been moved with joy, Citizens! at the news that a Russo-Polish printing-office has been established in London. A noble and godlike spectacle to see the most illustrious patriots of the two countries working in exile at the holy task of reconciliation.

I greet you, Citizens! with all my heart, and with a heart full of hope. The common enemy precipitates the advent of justice.

J. MICHELET.

Nantes, October 1, 1853.



# POLAND AND RUSSIA.

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## KOSCIUSKO.

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### I

#### TO POLAND.

FRANCE offers to Poland, in pledge of a friendship more strong than fate, the religiously-faithful portrait of a man dear to both, of one of the best of those who have honoured our common nature.

Others have been as valiant, others perhaps greater or more exempt from weakness. Kosciusko was, among all, *eminently good*.

He is the last of the knights, the first citizen (in the east of Europe). The flag of the old Polish chivalry held so high,—his generosity without bound or measure, and even beyond reason,—a heart true as steel, and yet a tender soul, sometimes too tender and credulous,—the gentleness and ease of a child,—such was Kosciusko.—A hero, a saint, a simple-minded man.

Many, even among the Poles, in their republican austerity, looking as an old Roman might, have severely judged this heroic heart and nature. They have not found in him the great man and the politician required by the terrible situation in which destiny had placed him. Called to the defence of a desperate cause, to a most unequal struggle, he accepted it, trusting to a miracle, and, like some knight or saint of old, magnanimously embraced the chances—victory or martyrdom. But as to the violent measures which might have given him victory, it was of no use expecting him to have recourse to them. He had not the iron soul which such a peril required. He did not recollect, said they, that he was dictator of Poland, that he ought to have forced Poland to save herself, to have terrified treason, egotism, and the aristocracy. He gave only himself; asking too little from others, and content to die, leaving them to their remorse, himself wrapped in his holiness.

Noble error of a heart only too humane! Alas, we should have more than once to reproach Kosciusko for his mildness and tender feeling. He was trusting, credulous, giving ear too easily to women and to kings. Somewhat chimerical, perhaps, of a poetic and romantic nature, amorous all his life (but of the same person), a child was able to lead him, and he was a child till death.

Are these defects those of a man or those of a nation? We find them often in the heroes of his history. We must not be too much astonished if the great modern citizen does not differ from his family: if it had been otherwise, he had not so completely represented all the soul of his noble country. I know not if these are stains, but such a character could not be without them. We love him even for their sake, recognizing in them the antique Poland. And so much the closer we hold you to our hearts, poor old flag!

Is it sure that with more of civic rigour Kosciusko would have saved Poland? I doubt it; but of this I am sure,—that the great, the extraordinary goodness, which was in him, has had immense effects, infinitely favourable to his country's future. On the one hand he has won the hearts of all the nations; many have been convinced that the height of human goodness is to be found in a Pole;—and on the other, in this high moral excellence the different

classes of Poland, so unhappily separated, have found a common ideal, and a new point of union. The nobles have hailed in him the knight of the crusades; and the peasants, finding in him the good heart and plain sense, the devotedness of the poor people, have felt that he was theirs, that he was Poland itself.

The day on which, leading his raw bands against the Russian army used to war and victory, this man of faith threw aside all routines and ancient pride, and leaving the noble cavalry, alighted and took his place among the Polish scythe-men, that day a great thing was done for Poland and for the world. Till then Poland was but an heroic noblesse; thenceforward it was a nation, a great nation, and indestructible. The imperishable spark of national vitality, so long buried, burst forth. It entered into the heart of the people, and rests there with the memory of Kosciusko.

Devoted, resigned, and simple, he knew, they say, only how to die. But even in that he did greatly: he awoke a feeling till then unknown in the Russian heart. Barbarians toward Poland itself, they began to be troubled when they saw it wounded and cut to pieces on the field of battle in the person of Kosciusko. The most suspicious of beings, the Russian peasant and soldier, who may be crushed but not moved, was defenceless against the moral impression of this great victim. He felt himself unjust.—Real miracles were seen: stones wept, and those Polar icicles, the Cossacks, wept, remembering too late, alas! their Polish origin. Their chief, Platoff, coming to Fontainebleau, in 1815, saw the poor exile, the unfortunate shade of Poland, still dragging himself about; and he wept bitter tears. He, the old pillager, the man of murder, found that he was man. To the day of his death it was enough for him to hear that fatal name, to bring, in spite of himself, the tears into his eyes.

Ah! there is indeed a God in this world; justice is not a vain word.—From this day and through this man the remorse of fratricide began for Russia. Weep, Russians! weep, Cossacks! but weep rather for yourselves, miserable instruments of a crime so fatal to both countries!

Young Slavonians of the Danube, whom joyfully I see climbing

to the rank of nations! heroic children who have already shielded the world against the barbarians! it is to you also that I present this portrait of the best of Slavonians, the good, the great, the unfortunate Kosciusko.

The generosity, the magnanimous gentleness, of the true Slavonians, those heavenly gifts found in their primitive tribes, shone forth with a tender charm in this man. In him we honour the genius of this great race; we hail his appearance with a brotherly welcome.

Young Slavonians! what shall I wish for you? what shall France, who watches you and gladly looks upon your growth, ask of God for you?—Valour? No! yours is known throughout the earth. Shall I wish you the muse and songs? Yours are celebrated among us. Often in my drought, I myself have drunk at Servian sources.

Something more I will wish you, friends! To the glorious beginnings of your new fortune I add a vow, a gift, a benediction. So far as is in my power, I endow you in your cradle with a holy gift proceeding from the heart of God himself.

The heroic goodness of Ancient Poland.

## II

### A NATION MAY NOT BE SLAIN.

As we have said elsewhere, Europe is not a chance assemblage, a mere juxtaposition of peoples; it is a grand harmonic instrument, a lyre, of which each nationality is a chord and represents a tone. There is nothing arbitrary in this; each is necessary in itself, necessary in relation to the rest. To take away one is to alter the whole, to render this gamut of the nations impossible, dissonant or mute.

None but madmen, destructive children, could dare to lay hands on this sacred instrument, the work of time and God and the necessity of things, to attempt aught against these living chords, to conceive the impious thought of destroying one, of breaking for ever the sublime harmony designed by Providence.

These abominable attempts have been always powerless. The nations whose existence they thought to suppress, have flourished again, ever living and indestructible. A despot could say, in a fit of boyish anger: 'I suppress Switzerland.' Mr. Pitt said of France: 'She shall be a blank upon the map.' All Europe, kings and popes together, taking advantage of the death-slumber in which Italy seemed plunged, thought to dismember her, to cut her into portions; each devoured his share; they said: 'She has perished.' No, barbarians! she revives; she comes forth from your jaws, living and entire. She comes out young from the cauldron of Medea; she has left there only her old age: behold her young, strong, armed, heroic, and terrible! Do you recognize her?

Imbecile murderers! do you understand why none of these great nations can perish, why they are indestructible if not invulnerable?

It is not only because each of them, in its glorious past, in the immense services it has rendered to mankind, has a moral reason for existence, its legitimacy and its right before God; but it is also because *the whole of Europe being but one person, each of these nations is a faculty*, one of the powers, the activities of this person; so that, if for an instant it was possible to suppose a nation killed, Europe would be in the condition of a living creature one of whose lungs had been destroyed, or of whose brain one side had been cut away. The creature still lives, but in a state of strange suffering, which condemns its mutilation. It can hardly breathe, it becomes paralytic or mad; or yet worse, it may be seen, its equilibrium being destroyed, to act like an automaton, not like a person. Its every action is one-sided, blind, ridiculous, and bizarre.

Suppose an instant we were to learn here some morning that *our eternal enemy*, England, had gone down beneath the waves; or again, that, the Baltic having changed its bed, there was no longer a Germany. Good God! what would be the results of such terrible

events? We can not even imagine them. The economy of Humanity would be overthrown by them, the world would go about like one drunk; the whole great machine, broken and out of gear, would have none but false movements.

Suppose yet an instant that the impious prayers of our traitors (the Cossack writers) had been heard; that the army of the Tsar was here, liberty slain, and France perished in her blood . . . Horror! the mother of nations, she who fed them with the milk of freedom, of the revolution, she who vivified the world with her light, with her vitality . . . France extinct: frightful hypothesis! that moment light and warmth sink for all the globe; every thing pales, every thing grows cold; our planet enters into the path of these ruined stars which wander yet in heaven, solitary, useless, melancholily parading the remains of their existence, a dead life, so to speak, which only tells of their having lived.

Our ignorance, the excessive preoccupation concerning what is near us, the profound attention we give to the least objects, to the neglect of every thing of importance, alone have hindered us till now from observing the terrible consequences of the murder of Poland—of the suppression of the France of the North.

A part of them has been concealed by dint of lies. It is a prodigious fact, and one most humiliating to the human mind, that, the world of light and civilization has for half a century allowed itself to be so deceived.

Memorable example of what the arts of thought, literature and the press, skilfully seduced and corrupted, can do toward extinguishing the light, and darkening the day, to such an extent that the blind world comes to not even see the sun at noon.

In the depths of darkness which they have made the murderers have come and sworn boldly over the body of their victim: 'There was no Poland; it did not exist. . . . It was a mere nothing which we have killed.'

Then, seeing the stupefaction of Europe, its silence, and that many seemed to believe them, they have coldly added—'For the rest, if she existed, she deserved to perish. If there ever was a Poland, it was one of the powers of the middle ages, a retrograde

State, vowed (it is that which offends us) to aristocratic institutions.

‘I, says Prussia, am civilization.

‘And I, says Russia (or at least her friends say so for her) am a power friendly to progress, a revolutionary power under an absolutist form.’

There is scarcely an impudent lie with which the friends of Russia have not insulted the common sense of Europe, especially during the last twenty years.

One can no longer speak of either the history or the policy of the North without first throwing light upon these questions. We should not be able to recount the life of Kosciusko, without first explaining the position and the real life of Poland and Russia.

One word then, a single word, to the patent liars, the hired calumniators, who have perverted the sense of the public, and created this darkness,—a simple word, an avenging word, which at least shall be clear. If they have wrapped the day in gloom, let it be cleared by a thunderbolt.

That thunderbolt is truth.

And the truth is here: . . . We trust to God and to common sense, and we doubt not but that every right heart, at the end of these pages will say—‘It is truth.’

We have sought it eagerly, thoroughly, laboriously, with a truly religious fervour. No reading, no study toward attaining it, has been too great a cost for us. The results of our patient inquiries have answered to those given by logic and meditation. And now, assured by this conscientious travail, we lift our hand and swear this:

‘Poland, which you behold in bloody shreds, mute, and without pulse or breath, yet *lives*. *And she lives but the more intensely*; all her life, withdrawn from her limbs into her head and heart, is but the more powerful.

‘This is not all. *In the North she alone lives*: she and none other. *Russia lives not*.’

We have not to see if some few men of talent, exercising themselves in the Russian tongue, as in a learned language, have amused Europe with the pale representation of a pretended Russian litera

ture. All this literature, except some rare efforts, generous but soon stifled, is a work of imitation.

The frightful mechanism of the self-called Russian bureaucracy—which is altogether German, the military constitution—not less artificial—of the government,—all that does not impose upon me.

I say, I assert, I swear, and I will prove, *that Russia does not exist.*

Monstrous crime of the Russian Government! vast crime! the immense murder of fifty millions of men. In dividing Poland, it has only given it a stronger life; but in reality *it has suppressed Russia.*

Under it, through it, she has descended the slope of a terrible moral nothingness; she has marched the wrong way of the world, stepped back to barbarism.

She is undergoing at this moment an atrocious operation, such as is shown us by no martyr-people in history: we will explain it presently. *From serfdom* she is going back to the ancient slavery.

The Russian mind, falsified by the torture of a vile and base inquisition (which has not, like that of Spain, the excuse at least of a dogma)—the Russian mind goes lower in its degradation, in its moral asphyxy. It was gentle, believing, docile. It believes less and less. Its law was in the idea of the family, in paternity. It is losing this idea.

Terrible phenomenon for the world; but especially for Russia herself. The Russian idea is enfeebled in her; and she has not yet taken the idea of Europe; she has lost her dream, which was of a *fatherly authority*; and she is ignorant of *law*, that mother of the nations.

Where would she be, if she had not, to draw her from the nothingness in which she is sinking, a sister who understands the two authorities (paternity and law),—this sister, the eldest of the Slavonians, in whom their life is most intense,—this sister whose genius has grown and deepened under the rod of Providence and in the proof of destiny.

Without her, without that unfortunate Poland whom she thinks dead, Russia would have no chance of resurrection.

She might trouble Europe, steep it again in blood, but that would not hinder her from sinking herself in nothingness, in the deep mire of a certain dissolution.

For the rest, Russia feels this. Notwithstanding her atrocious government, notwithstanding the mad master who plunges her into the abyss, she feels still that all her hope is in this poor Poland. She feels it; she remembers their fraternity. This remembrance and this feeling are for Russia her legitimacy; and therefore God will save her.

Live, Poland! live. The world, all nations, pray you; none has more need of it than the unfortunate Russian people. The safety and renovation of this people are a glorious reason for your existence. The lower this people sinks, the more your right to life increases, the more sacred you become, the more necessary and fated.

### III

#### REAL CAUSES OF THE RUIN OF POLAND.

NEVER since *Ædipus*, since the atrocious riddle of the Sphynx, has destiny put to nations a problem more cruel or more mysterious than the ruin of Poland.

Strange contrast! it is just the nation which was *humane* above all others, which has been thrust out of Humanity.

The generous, hospitable nation, the *bestowing* nation, if I may so speak,—that whose boundless liberality was a heart-need,—this it is which has been given up to be a prey and to be despoiled. She begs her bread over the earth.

The knightly people which, at the price of its blood, so often against the Tartars and so often against the Turks has defended us all,—it is this which now has defended in its last days.

The eighteenth century, which saw its ruin, was for Poland a period of singular gentleness of manners. Foreigners, who then visited it, tell us that in this country, where was neither police nor gendarmes one might traverse the immense forests in full security, his hands filled with gold. Scarcely any criminal trials. The records of many tribunals establish that during thirty years they had only gypsies and jews to judge there, no Pole; not a noble, not a peasant, accused of murder or of theft.

'The Poles had serfs'—it is said. And the Russians of course had none? And the Germans had none? German serfdom was very severe even in our own age. One of my friends has also seen in a German State a girl-serf in a dog-kennel, with a chain on. Even we Frenchmen, who can speak so well, with all our fine laws, we none the less have our negroes, without mentioning the white negroes, that industrial slavery which is often as bad as serfdom.

The serf under the republic of Poland payed ten times less than now. Add that he was exempt from the most terrible impost required by Russia. The nobility alone bore arms. You saw not those long files of young Polish peasants, chained by the neck, who march, goaded by the Cossack, to serve the enemy of Poland in the Caucasus, in Siberia, even to the frontiers of China. Half of them die upon the way; they take more, ever more, who never return. Poland brings forth her children but to glut the Minotaur.

What has really been the sin of Poland? That romantic spirit, that spirit of greatness (false or true), which made heroes, but which little suited the citizens of a republic. Every man was a king and kept his court; the doors open to all, the tables always spread; they intreated the stranger to enter, they loaded him with gifts. And it was not only pride and ostentation, it was also an amiable easiness of heart, a natural goodness, which impelled them into this excess of liberality. Whatever object you looked at, that seemed agreeable to you in your host's house, he said to you—'It is yours.'

And it would have seemed low, ignoble, anti-Polish, had it been otherwise. This was so much an established part of their manners, that they told the children, when they took them visiting—'Take

care not to name or praise any object you may see. That would not be right, for the master would give it you directly.'

This prodigal liberality and the false grandeur, the ostentatious life, of the knight who lives on glory and flings gold about, had a double effect, very fatal. At first they thought it beneath them to trouble themselves about their affairs, and left them to stewards who ground down the serfs. The most generous of men, the most humane, the least greedy, became thus, through these middle-men, without knowing it, very hard masters.

This estrangement from business caused them also to let the Romish priests and jesuits obtain a great ascendancy.—Poland, in the sixteenth century, was the most tolerant country in the world, the asylum of religious liberty; all who thought freely came there for refuge. The jesuits arrive, the Polish clergy follows their lead and becomes persecuting. It undertakes the senseless task of converting the populations of the Greek creed, the warlike Cossacks. These, of Polish origin, savage and independent as the proud courser of the Ukraine, drew bridle, and went over to the Russian. On that day the Republic of Poland gave its enemy the sword to pierce its own heart.

#### IV

##### SUBLIME GENEROSITY OF POLAND.

EUROPE, forgetful and distraught, seems no longer to be aware of the extreme danger she ran in the latter part of the middle ages, and who preserved her from it.

The invasion of the Turks, else as serious as that of the Tartars in Europe, was not a day's deluge, which inundates, ravages, and rolls back. These barbarians, by no means barbarians in war, showed themselves in strong, solid masses; among the swarms of cavalry

advanced their redoubtable janissaries, the first infantry in the world. Their victory was very probable: a hideous victory, which would by no means have been that of mahometanism. This monster of a Turkish empire, a creation altogether artificial, very little mahometan, did not come to us as a religion or as a race. It was, we know, by vast razzias of children of every race, that they recruited the army, the people, called Turkish: a filthy empire, a frightful Sodom, a sanguinary Anti-Christ. Europe shuddered at the recitals of the tortures which the vanquished had to expect, to be impaled or sawn in two.

Poland stood forth, with Hungary and the Slayonians and the Roumanians of the Danube, before Europe. She saved Humanity.

While Europe was lazily babbling, disputing about grace, losing itself in such subtleties, these heroic guardians covered her with their lances. That the women of France and Germany might tranquilly spin their thread, and the men their theology, the Poles, the Hungarians, must stand sentinel all their lives, watching sword in hand, at two paces from the barbarians. Woe to them if they slept! Their bodies remained at their post, their heads were in the Turkish camp.

Every man then born in these countries knew perfectly that he would not die in his bed; that his life was vowed to martyrdom. Grand situation! to know oneself always to be so near at hand to God. This alone made hearts beat high, and also kept them free. What more free than death? Living, they belonged to it, and owed all to it. Such men were only to be ruled by their own will.

Nothing was grander than this republic of Poland! Will there did all. It was like an empire of minds. Neither king nor judges having sufficient force to insure the execution of decrees, it was necessary for the condemned to deliver up himself, to bring them his own head.

The Polish ideal, placed so high, imposed immense difficulties on the Republic; the law required from the citizens a continual effort; in their natural and ordinary state it required them to be sublime. It presumed them always generous, at least willing to be so. In the course of its history, Poland seemed to march toward a govern-

ment which has not yet been seen in this world—a government of *spontaneity, of good-will.*

Whatever in later time may have been the national abasement, the pride of the nobility and its spirit of exclusion and caste, which gave the lie to the antique generosity, there remained from this sublimity of earlier days a chivalrous tendency, an astonishing disposition for sacrifice, of which perhaps no nation has given such examples.

Whatever it may cost a Frenchman to avow it, we ought in justice to say that the governments of France have all used and abused the friendship of Poland, the heroic fidelity of the Poles. They have put it to the roughest proofs without ever sounding its depth.

It is shameful that, in so many treaties, even under the Republic, at Basle, at Campo-Formio, at Lunéville, Poland should not be even mentioned. She then poured her blood for us in floods; she created, under Dombrowski, those valiant Polish legions, which everywhere seconded us, equalling, sometimes surpassing the bravest of our own.

One's heart bleeds to speak of Napoleon's terrible expenditure of the blood of the Poles. Their docility, their devotedness, their obstinate enthusiasm toward him with whom they saw the flag of France, fill us with astonishment and compel our tears. In the saddest enterprises, most foreign to their cause, he wasted them without scruple; he embarks them for St. Domingo, throws these men of the North into climes of fire, employs these soldiers of freedom for the reestablishment of slavery. In the most unjust of wars, that of Spain, again the Poles. The French are disgusted at it, grow weary: the Poles are not yet weary.

What reward? But this: thrice in close following, in 1807, in 1809, in 1812, Napoleon hindered the restoration of their nationality, which themselves could have accomplished.

Doubtless you suppose that the Poles, so ill-treated, have kept some rancour toward him, that they have a bitter remembrance of an adoration so poorly acknowledged, that they would hold some

quarrel with this ungrateful god? It is precisely the contrary. Quite the reverse of other men, their attachment has increased with ill-treatment. The fall of Napoleon (which detached so many from him) rallied closer to him the hearts of the Poles. Saint-Helena led their fanaticism to its height. Death, at last, laid it upon an altar. Conquering, he was for them a great man; conquered and captive, a hero; dead, they made of him a messiah.

Magnanimous instincts of generosity and greatness! heroic outbursts of the heart! to love who makes us suffer.

We have had under our own eyes a miracle of this kind, an unheard of, a prodigious fact,—the very thought of it warms me—the College of France was a witness of this thing. His chair yet remains holy.<sup>a</sup>

I speak of the day when we saw, when we heard, the great poet of Poland, her illustrious representative both by heart and genius, consummate before France the immolation of the justest hatreds and pronounce fraternal words over Russia.

The Russians there were thunderstruck. They cast their eyes down upon the earth.

For us Frenchmen, shaken even to the depth of our souls, hardly dared we look upon the unfortunate Polish auditory, sitting near us on the benches. What grief, what misery was wanting in this crowd? Ah! not one. The ill of the world was there in its fullness. Exiles, proscribed, condemned, old men broken by age, living ruins of the old times, of battles; poor old women in the dress of the people, yesterday princesses, work-women to-day, every thing lost, rank, fortune, blood, and life; their husbands, their children, buried in the battle-fields or in the mines of Siberia. The sight of them pierced us to the heart!—What force was needed, how enormous a sacrifice, and what heart-rending to speak thus to them, to wrest from them forgetfulness and mercy, to deprive them of what little remained to them, their last treasure, hatred. Ah!

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<sup>a</sup> The professor's chair of Adam Mickiewicz, the author of the *Dziady*; or Feast of the Dead. Mickiewicz was professor of Slavonic history in the College de France; and was deprived of his chair by Louis Philippe.

thus to risk the wounding them again, one single thing could embolden one, to be of all the most wounded.

This too was written and must happen. There is nothing to discuss, nothing to be said, for or against. It was written and willed that Poland, tearing Poland from its heart, losing sight of earth, throwing off its infinitude of griefs, of hates and memories, should bear, in its flight toward heaven even Russia itself.

It is the mystery of the white eagle which lets its blood rain down and saves the black eagle.

## V

## PROPHETIC AND POETIC GENIUS OF POLAND.—HER

## RECENT LEGEND.

A FEW years since, several villages of Lithuania bore authentic witness, and affirmed on oath before the magistrates, that they had distinctly seen in the heavens a great army which set out from the West and went toward the North.

This is the privilege of great sorrows, the gift which heaven accords to those who suffer much in the present, thus to anticipate time.

This great-heartedness, this magnanimity of which we spoke, this gentleness toward enemies, well deserves also that from those heights of the moral nature, their look should reach afar and see in advance the reparations of the future.

Ah, gifts of heaven! never were you more necessary, never came you to console profounder sorrows. Help them to see the just and good world we shall one day have!

This power—many are sure of it—is in man. I can easily believe it, and of thousands! Were there not in the captivities of the Jews, in our Cevennes, and elsewhere, whole peoples of *seers*?

Beautiful justice of God! This people, hammered and sawn in two, as was Isaiah, has taken in its pain prophetic wings. It no longer walks; it soars. The only sublime poems which have appeared in these later times are the two cries of Poland: the *Infernal Comedy* and the *Vision of Christmas Eve*.<sup>b</sup> Profound utterances of a man who, groaning over the old world, without knowing it found himself all at once a prophet.

Those who have also seen the funereal engraving which represented Napoleon in his winding-sheet, crowned with laurels, but having before his eyes the map in which the name of Poland was wanting, and excusing himself to God,—they only, I may say, know to what height of intuition the Polish soul has reached, and how confident it is of the judgments of eternity.

No doubt that in the depths of this unfortunate people, which can not even groan, there are many other sublime intuitions, of prophecy and poesy. They remain mute in them, for their comfort, *a remedy for their souls*.

The mightiest revelation of Poland in these latter times, her living poetry, her human poem, was the strange man who alone, in our days, in the broad light, but yesterday, in 1849, has become a legend.

We knew him here, this terrible being, this wierd man, who without arms chased whole squadrons, wounding them with his glance; him on whom the bullets softened, before whom the balls recoiled afraid; we knew him,—general Bem.

Here he seemed to us a man gentle and good: nothing more. He busied himself indefatigably about methods to be some day applied for the instruction of the poor Polish peasants. War was natural to him; he had it in his blood, and gave no outward sign of it. His countenance, which had very little of the soldier in it, was sad. To be gay, he had need of war, combats, and terrible ones.

There, in the midst of bullets, he became amiable, of a jovial bonhomie. The rain of iron and fire was his element. Then he had the air of one floating upon roses. With it he was humane and mild. Danger awoke in him neither hate nor anger; on the con-

<sup>b</sup> Written by Krasinski,

trary, a charming gaiety. No one less hated those he killed. Thus he remained dear to all, to the Slavonians as to the Hungarians and the Poles. They sing of him as of their own, and boast that he also was a Slavonian; they show with pride the blows with which he honoured them.

This legend is founded on the peoples' heart; it flourishes day by day, enriching itself with new branches and young flowers. Yet not long since, when the volunteers of Silesia, whose hearts urged them toward the South, went despite themselves to the North under the Russians' baton: 'You have acted finely,' said they, 'Bem will have his revenge of you all. He lives, and he will live. The bells for this thousand years have done nothing but announce him. Hear them! Do you not understand what they say? *Bem! Bem! Bem!*—They sound and they will sound his name eternally.'

## VI

RUSSIA WAS UNKNOWN TILL 1847. IT IS ENTIRELY COMMUNIST.

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One thing seems strange to say. It is that, up to 1847, Russia, the true Russia, the Russia of the people, was scarcely more known than America before Christopher Columbus.

I have read everything of importance which has been published in Europe concerning Russia. I have not learned much from it. I felt somewhat indistinctly that, in this host of works, generally light under a serious form, they had given the outside, the costume, and not the man.

A penetrative observer, delicate and endowed with a woman's tact, M. de Custine, had painted the higher Russian society, and sometimes on his way had even happily seized the people's profile.

Mickiewicz had broadly given the generous traits of Slavonic life and, going down into detail, had thrown profound and admirable

lights upon the true character of the Russian government. He would have gone farther; but was not permitted. His very chair was abolished.

For the rest the tendency of Mickiewicz, in his sublime effort to amnesty Russia, to reconcile the hostile brothers, Russians and Poles, with the idea of a common origin, scarcely permitted him to insist upon that which is peculiar to the Russians, upon that which in them is different from the other Slavonians, which places them on a lower ground, upon the miserable decadence and degradation into which the Slavonic mind of this great empire has fallen.

In 1843 a scientific agriculturalist, M. Haxthausen, visited Russia to study the processes of agriculture. He sought only the land and matters appertaining to the land; and he found man.

He discovered Russia. His patient inquiry has enlightened us more than all the earlier books put together.

The testimony of this excellent observer is so much the less suspicious that it can be considered as that of Russia itself, a deposition made by it of itself. Recommended by the emperor, he was conducted by the authorities, by the large proprietors, who would not have failed to hide the truth from him if he had desired to become acquainted with the Russian government, but who made it a pleasure to inform him in detail of all the lower life of Russia, of the serf and the village, of the condition of culture and the cultivator.

The German, thus introduced, went slowly from commune to commune, looked about him, observed, questioned, as much as he could; and notwithstanding a somewhat servile respect for the government, and a respectful deference for the great personages who conducted him over their lands, he did not the less preserve a remarkable freedom of judgment.

What do you suppose was the conclusion of this inquiry so conducted by interested persons? One most unexpected; and it does much honour to M. Haxthausen.

He does not sum it up in one general form; but he every instant establishes that *both culture and cultivator are miserable, that they produce very little, that the latter, improvident and never looking to the future, is little capable of amelioration.*

Population increases, it is said, rapidly. Production does not increase; activity is none. Strange contrast! life multiplies and yet seems stricken with languor and with death.

One word explains all, and this word comprizes Russia.

Russian life is communism.

Form unique and exclusive of this society, almost without exception. Under the authority of the lord, the commune divides the land, shares it among its members, here every tenth year, there every sixth, elsewhere every fourth or third, in some places even every year.

At the usual time of partition, the family which is found to be reduced by death receives less land; the family which has increased receives more. It is thus so much interested in maintaining its numbers, that if an old man dies, the old father for instance, the family adopts an old man, makes a father of him to replace the dead.

The strength of Russia (analogous in some respects to that of the United States of America) is that it has within it a sort of agrarian law, I would say a perpetual distribution of the land among all new comers. Not many strangers are found willing to profit by this at the risk of becoming serfs. But the children come blindly to it in crowds, in immense numbers. Every child on opening its eyes finds ready for it the share which it will receive from the commune; it is like a premium upon births, the most efficacious encouragement of generation.

Monstrous force of life, of multiplication! horrible for the world if this force was not balanced. But the action of death is not less monstrous; it has its two ministers, both expeditious, an atrocious climate, a government yet more atrocious. Add that in this very communism, which has such encouragement for birth and life, there is a compensating force of death, of unproductiveness, of idleness, of sterility. Man, not responsible, leaning upon the commune, rests as if asleep, in child-like improvidence; with a light plough he lightly furrows an ungrateful soil; he sings, carelessly, his sweet, monotonous song; if the land produces little, what matters? he will get another lot of land assigned to him; his wife is there; he will have a child.

Thence a most unforeseen result: communism here strengthens the family. The wife is well-beloved; she has a gentle life. She is in reality the source of ease; her fruitful womb is a source of wealth to the man. The child is welcome. They sing at its birth; it brings prosperity. It dies soon, in truth most often so; but the fruitful mother loses no time in replacing it, to retain its portion in the family.

A life *altogether natural*, in a low sense, profoundly material, which singularly attaches man while keeping him down.—Little toil, no forelooking, no care for the future.—The wife and the commune: here is the man's protection. The more fruitful the wife the more is given by the commune. Mere animal love and brandy: the incessant begetting of children who die and who are incessantly replaced: such is the life of the serf.

They have a horror of property. Those who have been made proprietors come back quickly to communism. They dread the mischances, the toil, the responsibility. A proprietor may ruin himself; a communist can not, having nothing, to speak truth. One of them, who had the offer of some property in land, said: 'But if I drink my land?'

In truth, it seems strange to confound, under this one name of communism, such different things; to liken this communism of indolent sleepiness to the heroic communities which have been the defence of Europe against the barbarians, and the vanguard of liberty.—The Servians, the Montenegrins, those populations neighbouring the Turks, in their unequal struggle against that great empire, hourly menaced with being carried into captivity, dragged at the horses' heels, in the midst of these extreme dangers—sought unity and strength in a sort of communism. Common harvests, often common tables, a fraternal unity in life and death. Such a community, as it might be clearly seen in their combats and in their songs, in no way enervated either their arms or their intellects.

Very far from that is the instinctive, natural, and idle communism which is the invariable condition of so many of the animal tribes, before individual life and individuality of organism become strongly marked. Such are the mollusca at the bottom of the sea; such are

numbers of the savages of the Southern Isles; such in a higher degree is the careless Russian peasant. He sleeps in the commune like a child upon its mother's breast. He finds there an alleviation of his serfdom, a sad soothing which confirms and perpetuates it by favouring his indolence.

In the deep misery of the Russian serf, and his powerlessness for amelioration, one single view redeems the picture, seeming to throw upon it a ray of happiness: it is the excellence of the family,—the wife and child. But even there we may again find a greater misery and raw depth of abjectness. The child is born, is loved; but it is little cared for. Dying it gives place to another equally loved, as little regretted. It is as the water of a stream. The wife is the source whence flow the progenies to be lost beneath the earth. The husband has no care for them. Wife and child, what are they to him? The hideous life of serfdom implies a sad communism which we have left in shade. Who has not even his own body, has neither his wife, nor his daughter. No progeny is sure to him. In reality, there is no family.

## VII

IN RUSSIA ALL IS ILLUSION AND FALSEHOOD.

RUSSIAN communism is by no means an institution, it is a natural condition belonging to the race, the climate, man, and nature.

Man in Russia is not the Northman. He has neither his ferocious energy nor his serious strength. The Russians are Southerners; you may see it at a glance, in their light and easy movements, in their mobility. The violent press of Tartar invasions has driven them from the South into that immense marsh which is called Northern Russia. This frightful Russia is thickly peopled. The rich and fertile South remains a solitary prairie.

Eight months in the year of deep mire and all communication

impossible, the rest of the time ice and travelling difficult and dangerous except by sledges. The desolate uniformity of such a climate, the solitude occasioned by the absence of communication, everything gives the inhabitant an extraordinary need of motion. Without the iron hand which holds them bound to the soil, all the Russians, nobles and serfs, would flee away; they would go to and fro on their travels. They have nothing else in their heads. Labourers spite of themselves, and no less hating a military life, they are born travellers, pedlars, brokers, nomad carpenters also; coachmen especially, it is in that they excel.

Unable to follow this instinct of motion, the agricultural labourer at least finds pleasure in change and stir upon his one spot. The continual distribution of the lands, their passing from one hand to another, becomes a sort of home journey for the whole commune. The wearisome, motionless land, is, as it were, made moveable and diversified by this frequent change.

What has been said in speaking of the Slavonians in general is at least true of the Russians: 'No past, no future; the present is their all.'

Mobile inhabitants of the mud ocean of the North, where nature is incessantly composing and decomposing, resolving and dissolving, they seem even of the nature of water. 'Unstable as water' it has been said. Their long, half opened eyes scarcely remind you of those of a man. The Greeks called the Russians *Lizard-eyed*, and Mickiewicz has still better said that the true Russians have *the eyes of insects*, brilliant, but without human expression.

In seeing them, one divines the sensible blank which is found in this race. They are not yet men.

We would say that they want the essential attribute of man: the moral faculty, the sense of right and wrong. This sense and this idea is the base of the world. A world which as it not drifts yet at random, like a moral chaos awaiting creation.

We do not deny that the Russians have many amiable qualities. They are gentle and easy-natured, good companions, tender parents, humane, and charitable. Only sincerity and morality are entirely wanting in them.

They lie innocently, steal innocently; they lie and steal always.

Strange to say, the faculty of admiration, very much developed in them, allows them to feel the poetic, the grand, perhaps the sublime. But the true and the just have no meaning for them. Speak of these, they remain mute, they smile, they know not what you would say.

Justice is not only the guarantee of all society, it is in fact its reality, its foundation and its substance. A society in which it is ignored is only the semblance of a society, without reality, false and void.

From the highest to the lowest Russia cheats and lies: it is a phantasmagory, a mirage, it is the empire of illusion.

Start we from below, from the element which still seems the most solid, from the original and popular trait of Russia.

The family is not the family. Does the wife belong to the man? No, to the master first. Whose is the child? Who knows?

The commune is not the commune. At first sight it is a little patriarchal republic, which gives an idea of liberty. Look more closely, they are miserable serfs who only share among them the burden of serfdom. By simple sale and purchase they break at will this republic. There is no more guarantee for the commune than for the individual.

Let us go higher, even to the lord. There the contrast between the ideal and the real becomes yet harsher, and the falsehood more striking. This lord, according to the primitive idea, is a father. He fatherly administers justice, assisted by the starost, or elder of the village. In reality this father is a terrible master, more a tsar in his village than the emperor in Petersburg. He beats you when he will; at his will he takes your daughter or yourself, makes you a soldier, makes you a miner in Siberia, flings you, to perish far from your family, into new manufactures, real galleys which incessantly buy up the serfs and devour them.

The condition of the free is worse; and no one has any interest in being free. One of my Russian friends made vain efforts to enfranchise his serfs. They liked better the chance of serfdom; it is like a lottery; sometimes they fall under a good master. But

the so-called free under the government have none of these chances. It is the worst of masters.

This government, in an empire of lies, is all that is most lying. It pretends to be Russian, and it is German. Five sixths of the officials are Germans of Courland and Livonia. An insolent and pedantic race, in thorough contrast to the Russian, knowing nothing of his life, his manners, or his genius, leading him just the reverse way, brutalizing, falsifying the amiable original sides of this gentle and light population.

In this people of functionaries, one can not without disgust contemplate what is called the Church, and which is only a part of the executive. No spiritual instruction, no consolation given to the people. Religious instruction expressly forbidden. The first who preached were sent to Siberia. The priest is an office-clerk (commis), nothing more; and like the clerk he has his military grades. The Archbishop of Moscow has the title of general in chief, that of Kazan of lieutenant-general. A thoroughly material church, and the antipodes of spiritual.

The pope of Russia is the ecclesiastical college, which judges in spiritual causes; but which itself takes this oath: '*The Tsar is our judge.*' So that really the true pope is the Tsar.

An important author in this matter—Tolstoi, expressly says: '*The emperor is the born chief of religion.*'

In the tsar is the falsest of falsehood, the supreme lie which crowns all lies.

A visible providence, the father of fathers, the protector of the serfs!—We shall elsewhere explain this frightful fatherhood in all its diabolical development.

Let it suffice here to show what falsehood there is in its least false, its least contestable attribute, force and power; to explain that this power itself, so stiff, so harsh, and apparently so strong, is in reality very feeble.

Two natural things have brought about this unnatural thing, this monstrous government. The desolating instability, which the eternal invasions of the Tartar horsemen occasioned in the existence of the Russians, made them desire stability, repose, under a mas-

ter. But, on the other hand, the intrinsic mobility of the Russian race, its excessive fluidity, rendered this repose difficult. Uncertain as water, it could only be kept in by the process which nature uses for fixing water, by compression, by the hard, sharp, violent contraction which in the first nights of winter makes the water ice, fluid crystal, as hard as iron.

Such is an image of the violent operation which created the Russian State. Such is its ideal; such should be its government, a hard repose, a strong fixedness, bought at the expence of the better manifestations of life.

It is not so. To continue the comparison; it is like the half-frozen ice which contains within it voids, pools of water, remaining in motion, and every moment deceiving. Its fixedness is very little fixed, its solidity uncertain.

The Russian soul, as we have said, has nothing of that which even in slavery is necessary to stability. It is an element rather than a humanity. Bind it,—it is almost in vain; it runs away, it escapes you. Wherewith would you bind? With a government, doubtless; but your government is no more moral than those it pretends to regulate. The functionary has not, any more than the subject, the coherency, the seriousness, the stability of character, the sentiments of honour which alone can render the action of a government efficacious. It is, like all the rest, frivolous, knavish, and greedy. If all the subjects are thieves, all the judges are for sale. If the noble and the serf are corrupt, the official is not less so. The emperor knows perfectly that they sell him, that they rob him, that the soundest of his officers will not hold out against a hundred roubles.

This immense and terrible power which he transmits to the agents of his caprices, what becomes of it on its way? At every step there is corruption, venality, and, consequently, absolute uncertainty in the results.

If the emperor was always cheated, if his will remained always powerless, he would take his measures and arrange accordingly. It is not so. The great fault of the machine is that it is uncertain and capricious in its action. Sometimes the most absolute decrees

of the autocrat come to nothing. Sometimes a word by chance escaping him has immense and most disastrous effects.

For instance: Catherine, sending into Siberia some Frenchmen taken in Poland, very strongly recommended (out of respect to public opinion) that they should be well treated. She said it, and repeated it, ordered, and threatened. She was never obeyed.

Another contrary instance. One day Nicholas said to the peasants of the Volga that he should be pleased if every peasant should in future be free. This word fell like a spark; a tremendous revolt and massacre of the masters was the result; it called for an army and torrents of blood.

This is how all goes on. The emperor is sometimes infinitely too well obeyed against his will; sometimes he is not obeyed at all. Often he is deceived and robbed with an incredible audacity. For instance, to his beard, under his eyes, they steal, they sell piecemeal a ship of the line to its very brass cannons. He sees it, he knows it: he threatens, and sometimes strikes. And none the less things go on in the old way. Every day harshly, and as if derisively, shows him that his enormous authority is illusory, his power powerless. Every day, more indignant, he debates with himself, he stirs himself, makes some new and still powerless essay. ... Humiliating contrast! A God upon earth, cheated, robbed, mocked, so outrageously. Nothing more likely to drive him mad.

To resume, Russia is falsehood. It is so in the commune, a false commune. It is so with the lord and with the priest and with the tsar. A *crescendo* of lies, of false-seemings, of illusions!

What then is this people? Humanity? Nature—an elementary beginning, not yet organized? Is it sand and dust, like that which, during three months, at once volatilizes and uplifts all the Russian soil? Is it water like that which, the rest of the time, water, ice, or mud, makes a vast marsh of the sad country?

No! Sand, in comparison, is solid; and water is not deceitful.

## VIII

## LYING POLICY OF RUSSIA. HOW SHE DISSOLVED POLAND.

Russia, naturally, in its own life, being very falsehood, its outward policy and its weapons against Europe are necessarily falsehood.

Only, here is a remarkable difference; for inasmuch as Russia, as a race, is mobile, fluid, and uncertain, in its policy and diplomacy it is fixed and persevering. This government, in great part foreign, often all German, or following the tradition of German machiavelism, with a mixture of Greek and Byzantine cunning, varies little, recruits itself with a personnel almost identical. Ministers, diplomatists, supervisors, spies of different ranks and of both sexes, the whole forms a like body, a sort of political jesuitism.

Only two powers have understood the mechanism of falsehood and practised it on a large scale. The jesuits properly so called, and this Russian jesuitism.

Modern times, superior in everything, armed with a host of new means and arts unknown to antiquity, present here two incomparable works of systematic lies, two Iliads of frauds, such as no anterior age could even have conceived.—The first, accomplished by the Jesuits near the time of Henry 4, was their patient educational labour to remake a world of fanaticism and murder, and to recommence on a larger scale the massacre of St. Bartholomew under the name of the Thirty-years' War. The other more modern labour, which has lasted for almost a century, is the persevering intrigue through which Russian jesuitism (I call thus this diplomacy of darkness) contrived to dissolve Poland from within, and from without to envelope it as in a net of darkness, working up all Europe against her, gaining by flattery or by gold the dominant organs

of opinion, creating a factitious opinion, a seeming publicity which kept things secret, and at length, grown more emboldened, mixing with its cunning ways a fascination of terror.

This work has been very long, and needs much time to study it. But, in truth, it is worth the trouble. Those who may have the patience to follow it in Rhulieres, Oginski, Chodsko, Lelevel, and other writers, will be present at a cruel but very curious political and physiological experience, that of seeing how a cold-blooded animal, incessantly fixing its dull gaze upon one warm-blooded, like a frightful boa upon a noble horse, holds him, binds him with his fascination, till at length he is able to suck him in, enfeebled and broken.

This is begun gently. At first it is a glance of interest, a kind neighbourly attention, the brotherly uneasiness which Russia feels at the dissensions of Poland.

And she so loves this Poland that she can not suffer that one Pole should be oppressed by another. Philosophical, enthusiastically tolerant, she takes special interest in dissenters; she comes to the succour of religious freedom (which is not oppressed).

*This was the first means of dissolution, the first operation of Russia upon Poland.*

At this very moment Catherine was taking the wealth of the Russian monasteries. She was not without disquiet. So she thought of flinging Russia into a religious war, to make the peasants believe that it was necessary to defend their brothers of the Greek church persecuted in Poland by the men of the Latin church. The war assumed a character of terrible barbarity. At the instigation of this atheistic woman, who preached a crusade, the populations of whole villages were tortured and burned alive in the name of toleration.

All this was only through friendship for Poland, for the protection of Polish dissidents. This was not all. The empress no less protected the Poles who were faithful to their ancient barbarous laws, to their old anarchy.

*This was the second means of dissolution.*

Admiring the ancient constitution of Poland, she could not suf-

fer the country to change it, or the government to get any power.

In this second work Russia sought above all to create a Poland against a Poland, like a treacherous physician, who, undertaking to cure a sick man in spite of himself, knows how skilfully to excite in his living body other living bodies, to produce in it worms. ...

And here were scenes most execrably comic. These Poles, the friends of Russia, performed the strangest scenes of patriotism. You might see one of them on his knees at the Diet, in the midst of the hall, holding before him his six-year old child, and, dagger in hand, exclaiming that he would kill him if they changed the old laws, that he would remain free or kill his child.

This was the second operation of Russia. The third, more hardy, was not only political but social. From 1794, to the time of Kosciusko, Russia never entered Poland *but to assure the well-being of the innocent country-folk*. She raised the cry of Spartacus, an appeal to servile wars; this was the first essay of the system practised by Austria in 1846, in the massacres of Gallicia.

*The third method of dissolution.*

It is not by their sword that the Russians have conquered Poland; it is their tongue which has worked its dissolution. They have conquered with three lies.

What if we could here show all the arts wherewith Russia at the same time moved the world against Poland, specially taking advantage of the grand passion of the eighteenth century for religious freedom, thus sowing doubt in the European mind, throwing into the West a first germ of dissolution!

A profound and admirable definition has been given of Russia, of this dissolving force, this cold poison which little by little she puts in circulation, which relaxes the nerves of life, demoralizes its future victims, and renders them defenceless:

‘Russia is the cholera.

## IX

## INFANCY AND YOUTH OF KOSCIUSKO (1746-1776).

THE hero of Poland was not properly a Pole; he belonged to that mysterious Lithuania, whose immense labyrinth of forests and morasses seems to be the first outwork of Europe opposed to Russia. Many brilliant Polish gifts are wanting to Lithuania; she has others of a graver character. The Poles, relatively speaking, seem to be the children of the sun, the Lithuanians of the shade. Among them begins the great North with its illimitable forests. Their songs, very sweet, have all the melancholy of the climate. The Lithuanian soul is dreamy, mystical, full of a feeling of the infinite and of the world-to-come.

Kosciusko's father was an impassioned and indefatigable musician; devoting to music every hour at his disposal. He was one of those small gentlemen, innumerable in that country, who have nothing but their sword, and who live in the households of the great, or as stewards of some noble domain. A client of the princes Czartoryski, he served in a regiment of artillery during thirty years peace. Having retired, he cultivated a domain of Count Fleming, the father-in-law of a Czartoryski.

This family, which had undertaken the difficult task of reforming the nation in the presence of the enemy and, so to speak, under the thumb of Russia, sought every where for men. It had never lost sight of the Kosciuskos; and it placed young Thaddeus Kosciusko, born in 1746, at the school for cadets, which King Stanislaus Augustus founded at Warsaw.

Kosciusko came there already prepared. From a child he was full of ardour, eager to learn and to act; it seemed as if action, ever adjourned by the father through the long indolent period in

which his life had rolled away, had accumulated to burst forth in his son. In his desert, hungering for study, he profited by the lessons of an old uncle who had traveled much and who came for some months in every year to his father's farm. From him he learned a little drawing, a little of mathematics and of French. At the same time he read by himself Plutarch's Lives, made extracts from them, and assimilated the heroic genius of antiquity to himself.

The wild and studious child, in his solitude, had in him something violent, impetuous, and untamed. What brought him back to gentleness, put, if one may so speak, bit and bridle upon him, was his love for his family, especially the regard and chivalrous protection which he felt due to his sisters, two very young girls. Thence doubtless came the noble and pure tenderness which he had for woman, and the singular predilection for children which he manifested all his life through.

He arrived at the school in a moment of ~~sadness and dramatic~~ interest, the moment in which Poland accepted a king from the hand of Russia. Thenceforth the real king was the Russian ambassador, the ferocious Repnin. One saw this man, without shame or decency, without pity for so proud a people, seize in the midst of the Diet the members opposed to him, and send them to Russia (1767). There is no doubt that such spectacles powerfully moved the heart of young Kosciusko and made him redouble his efforts; he must haste to serve his humiliated country. He prolonged his studies often deep into the night, plunging his feet into cold water to fight off sleep. A hard trial in such a climate. Every evening he gave notice to the watchman who all night kept up the fires for warming the school-building. A cord tied to his arm, and going through the corridors, drew him out of bed at three in the morning.

Every year, after an examination, four of the scholars were selected to travel in order to perfect themselves in the principal military institutes of Europe. Kosciusko was of this number. He was sent to the military academy of Versailles, then to that of Brest, to study fortification and naval tactics. Afterward he passed some time at Paris.

This was near 1770, or a little after. Never, in arts or letters, was France more brilliant. The grand philosophical period, opening with Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* and continued by *Emile*, closed gloriously with the defence of Sirven and Calas. In Voltaire and Rousseau France had in some manner the pontificate of Humanity. A mild spirit of benevolence, of philanthropy and liberty, seemed thence to spread itself through Europe.

The soul of the young Pole drank deeply of this cup, filling itself full of human love. He remained the child of that time, the son of France of that day. The terrible times which followed, the extremest necessities, his perils, those of his country, could not make him deviate from the line traced by French philosophy: humanity and tolerance. He remained faithful to it at the cost of victory and life.

He was at Paris at the moment of the first partition, when Poland, endeavouring to reform herself and to lead a better life, was punished for it by her neighbours and dissected alive. Kosciusko returned, at the age of twenty-six years, and received on his arrival the commission of captain of artillery, an useless sword and caunons to be done nothing with. He had not however to seek very far for the enemy: it was at the heart of Poland. Our young officer consumed himself in this deplorable repose, seeing scarcely any one. One day (in 1776) the whole corps of officers was invited to a grand ball in honour of the king's birthday; Kosciusko went as a matter of duty. There he lost his heart. A young girl robbed him of it. She kept it to his death.

Sosnowska—that was her name—was unfortunately placed, by birth and fortune, very far from Kosciusko. She was the daughter of the hetman of Lithuania, Joseph Sosnowski, a proud and mighty lord, one of those old Poles, kings upon their lands, implacable against whoever might dare to raise his eyes toward their august family, like the old palatine who bound Mazeppa on the wild horse.

It was just this pride which opened the door to Kosciusko. Sent with the corps in which he served, he dwelt with his colonel in the marshal's castle. The marshal never imagined that a young man

of such inferior position could so far forget himself as to love his daughter. He was allowed to see her continually, to talk with her, to give her lessons; he taught French, and love. The Polish women, in a country so agitated, mixing very young in the movement, and at least constantly hearing talk of the affairs of the country, have a remarkable tact for appreciating men. They judge them because they make them, gloriously using their empire to require heroic things.

Never love was less blind or more deserved. It was not a possible future merit that she loved; it was a man already accomplished. At thirty years of age he was in the plenitude of his gifts and virtues. He appeared to Sosnowska what indeed he was, a hero.

As yet he had done nothing, and his personal appearance was not in his favour. Judging of him by the portraits, he had a prominent chin, and high cheek-bones. His nose, very much turned up, gave his face a something, not vulgar as usual, but rather strange, bizarre, fantastic, bold, and adventurous. Nose, chin, mouth, eyebrows, all seemed to point forward, like the forward-flinging of a knight in full charge, but at the same time the outlines very firm, very determined, very fine, reminded one of the precision of the cannoneer who does not fire at random, but who sees and hits the object.

His eyes were very quick, bold, and mild. In them especially, was seen the excellent-heartedness of this great warrior. The ancient heroes of Poland were saints. The Turks, who had so many proofs of the warlike spirit of this race, had not less remarked its extreme gentleness, its all-loving disposition. They called the Slavonians *doves*. This loving disposition shone resplendently in Kosciusko. No man has so loved woman, none with a purer tenderness. He had a singular passion for children, who all came to him. Especially he loved the poor. It was impossible for him to see them without giving to them; and he spoke to them with respect, with the most delicate expression of equality.

From his infancy he showed these charitable dispositions. The dolorous spectacle of the unfortunate Polish peasant, twice ruined,—by his master first, and then by the soldiers billeted on him,—the continual passing of foreign soldiers who devour and beat him,—

this had deeply wounded Kosciusko's heart. Pity, a sorrowful pity for the ills of humanity, seemed to have broken some of the nerves of his heart, and perhaps produced in him the only defects which we can lay hold of in so perfect a nature.

These qualities, these very defects, made an adorable whole, which but few hearts could have resisted. Sosnowska was so touched by it, that, not doubting that every one saw her lover as she saw him, the equal of kings, she told all to her mother. On his side, Kosciusko threw himself at the father's feet, bathing them with his tears. This confidence succeeded ill. The father received it with so much contempt that he did not even deign to send Kosciusko away: he merely forbid him to speak to his daughter, or look at her.

She, exalted by her passion, absolute and audacious as a Polish girl, declared to Kosciusko that she would be carried off. A violent resolution. It was not only quitting her family, it was the abandonment of a great fortune, an almost royal life, to follow an obscure officer, who would even lose his rank and probably his country, pursued as he would be by the bitter hate of so powerful a family. It was to follow misery, and exile.

The father knew all. But by a strange singularity, which shows that vengeance was yet dearer to him than the honour of his family, he let the lovers go. It was only at some distance from the castle that a band of armed men surrounded them. Kosciusko must perish; he faced the whole troop, astonished them with his audacity, and paid for it with a severe wound.

He fainted for some hours; when he awakened she had disappeared. All that remained to him of her was a handkerchief she had left. He seized it, placed it in his bosom; he bore it with him always, through all his battles, even to the end of his life.

## X

## KOSCIUSKO IN AMERICA; DICTATOR OF POLAND.

(1777—1794.)

So at thirty years of age Kosciusko had lost all, his mistress and his country: the first married, despite herself, to a man whom she did not love; the second humiliated, violated every day at the caprice of Russian agents. An ignoble spectacle! True Poles could not support it. The illustrious Pulawski, the chief of the last resistances, left to be killed in America. Kosciusko also went, and many others less known.

Such was the beginning of the glorious Polish emigrations. Thenceforth Providence seemed desirous of daily unrooting Poland, tearing her from herself, in order to aggrandize and glorify her. It drew her out of her home quarrels, from the narrow atmosphere in which she was stifled, and widened her in the universe. Wherever was war and glory, wherever freedom led men to combat, there was Polish blood. This blood is found as a leaven of heroism in the venerated foundations of the republics of both worlds.

Concerning this a Pole has said an ingenious and sublime thing: 'The people of Copernicus, the people which in astronomy had the scientific intrepidity for the first time to launch the earth into space, ought to mobilize their country, to launch it through the world.

This American war was a fine opportunity for a Pole. A mighty inspiration of youth, a poetic revolutionary impulse animated the volunteers of every nation who were hastening thither. All were yet so pure, fair, disinterested and innocent. The Lafayettes, the Lameths, the Mirandas, the Barras, were very far from guessing

the part they would one day play. Free yet from ambition, they desired nothing for themselves, every thing for the freedom of the world.

Kosciusko was received by the French as a compatriot and a school-fellow. Lafayette, admiring his hot courage, lost no occasion to get him remarked by Washington. Engineer, colonel, and at last general of brigade, Kosciusko evinced, along with his Polish intrepidity, a firmness yet more necessary to hold and direct the American militia. These peasant soldiers desired to return to their fields; Kosciusko only said—'Go, if you will, I remain.' Not one of them dared to go.

He had more than one brilliant adventure: wounds first, then the happiness of saving some prisoners whom the Americans would have massacred. He also appointed himself the patron and protector of an orphan boy, nine years old, whose father, a brave soldier, had just fallen; and he obtained the adoption of the child by the Republic itself.

America was founded. Poland was perishing. At the time of Kosciusko's return, she was close upon her last crisis. She made a final effort to transform herself under the eyes, under the terrible weight of the tyrants who desired her death. In so difficult an operation, which would have required a complete unity of action, she did not act with all her force. Bound by her enemies, she was bound also by herself, through the national prejudice, favourable to those ancient institutions under which Poland had already acquired so much glory. The philosophers themselves (Rousseau, for instance, of whom they asked advice) told them to change as little as possible.

This excessive prudence was very imprudent. In times so changed a profound, a radical change of institutions was necessary. By reforms in matters of detail, outward and superficial, they warned the enemy, they brought on, they provoked the storm, and they created no force which could resist it. A resurrection of Poland in the presence of and in spite of Russia, the emancipation of the dwarf under the very foot of the giant ready to crush it,—these were impossible things unless there was evoked in this Poland a power altogether new, the nation itself.

A million of nobles governed fifteen or eighteen millions of serfs. The bourgeoisie, very few in number, were shut up in the towns, which counted for little in this great agricultural country.

The Poles, naturally generous, and for the most part imbued with the ideas of the philosophy of the century, desired to change this state of things. The difficulty of enfranchisement was this: that in a country without industry, they could not be content with saying to the serf—‘You are free.’ They could not emancipate him without finding him the means of life. In giving him liberty, it was necessary to give him the land.

Many disciples of Rousseau, great lords, rich abbés, had made on their domains vast attempts at enfranchisement. Not content with liberating the peasant, they distributed the land to him, and even built houses for him. These examples would have been easily imitated by the large proprietors, but with more difficulty by the great mass of nobles, who having but few peasants, and little land, would have made such a sacrifice, not out of their superfluity, but out of what they called necessaries, out of what constituted the very life of the noble. They could only have enfranchised the peasants by reducing themselves almost to the peasants’ condition.

And then this social reform implied a moral reform of the nation yet more difficult,—the sacrifice, not only of luxury, but of certain habits of chivalric elegance, which according to the ideas of the country, were nobility itself.

Here was the difficulty. And this is why, at the moment when Poland could only be saved by a social revolution, she contented herself with a political reform.

It must also be confessed that the sovereign who then constituted himself the protector of Poland, the king of Prussia, would not have permitted a more radical reform. He authorized the revolution on condition that it should be null and powerless.

The new constitution (of the 3d of May, '91) abolished the ancient anarchical right whereby the resistance of a single man stopped an assembly. It admitted the citizens to political rights. It put the peasants under the protection of the law. It rendered the royalty hereditary.

This fault brought on others. They gave the army to the king's nephew, a young man without experience, and they made Kosciusko subordinate to him. Kosciusko with four thousand men conquered twenty thousand Russians. But the perfidy of Austria, which rallied the beaten Russians,—the perfidy of Prussia which abandoned Poland, encouraged and compromised by her,—inflicted a mortal wound on this unhappy country. The king dishonoured himself, to avoid the partition, by acceding to the league formed under Russian influence *for the ancient liberties*. And then the Russian ambassador, terrifying the Assembly, carrying off the most courageous of its members to Siberia, shutting up and starving for three days the king and the Diet, took the hand of the half-dead king and made it sign the second partition (in 1793.)

In the act of declaration, it was announced that in memory of this splendid victory of the ancient laws of Poland, a temple built upon rock should be erected to them, a temple to liberty, under theegis of the wise Catherine.

All the winter the Russians devoured Poland. The military billetings crushed the peasant. Everywhere was nothing but pillage, poor folk beaten, tears and cries. The Russian ambassador Ige.strom, in his quarters at Warsaw, taught the Poles what the Huns were in the time of Attila. He pillaged some, arrested others, made game of all. The Russian ambassadors who succeeded him in Poland were for the most part intolerable in one thing: they were facetious. One, who spirited off four members of the Diet, had the pleasantry to add—‘That he did not intend to curb the liberty of opinion.

The Russians felt instinctively that an insurrection was hatching. Unable to lay hold of anything, they accused at random, exclaiming against jacobinism. They suspected the active influence of France, and they deceived themselves. Some jacobins came to Warsaw, but they effected very little. One Frenchman brought, ready printed, a bold and cutting pamphlet: *Nil desperandum* (Nothing yet to be despaired of). Later, the revolution having broken out, they sent to Turkey, and also to France. But France herself was on the brink of the abyss. The committee of public safety

promised nothing and only said—That it would do what it could.

The Polish revolution of 1794 was altogether original. It had two popular elements: the workmen of Warsaw, raised and led to combat by the shoemaker Kilinski, and the peasants summoned to the battle-field by Kosciusko.

We can not refuse a word to this heroic workman, who was, in reality, the chief of the valiant bourgeoisie of Warsaw. He exercised an extraordinary influence in the town. He was wont to say: 'I have under me six thousand shoe-makers, six thousand tailors, and as many saddlers.' One of the Russian ambassadors, the violent prince Repnin, before whom every one trembled with fear, had Kilinski brought to him, and was indignant at seeing a man calm, and with the air of fearing nothing. 'But, citizen! do you not know then before whom you are speaking?'—then, opening his mantle, and showing his decorations, his orders, and his stars: 'Look wretch! and tremble.'—Stars? said the shoe-maker; I see plenty of them in heaven, my lord! and do not tremble.

He was a man as simple and pious as intrepid. They could only reproach him with one thing: married and the father of a family, his heart was but too susceptible; his morals were not exemplary. As amends, the basis of his character was an extreme goodness. In the memoirs which he wrote, he blamed, accused no one. He is the only Polish author who has such moderation. He seemed to regret the blood he was forced to shed. He avoided the word *blood*. He would say, for instance, that he had been obliged to *appease* a Russian officer, to *tranquillize* a Cossack, to set another *at rest*.

Kilinski and the other Warsaw patriots were in the liveliest impatience to break forth. An event precipitated the crisis. The army was disbanded. On the 12th of March an old brave and worthy officer, Madalinski, declared that he would not obey. He had only 700 horsemen; with this little corps he boldly traversed the whole of Poland, overthrew the Prussians who opposed his passage, and threw himself into Cracow.

The hour had struck. Kosciusko, who had then left Poland, returned on the instant. He arrived at Cracow, on the night of the 24th of March (1794). All the town was up, all the popula-

tion awaited him with torches, and conducted him in triumph. A sublimely enthusiastic festival, and yet with a mournful effect. The flashing lights, strongly contrasting with the shadows, seemed to tell of the brilliant glory of this revolution, so brief, so soon to be replunged in night. The people wept with enthusiasm, with affection for this man, the first among all for heroism and goodness. They cried out—'Long live the Saviour!' This cry seemed repeated by the deep echoes of the old churches in which the kings of Poland lie interred; the Sobieskis and the Jagellons answered from their tombs.

Kosciusko was named dictator. His first acts were simple and grand. 1st. A general levy of all the Polish youth, without distinction of classes, from the age of eighteen to that of twenty seven. 2d. A touching proclamation, such as should reach the very heart-depths, even of the most selfish.

Ten days were hardly past. The Russians gave battle to the Poles (April 4, 1794). They had 6,000 men; Kosciusko 3,000, of whom 1,200 were horsemen. Of this small number scarcely any were to be called soldiers. The horsemen were the nobles of the neighbourhood. The infantry (except some few regular troops) were simple peasants armed with their scythes; the most of whom had never even heard fire-arms. These poor folk were much surprised to see the dictator of Poland take his place in the midst of them, and not with the cavalry. He had even their costume, a short frock of brown linen, only distinguishable by some black military frogs.

These peasants, mixed with a few regular troops, formed the column of the centre, led by Kosciusko. Astonished at the first din, they followed him none the less, and with an irresistible onset, not knowing what they did, in their heroic ignorance, overthrew the Russians. The battle was won, so completely that twelve pieces of cannon remained in their hands. The affair was so quickly decided, that they hardly had time to lose on their side. They had only 150 killed and 200 wounded.

The conquerors, so little used to conquer, hardly knew that they had conquered. Many a dashing cavalier rode off with loose rein,

even into Cracow, announcing the loss of the battle and the death of Kosciusko.

On the eve of this battle and throughout the war, Kosciusko ate among the peasants, and like them, with extraordinary frugality, refusing every thing which could not be had by the mass. For the great lords, in this land of aristocracy, it was a continual matter of astonishment to see in Kosciusko the modest and worshipful image of a true chief of the people; making himself like to this people, the most unfortunate in the world, and himself bearing their poverty. Oginski, the author of the memoirs, one day dining beside him, saw him drink a poor low-priced wine, and recommended him the excellent Burgundy which Oginski himself was drinking: 'I can't afford to drink wine at that price,' replied the dictator.

This simplicity of life was so new and unheard of a thing, that in general it seemed rather odd than affecting. Several found it ridiculous. Many would see nothing in it but a politic comedy, a method of flattering the people; and the people, the peasants themselves, felt not at first all the real grandeur of it.

Kosciusko, a stranger to all political address, had in this course only followed the bent of his great soul. It seemed hateful to him, in the midst of a crowd so poor, to show himself as a stage king, to have his pompous banquets while they had hardly bread enough. His whole heart was with the people: how should his life be different from theirs? The nearer the crisis and the day of their common death, the more natural it seemed to him that they should live together, eating of the same bread, at the same table; every repast was as the communion between chief and people, a preparation for a worthy death.

## XI

## HEROIC RESISTANCE OF KOSCIUSKO. HE SUCCUMBS.

(1794.)

THE towns, Warsaw, Wilna, were set free by heroic combats; but the towns counted for little in Poland. The fate of the revolution depended on the part which should be taken by the noble proprietors established in the country districts.

They seemed to be enchained by a double terror.

On one side, the Russian army was entering, a barbarous army just fresh from the Turkish war, and well deserving its execrable reputation there acquired by the tremendous massacre of Ismail, the greatest destruction of human life which had been for ages in a town taken by assault. The Russians, very numerous, took possession of the country, burning villages, pillaging and ravaging everywhere.

The other dread which seemed to paralyze Poland came even from France,—in the terrible accounts, horribly exaggerated, given everywhere by the emigrants of our revolution. The Polish nobility, frightened by these accounts, knew not which they had most to fear, their peasants or the Russians. They were deeply in the wrong to misunderstand the extreme gentleness, which distinguished the Polish peasant among populations. They had no faith in the people. This is why they have perished.

It must be owned that about the nobles there was a world of folk interested in shackling the revolution, a world of overseers, stewards, and agents, who saw very well that it would lead to the emancipation of the agricultural class, and change from first to last the order of things which favoured their system of rapine. Under

pretext of agricultural labour, they declared that the levy *en masse* was impossible, and kept back the peasants. Kosciusko, confining himself to a demand of only one man for every five families, was no better obeyed. They persecuted the families of those peasants who joined the war. Many, fearing equally the revolution and the Russians, adopted the middle term of presenting their peasants at the morning's review, and carrying them off at night.

In his declaration of the 7th of May, 1794, Kosciusko threw himself into the people's arms. In this remarkable document *the peasant is declared free to quit the land* cultivated by him, and to go wherever it may seem good to him, and *the proprietor not free to deprive him of the land* so long as he fulfils the conditions fixed by law. According to the terms of these new conditions, the labour due from the peasant to the proprietor is lessened one third, and in certain cases one half. The proprietors who would require more are threatened with the tribunals.

This act, which forbids the proprietor to deprive the peasant of the land cultivated by him, appeared to sanction by the authority of law the opinion generally held by the Slavonian (Polish and Russian) serfs, who look on themselves as the ancient and legitimate proprietors of the soil. The Russian serfs often say: 'Our bodies belong to our masters, but the land is ours.'

This act of Kosciusko was on such account far more popular than was the later French law in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. That has no regard for this antique bond between the peasant and the land. That permits him to go where he will, but only by abandoning the soil on which for ages he has expended his sweat and from which he has drawn his life; that law of emancipation is, in reality, only an authorization to wander, to beg, to die of hunger.

To this noble and humane propagandism of Kosciusko the Russians opposed a diabolical machiavelism. They caused the unworthy King of Poland to write a manifesto to the nobles to terrify them with the consequences of this *jacobin* revolution. And at the same time the Russians, employing a means more than terrorist, sped through the country crying to the Polish peasants—'Pillage with us!'

Their ravages overpassed all that ever can be imagined. The Russian armies, followed by an immense number of chariots, carried off literally everything, even the most valueless and trifling object. A Polish prisoner saw with wonder that a Russian general, who had brought his family with him in this sure to be successful war, carried off, with enormous magazines of spoils of all kinds, even waggons full of childrens' playthings, for the amusement of his son.

It must not be forgotten that this invasion of Poland was, for the courtiers of the three partitioning courts, what they call *a good stroke of business*, as to the courtiers of Louis the fourteenth was the revocation of the edict of Nantes.

The favourites of Catherine, of the emperor, and of the king of Prussia, asked in advance for such and such Polish estates, and had them assigned to them. This last prince, who had the smallest share in the division, sold to his courtiers to the amount of 80 millions (francs) of property in the duchy of Posen. From that may be guessed the huckstering at St. Petersburg between the minions of Catherine and those who through them and in their name, made such bargains. The palace, the empress' bedchamber, even the old woman's bed, were a market, an exchange.

The Russians never presented themselves before the Polish army, without being at least four to one; and it must also be added that they were regular soldiers, inured to war, against mere peasants. Kosciusko never had, in all the divisions of his army, a total of more than 33,000 men. And had he vanquished the Russians with this feeble number, Prussia and Austria were behind to support and relieve them.

In '92 Austria had stayed Kosciusko's victory; in '94 Prussia snatched it away. On the 6th of June Kosciusko, pursuing the Russians, overtook them on the confines of the palatinate of Cracow; he broke their cavalry, began upon their infantry, took several of their cannon. In the midst of the victory, they saw in the horizon an army of 24,000 Prussians led by the king in person. A retreat was ordered, which would have been a rout, if Kosciusko had not covered it by several vigorous charges that stopped the enemy.

He had two horses killed under him and was ten times like to perish.

This reverse was owing to the treason of Kosciusko's scouts, who left him in ignorance of the Prussians' approach. Treason also delivered the city of Cracow to the Russians. In such a peril the dictator of Poland had certainly the right to organize a swift and severe justice under whose sword the friends of the foe should be made to tremble.

He had not time to do so, perhaps had not sufficient firmness. The people, in their fury did what authority had not done in its justice. On the 9th of May, the people of Warsaw erected three gallows and hung three traitors, one of them Catharine's principal agent, the tyrant of Poland, bishop Kossassowski.

On the 26th of June, at the news of the taking of Cracow, about a thousand men betook themselves again to the prisons, and drew thence seven prisoners, of whom unfortunately several, guilty less of treason than of weakness, were far from deserving death. The blind fury of the people confounded them, and they all perished.

This was a terrible blow to Kosciusko. 'I would rather,' he said, 'have lost two battles.' The revolution, hitherto so pure, was sullied. The flag, about to be ruined, was falling into blood. The political effect of such an act was otherwise deplorable, It was the moment in which Kosciusko, Kollontay, and Potocki, were accused of desiring to organize a great massacre of the nobles. Could they hope that these, so alarmed, would send them their peasants?

Kosciusko, in perishing, wished to be just. His power as dictator, which in other matters he allowed to be too easily disputed, he made respected here. He ordered the punishment of the murderers; and was obeyed. The people of Warsaw hastened to wash themselves of the blood; but as in an unfortunate situation every thing becomes misfortune, this punishment had the effect of emboldening the friends of the foreigner.

Pressed by the enormous forces of the Russians and Prussians, poorly supported by his own, he fell back upon Warsaw. His enemies have acknowledged the admirable military genius showed by him in this retreat, especially his ability in covering the capital.

The king of Prussia threatened it, and gave orders for the assault on the 1st of September, when news came to reassure Warsaw. On the one side Prussian Poland had arisen; on the other Lithuania was arming against the Russians. Russians and Prussians took themselves off.

A short and fatal respite. Warsaw was reserved to fall under an enemy more barbarous than the German. The fanatical army of Suwarof arrived with orders of death. Suwarof always declared that it was by the express command of his gracious sovereign that he perpetrated the massacre of Warsaw, as before he had that of Ismail.

This army advanced in two divisions: that of Fersen and that of Suwarof. Kosciusko, weakened by the detachments he had been compelled to make, had not in all more than 7000 men. He left 3000 to watch Suwarof, and himself with 4000 attempted to oppose Fersen.

Every body could easily see that it was only a question of death, of honouring the last day by a glorious feat of arms. Kosciusko reviewed his troops and said: 'Let who will, leave!' Not a man would abandon him.

Informed in the night between the 4th and 5th of October that the Russian general Fersen had passed the Vistula under cover of a dense fog, and was not more than twenty leagues distant, he resolved to reach him before his junction with Suwarof. He communicated the secret of his departure only to the grand chancellor Kollontay, and to young Niemcewicz who was to accompany him. Niemcewicz knew so well that he was going to his death, that he took his ring from his finger and gave it to Potocki: 'Keep it for me till I come back,' said he, smiling.

In his interesting memoirs he draws a sad picture of the country which he traversed in this course to meet the enemy. Their halts were in the palaces, where all sorts of things, papers, paintings, furniture, strewed the ground, hacked to pieces by the Cossacks' sabres. Some old ancestral portraits yet hung upon the walls, but cut up and mutilated, like Poland herself; the pillagers had amused themselves with scraping out the eyes of

these venerable palatines. Chance determined it that the first of these devastated palaces in which Kosciusko stopped was that of the Princess L. . . This was now the name of her whom he had so well loved.

He had 4000 men, Fersen 14000; but the superiority of the latter was yet greater in artillery. The Poles who had only 20 small pieces, could not do much against 60 Russian cannon of the heaviest calibre. Fersen, to speak truth, might have dispensed with fighting. From the plain upon which he had established his batteries, he at his ease swept the position of Kosciusko. Added to which, the Poles, scant of ammunition, could not even keep up their fire. The disproportion of material of all sorts between the two armies was such, that Fersen did not even deign to mount his horse; he rested without his sword, in his coat of red plush, the most shopkeeper-looking coat in the world.

The greatest difficulty for the Russians was to advance and to bring forward the cannon through the marshy lands in which he had plunged. But at last their immense circle closed in, enveloping the little army on three sides. There the Polish infantry, a young newly-raised militia, had a sublime end. Thinned by the balls, scattered by the grape, what remained of it sustained, immovable, the attack of the musketry, the shock and frightful approach of 14,000 bayonets. An eye-witness who on the morrow saw them, already stripped, covering with their white bodies the place where they had fought, the soil of their poor country so bravely defended by them, had his heart rent and retained the most poignant and ineffacable impression of grief.

Kosciusko, endeavouring to save at least the cavalry, had several horses killed under him; he ended by mounting a sorry horse, which slipped and threw him on the edge of a morass. He was raising himself, when a crowd of Cossacks fell upon him. They little thought of recognizing the dictator of Poland in this man so ill-clad. They bore him down with lance-thrusts, crying out to him: 'Yield yourself!' But he did not answer. Then one of them, approaching and taking him from behind, struck at him a furious sabre-blow which clove his head and neck down to his

shoulders. Under this terrible wound he fell, and they believed him dead.

## XII.

CAPTIVITY, EXILE, OLD AGE, AND DEATH OF KOSCIUSKO.

(1794—1817.)

Russia in those days, as in the present time, had a manufactory for histories, false news, and forged facts. Our emigrants, who then resorted there, aided in the work of falsehood, and lied with spirit. They spread abroad in the newspapers, still oftener they put into plaintive song, a fiction which public credulity adopted with docility. It was all the better received for being pathetic, touching; it drew forth tears.

They supposed that the unfortunate Kosciusko, feeling himself wounded to death, no more offering to resist, and letting fall his useless arm, despaired of all and allowed these words to escape him:—*Finis Polonia!* (An end to Poland!)

It was the speech of a dying man, the true expression, it was said, of those words which gush forth when man, disengaged from all, hears only the truth. The hero of Poland, he whose heart was very Poland, confessed that all was ended, abandoned her to destiny, bequeathing her to his vanquisher.

Kosciusko remained two years in the Russian prisons, and afterward a long while in America, and was ignorant of all this. The lying tradition had time to spread and be established. In 1803 it was again reproduced in a history by M. Segur, an old courtier of Catherine, the amiable poet who wrote an epitaph on her dog. Then only Kosciusko protested with force, with indignation, against the lie.

How indeed could it be supposed that this great man, who was

modesty itself, should utter so haughty a speech as that 'he dead, all was dead, and Poland finished'?

Such an expression, unworthy of the mouth of any Pole, had been in that of the man to whom Poland had confided her destinies a crime, a treason.

This protest, so just, passed almost unperceived, or was stifled. All literature (which is only a copy, routine and reiteration) still invariably repeats this phrase of Russian invention: *Finis Poloniae*.

Here is what really passed. Kosciusko had received more than enough blows to kill a man; the last settled him, he breathed no word. He remained twenty-four hours without cognizance, pulseless, and without speech. The Cossacks surrounded him and were in despair at having killed him. They knew perfectly from the Polish peasants that it was the people's father. They spoke of nothing but his heroic simplicity and his love for the poor. All the Russians were beginning to look upon him as a saint.

Catherine, humane or inhuman, according to her policy, ordered two things: to Suwarof, to give the Poles a bloody lesson, the result of which was the massacre of Warsaw, when 10,000 men, women, and children, were slaughtered indiscriminately; but at the same time she ordered Fersen to have the greatest regard for Kosciusko. The compassionate Catherine made him come near her, to better care for him; the praises of her humanity were inexhaustible; Kosciusko was called the empress' favorite. Every one was so far deceived that certain Poles addressed themselves to Kosciusko for him to obtain their freedom.

Notwithstanding all this apparent or real kindness, his health was not reestablished. The blood which he lost continually kept him in a state of extreme weakness; one of his legs had lost the power of motion; and his intellectual faculties were as if paralyzed. To his death he said that he had to regret being so badly cared for by the Russian surgeons. Is it to be believed that there was not one skilful man in that great empire; or else did skilful men, not too certain of their mistress' real thoughts, not dare to cure Kosciusko?

At the end of more than two years of captivity, Kosciusko, ever

bleeding, his head wrapped in bandages, saw suddenly enter a sort of Tartar, little, very ugly, and without any nose.

It was the new emperor, Paul I. His mother, the august Catherine, had rendered her soul to the Devil. 'You are free'—said Paul to him: 'that you have not been so long since is because I have not been free myself.' Kosciusko said nothing, he remained silent with surprise; he seemed to be dreaming, and painfully sought to retrace his ideas. At last, recovering himself: 'And my friends, shall they be free?' he asked the emperor.

On his side he was no less struck with the aspect of Kosciusko. A poor paralytic, sick, and singularly weakened in mind, very nervous, easily in tears, full of mistrust, of childish fears, believing himself surrounded by spies,—he would have broken the hardest hearts. Examining him attentively, it could be seen that he was wounded, but beyond his body, to the very depth of his moral nature.

At the sight of this sad wreck both the Tsar and his son Alexander felt the tears coming into their eyes. Alexander wept in silence.

This poor Tartar, Paul, whom like his father, they strangled, was like him a little mad, but he had a good heart. He had been very much against the partition of Poland. 'But now,' said he, how is this Poland to be given up? Will Prussia and Austria also give up their part? There is the difficulty.'

These good dispositions of Paul were before the next day singularly attenuated by the Polish traitors, who, having betrayed their country to the Russians, were indignant at seeing Kosciusko honoured by Paul. His liberty was given to him only on condition of accepting from the emperor a considerable donation of land. At this price, he was permitted to pass into America. The empress, Paul's wife, a fair and politic woman, caressed him very much before his departure; she desired to bid him adieu; they brought the paralytic through the apartments in the same wheeled chair which had been used by Catherine; the young empress begged him to send her some grain from America, and gave him a superb turning-lathe,—it was Kosciusko's sole amusement in his state of immobility.

His first care, on setting foot upon American earth, was to thank the emperor and to restore to him the lands which he held of him. The United States, grateful to their old defender, gave him, as pay and indemnity for his services, a sum of £6,000. He devoted one half to enfranchizing the peasants from their soccage labour, on a small estate in Poland, belonging to his family; the other half to an institution for purchasing the freedom of negroes and educating young girls of colour.

Nothing better proves the real originality of Kosciusko's character, than the vivid impression he made on the people, the most simple and barbarous, while your fine wits, the professional literateurs, could find nothing in him. Nodier, who saw him at Paris, found him tiresome; he calls him 'a disagreeable Tartar.' On the contrary, in America, the Savages had welcomed him with the liveliest admiration; these races, so unfortunate, yet truly heroic, can not deceive themselves as to a hero. The chief of the Creek Indians was devoted to him, for life and death; at the bare name of Catherine, at the recital of her machinations, he would brandish his axe in the most terrible fury. He would cry out: 'This woman does not know what my friend can yet do.'

But in America, however well-treated, Kosciusko was too far from Poland. He therefore established himself in France, at Fontainebleau, in a deep solitude, in the house of an intimate friend, a Swiss. There he received the best consolations he could have in this world; thence he followed with his eyes a marvellous phenomenon, the military rebirth of Poland, the sublime contradiction which our Polish legions gave to the Russian lie: *Finis Poloniae*. These legions, mixed with ours, made all Europe ring with their national song: 'Our Poland is not dead, ; in us she liveth yet.'

The young republic of Rome, which in a great measure owed its deliverance to the Polish legions, offered them in grateful acknowledgement the sabre of Sobieski, which was preserved in its sanctuaries; and the general of the legions, the illustrious Dembrowski, offered it in their name to Kosciusko.

This weapon, hung on the wall in the great man's humble dwelling, was to remain inactive. Kosciusko would serve under

neither Alexander nor Napoleon. He too well knew that the two masters of the world would do nothing for Poland.

In his apparent simplicity, Kosciusko perfectly judged Napoleon. He said to the Polish officers who visited him, that they might place hope *in France, but not in the Emperor*. Indeed what was the liberator of Poland in its terrible condition obliged to be? A puissant emancipator, a bold revolutionist. National independence will never be founded then except upon a radical and thorough revolution. It had been a folly to expect that of him who had just destroyed the French revolution.

When Napoleon, having conquered Russia, found himself at Poland, at the gates of that immense and redoubtable Northern world, it would have been of use to him to have drawn Kosciusko from his retreat. In reality he himself did not very well know what he wanted. Kosciusko was the national flag of Poland; they could not be separated, for they were one and the same thing. Napoleon wanted to show the flag, but on no account to guarantee the nationality.

He had previously had the singular idea of putting Kosciusko in that collection of fossils called the Senate. 'What for?' the indignant hero very bluntly replied: 'In the senate? What should I do there?'

In 1806 Napoleon makes a new attempt. He sends to him: whom? Fouché. The mere choice of such an agent was an indignity. To send this policeman, this man of treason and of blood, into that pure and holy dwelling! Eh! how should the place be cleansed in which he should set his foot?

They who have any remembrance of Bonaparte's violent and terrible police, know the sinister impression caused in any house by the entrance of that police. Apparently it was on that he counted. He thought to terrify, not Kosciusko, but the Zeltner family, with whom he lived, a family of foreigners, so much the more exposed to vexations. He reckoned upon the ascendancy which this frightened family would have over their guest. Kosciusko was not the less firm.

'I will not mix myself up with your enterprizes in Poland.'

said he, 'if you will not assure her a national government, a liberal constitution, and her ancient boundaries.'—'And if you are taken there by force?' brutally remarked the policeman.—'Then I will declare that I am not free.'—'We shall do very well without you.'

In fact, they knew how to do without him. In a lying proclamation of the 3d of November, 1806, the Emperor made them say to the Poles—'Kosciusko, summoned by Napoleon the Great, will soon speak to you by his orders.' Surrounded by the police of Fouché and Savary, Kosciusko, in the isolation wherein they kept him, was long ignorant of the way in which his name was abused. And had he known it, through what journal, by what means of publicity could he have given it the lie, in the ears of that mute Europe?

Napoleon, it is known, did nothing for Poland, nothing for her inner or her outer liberties. The French law, taking the Polish peasant for a farmer, declared him free, that is to say free to go by quitting the land which was his means of life. It understood not the antique bond which constitutes for the peasant a sort of co-possession. If he is bound to the land, the land is also bound to him. This law was, ignorantly, very partial toward the noble, acknowledging his rights without duffes, considering him as an unconditional proprietor.

At last Napoleon fell, and France was punished for the faults of the emperor. The invasion of the barbarians flooded our fields, the Cossacks spread themselves everywhere. Behold them at Fontainebleau. They yet show in the forest the cavern wherein the trembling women took refuge.—These disasters broke the heart of Kosciusko; he could not support them. He went unarmed to meet the pillagers; found some of them who were amusing themselves with burning the wretched huts of an inoffensive village. He rushed boldly on them, and catching sight of the Polish uniform on several of them 'Wretches! when I commanded the real Poles, not one of them thought of pillage?' 'And who are you then, who speak?' said they, with uplifted sabres. 'General Kosciusko.' The men were struck down. They set to work to put out the fire they had kindled. The Russians came from all parts on pilgrimage

to the house of Kosciusko, with the hetman of the Cossacks at their head,—old Platoff, who never recollected this interview without having his eyes moistened with tears.

It is well known in what a mystical state the emperor Alexander found himself after the miraculous deliverance of Moscow and his improbable victory over him who had appeared here below like victory itself. He thought that he owed all to God. The first idea of the Holy-Alliance was veritably sincere. But this alliance could not be really *holy*, unless through expiation, restoration of ill-gotten goods. There was the difficulty. What should be the *normal* year to which they might return? If it was '89, they would find there, it was true, the old French monarchy, but also they would find, and would have to reconstitute, the republic of Poland. If it was '94, there was no Poland, but then it would be necessary to reestablish a great republican France, which embraced the Low-Countries, Holland, Savoy, and Genoa. They ended by giving up all thought of it. They made a Holy-Alliance without any moral basis. Legitimate and monarchical Europe constituted itself in full theft, each keeping his booty and his bad conscience.

Alexander still retained a desire to be just. When he saw Kosciusko, he said to him: 'What would you?' Kosciusko, without speaking, seeing a map upon the table, put his finger on the Dnieper, the ancient frontier of Poland.—'Ah, well! it shall be so.'

This reply has been doubted. But Kosciusko himself, in a letter to prince Adam Czartoriski (June 13, 1815), asserts that Alexander made him, him and other Poles, the promise of extending Poland to the Dnieper and the Dwina.

The religious enthusiasm of Alexander, at this period, renders the thing very believable. He wished for restitution. One day in a numerous company of Russian ladies, he seized a crucifix which hung on the wall, and swore that he would keep no more of Poland than the sole space he pointed out to them: it was the hollow of his hand. The ladies' in their strange patriotism, fell a weeping.

They knew not that it is just the unjust possession of Poland which hinders and will hinder all amelioration in Russia.

Kosciusko demanded that the peasants should be gradually enfranchized in the space of ten years, and that their lands should be guaranteed to them. Alexander shut his ears to this. Such a change in Poland would have drawn on an immense revolution in Russia.

Kosciusko was not slow in seeing that the emperor would do nothing of what he had promised. The sight of the *allied* troops which were devouring France, was intolerable to him. He passed into Switzerland. It was thence that he wrote (in his letter to Czartoriski) these noble and sad words: 'The emperor has resuscitated the name of Poland; but the name is not enough. I have offered myself as a sacrifice for my country, but not to see it restricted to this little territory which is so emphatically decorated with the name of Poland.'

His last days were passed in great melancholy. He could not, he would not see again his country such as they had made her. Unmarried, without family except that of his host, he was reaching the bound of age, and saw himself about to die on a foreign soil. Some one having one day repeated to him the well known French verses:

From thy bough blown down,  
 Poor leaf, poor wither'd one  
 Where goest thou? Of that is nothing known. . . .

he was deeply moved, and intreated to have them written down. In them he found an image of himself, poor old exile, an image also of his country, tossed about on the north winds among so many occurrences. . . .

He now scarcely saw any but two sorts of persons, poor folk and children. These latter had a singular influence over him,—especially his friend Zeltner's little girl, whom he educated. His charity was indefatigable. Almost every day he went out on horseback, to carry succour to the poor, wine to the sick. He willingly conversed with them on their affairs, took interest in them, and showed a regard for them for which they were more grateful than for even his assistance. He never spoke to the poorest beggar without first obliging him to replace his hat.

His host having one day borrowed the little black horse which he ordinarily rode, was quite surprized to see that this companion of Kosciusko's solitary journeys' stopped of itself whenever it saw a man poorly dressed, bewraying thus the good heart, the charity of its master.

One usual object of his walks, was the hermitage of Saint-Verena, at a short distance from Soleure. There he would seat himself, at the foot of a block of granite encircled by trees, which had been set up there in honour of a brave Swiss of past times, who, to put a stop to a fratricidal war between the Swiss, had thrown himself before a cannon. Kosciusko loved to repose in the shade of this monument of humanity. He would remain there sometimes for half a day, even to sunset, absorbed in the contemplation of an immense view embracing the Jura and the Alps, and hardly able to tear himself from his religious reveries.

He was very near his end, when a sweet message came to him. All his life he had remained in correspondence with her who had been his first love, and who had become the wife of a Polish prince. The husband respected this holy and pure attachment. He died, and his widow wrote to Kosciusko in Switzerland, then seventy-one years old, that she was his, she and her fortune; that she was at last free and would rejoin him. She found him again, but dead. He had not the consolation of seeing in his last days this woman so constantly beloved.

He died, in 1817, in the arms of the Zeltner family, bearing with him the tenderest regrets of all nations. All wept for one as innocent and sainted as he was heroic.

His ashes were reclaimed by Poland, conducted with great pomp to the cathedral of Cracow, and interred near those of Sobieski. But this monument was not popular enough. For three years they toiled to raise one more worthy of him: a gigantic monument, as great as the people's love, a real mountain built with its hands, and of the purest material. Of marble? No! nor of granite. But of his native earth, the earth which he had loved so well.

## XIII.

WHAT HAS BECOME OF POLAND SINCE KOSCIUSKO.  
THEY COULD NOT DESTROY POLAND.

A weary traveller asks for hospitality. 'What countryman are you?' say they. 'I am a Pole.' During the last century he would have said, or endeavoured to make it understood, that he was a *noble* Pole. That is useless now; all the Poles are noble, in the eyes of Europe.

So glorious have been the Polish emigrations, its *legions*, its heroes, its martyrs, that the whole of Poland is thereby ennobled. Russia unknowingly has conferred the order of knighthood on the whole nation.

Find me, if you can, a man from Lithuania, a man from Galicia, who would think of saying 'I am a Russian or an Austrian,' when he can say—'I am from the country of Bem and Dembinski.'

And this conviction of superiority is not only in the minds of men of the higher classes. It is every day entering into the minds of the peasants. The honest Pole, dragged in chains to become a Russian soldier, broken with blows, exhausted with hunger, when he falls upon the road and lifts himself up again goaded by the Cossack lance, feels that he is a martyr to the Polish cause. He honours himself, judges himself to be the equal of all who suffer for her. In the army, if he reaches it, he finds himself side by side with the greatest and noblest of his land, whom they compel to serve as soldiers, and who are placed in the first rank, under the fire of the Caucasian riflemen. Thus is formed among the Poles, by the benefaction of Russia, a strong tie which perhaps else they had never known, what may be called the brotherhood of sorrow, and the equality of martyrdom.

Polish nationality, languishing at other periods, has become, God be thanked! prodigiously strong and vivacious. That might have been seen recently in the Duchy of Posen. Even in Galicia, the peasant, who, corrupted by the German, killed his master, would on no account be a German, and was annoyed if one gave the name to him.

If Russia had had the intention of reviving and fortifying Polish nationality, she would have done precisely what she has done for its destruction. With good treatment, the Lithuanian provinces, more anciently united to Russia, would perhaps in the course of time have become attached to their new masters. But Russia seems to have taken care to drive into the very depths of their hearts, never to be torn out, their feeling and their regret for Poland. By the enormous amount of taxation, by quartering soldiers, by the atrocities of recruiting, and the military service, she has done so well, that the good time of the Republic is never spoken of but it brings tears into men's eyes. Every year, each village in mourning and despair sees its children carried off to disappear for ever. The viceroys himself, Paskiewicz, in supplying the annual contingent owing from him for one of his estates, said lately: 'You see these hundred men they are about to send to the army; all will perish in the Caucasus: it will be something if one return.'

The unity of Poland is fortified in two ways. Identified in situation, sorrow, and regrets, the two halves of the realm (Poland and Lithuania) are yet more so through that common stock of military traditions, of noble and glorious memories, of heroic brotherhood, which history has given them in latter days. The knot is tightened between them, and they live from one heart.

For the rest, Poland was always, whatever may have been said, an homogenous state, naturally and most legitimately constructed, almost as much so as France. In one as in the other (as in every well-organized body) harmonious duality is a means of unity. Between these two halves (Poland and Lithuania) there is less difference than between the south and the north of France; there is not seen the extreme unlikeness which separates the Provençal from the Fleming.

The States which partitioned it are on the contrary heterogeneous and altogether artificial: Prussia is a mosaic; Austria a caricature, Russia is a monster.

Constructed on the pattern of a terrific spider, she is monstrous in this respect, that the claws do not at all belong to the body. But for the enormous compression which holds all together they would go asunder on all sides. The 30 millions of true Muscovites are the body; the feet (Siberia, Lithuania, Finland, etc.) have a horror of the body and would detach themselves from it. The Cossacks only hold to it on account of the material advantages they find in this immense empire, of which they are a kind of military factotums; for all else they despise the Russians. Of Russia's eccentric dependences, those only which hold to her are the Germans of Livonia and Courland, who have five-sixths of the offices in the empire, who in reality govern it, who compose all the bureaucracy, and little by little the nobility; they recruit its ranks in enormous numbers, the clerks becoming noble after a certain time of service.

Russia counts for nothing in Russia. There is no nation, there is only a bureau and a whip. The German is the bureau; the Cossack is the whip.

It is this which rendered the partition so easy. Russia was a government, with or without a nation, and Poland a nation without government.

This latter had remained almost at the point of the states of the sixteenth century, before their centralization. She had plenty of life, but dispersed through her territory. This life not being centralized, in killing what she had at the centre, they killed nothing at all.

The Powers well know this. Their work seems even to themselves so artificial, of so little solidity, that to prevent its ruin, in which they would perish, they have managed a terrific remedy; they have in each division carefully cultivated a germ of civil war, so that whenever Poland should attempt to draw the sword, they might from twenty quarters plunge the poignard in her.

It is curious to observe the means which the machiavelism of the three powers has employed, and their diverse and special arts for

fomenting hatred; an ingenious mechanism such as no other spectacle could afford in order to gladden hell. But no! the hell is on earth.

Here they forced the lord to remain lord in spite of himself. There they made a functionary of him, imposing on him functions detested by the people.

Prussia has gradually emancipated the peasant, has given him a share of the properties, but at the same time obliging the lord to keep the most dangerous, the most odious of his feudal prerogatives, *patrimonial justice*, the hereditaryness of justice, riveting him on this judge's bench from which he wishes to descend.

Austria, in Galicia, has diminished the statute-labour, but forced the nobles to exercise for her an Austrian tyranny, to be her *receivers* and her *recruiters*, to levy the taxes, to select the men for military service. There have been loud protests from the nobles: no attention has been paid to them.

From 1843 to 1846, they begged and intreated Austria to permit them to alter the condition of the peasant, to abolish all soccage-labour, to give up part to the cultivator, so that he might have his land to himself. The government made them the most gracious answers; adjourned, gained time, and underhandedly organized against them the massacre of 1846. Instead of possible and remote advantages, it gave money down, so much for every noble's head. They who thought they saw a popular movement in this Saint Bartholomew, may undeceive themselves in learning that they slaughtered only the patriot nobles, not a single aristocrat.

Russia's game could not be the same. Having so much to dread on her own territories the revolts of the serfs, she has hereto confined herself to two things: on the one hand she has hindered every amelioration proposed by the Polish proprietors, on the other she has seized every opportunity of making the peasant believe that she wished to emancipate him, to protect him, to make him a proprietor.

In that, as in everything, she has never had a man more variable or falsier than the emperor Alexander. When Napoleon frightened him and he deemed it à-propos to flatter Poland, he asked certain

philanthropic Poles for projects of a Constitution. 'Especially,' said he to them, 'let us temper the lot of the poor peasant!' These plans being given to him, he flung them into the fire. Later, in 1818, he let the true Russian be seen. The Lithuanian nobility, meeting at Wilna, having explicitly put in form their desire to emancipate the peasants, Alexander, by an ukase, forbade them 'to dream of this enfranchisement.' Those who had spoken with such intent were persecuted. A little after, a new ukase forbade the creation of schools for mutual instruction which the proprietors were founding for the peasants, and closed even the higher schools against the youth who could not give proofs of nobility.

The first act of the liberators of Poland, in 1831 (especially in Podolia), before taking up arms, was to sanctify them by the declaration that the peasantry were their equals and their brothers. Nothing was easier than to make them proprietors, in a country which is by no means crowded like France or England, which has an infinitude of waste lands, a country where the domain of the crown makes, in certain palatinates, the half of the land. It was the plan of the minister of finance, the illustrious Biernatski. The proprietors forsaken by a part of the cultivators to whom the demesne lands had been given, would have retained the others at any price, and given them the most advantageous conditions. It is well known how rapidly events proceeded, and how these noble projects were stifled in blood along with Poland herself.

All amelioration has been refused by these governments. We have seen how it was with Austria. In 1844 the representatives of Posen wished to establish a redemption-fund for the purchase of the soccage-labour of their peasants. Prussia opposed it.

It is not only even down to temperance-societies, instituted to raise the peasants from their moral degradation, that Austria and Russia have hindered in a thousand ways. A Russian ukase interdicted preaching against drunkenness.

It was in the Jews' wine-shops that Austria brewed the counter-insurrection in which the drunken peasants slaughtered the liberators of the country, who at that very moment were proclaiming the emancipation of the serfs and giving them the lands.

In the face of this hideous propaganda made by Austria and Russia in the heart of Poland, and which, God be thanked, has succeeded only on one point, through altogether exceptional circumstances, it is necessary to exhibit another.

I speak of the strange mysterious influence which Poland, without knowing it or willing it, by the very fact of her sufferings and her heroism, exercises upon Russia. The vengeance which she draws upon her enemy is to demoralize her, to develop in her an unheard of power of dissolution. Without speaking, without acting, it seems that she has troubled her heart, misled her mind, enfeebled and made her lose herself. The astonishing facility with which Poland has magnetized Russia belongs to a most sad mystery, which we must explain, to the immense void which Russia has within her, to the internal destruction she has undergone, especially from the century past. The wail of Poland traversing the Russian soul has met only nothingness there.

#### XIV.

##### HOW RUSSIA IS DESTROYED.

The historian of Russia, Karamsine, stops himself at the entrance of the age of Peter the Great, on the threshold of that brilliant and direful period in which Russia began to increase as an empire, to be abased as a race and nation, buying an outer eclat with the loss of its native vitality.

It is well known that this true Russian, in the confidential Memoirs which he addressed to the emperor Alexander, in order to combat his liberal wishes, his thoughts of emancipation, did not deny that Russia could, at other epochs, have been brought to liberty. But, said he, the immense extension of the use of spirituous liquors among the Russians, the frightful success which the

establishment of the imperial brandy-farm has had throughout the empire, are very far from preparing it for emancipation.

Karamsine's observation is just. Only he pauses at an outward sign; he ought to go forward, and ascertain what the sign would say. If Russia plunges itself, loses itself in brandy, if it buys a moment of forgetfulness at the price of a lasting degradation and a progressive debasement of the very race, it is because it has ended by losing that which formerly had sustained its soul.

The distinguished Russians whom I know, generous and spiritual, are so cultivated, they have so long lived on the life and the books of the West, that they appear to have very little of the disposition of their people. They are Frenchmen, and brilliant, but by no means Russians. I do not see in them the naive depth which must be possessed, in order to follow and thoroughly comprehend the decline and moral death of this unfortunate population.

In three centuries, the most brilliant in the world, in which invention has at the very least doubled the scientific patrimony of mankind, only Russia has given nothing. She has remained dumb in this grand concert of the nations.

A sad sign, whatever may be said. You may cite the Romans 'who knew only how to fight and govern.' You deceive yourself. The Romans have covered the world with useful monuments; they have endowed it with that vast system of laws which we follow yet. They are living in their works. But should Russia disappear, what monument will remain of her? It is a tent pitched to-day in the mid-desert, which to-morrow may be struck again.

Is it the fault of the Russian people that it has remained barren? Doubtless, no. What other people would have been fruitful suffering what it has suffered?

No where is there more wit than in the best Russian society. The people still more, has a variety of faculties, a suppleness in action, a mind for resources, a many-formed genius, which at once astonishes and charms. How has it kept till now these happy gifts, athwart the terrific trials it has undergone? This is what can not be explained.

We have said that it was a people altogether of a southern race and genius, amiable rather than strong, of middling solidity, but gentle, docile, and easily loving.

The reputation, so little deserved, for force and resistance, which it holds in European opinion, arises from Russia being judged only through the Russian soldier, forgetting that Russia has always opposed old soldiers to our young troops, and that they take twenty years to form these soldiers. This automaton-like fixedness is only given to them by keeping them all their lives under the flag, let us say rather, under the stick. See how they fix the Russian: they make the soldier, they kill the man. Owing to this fearful discipline there is a machine, but no longer a soul; the Russian has disappeared.

This people, in two hundred years, has undergone three atrocious operations, the least of which was enough to bring about the extermination of the genius of a people.

Toward 1600, at the period in which serfdom was disappearing in Europe, it begun in Russia. This most mobile of peoples was incorporated with the land, rooted in the glebe. And the century did not roll away without adding to this fixedness of the agricultural serf all the miseries and abjectnesses of serfdom.

Toward 1700, at the moment when the nationalities of modern time are becoming distinct and determining their lives with so much originality and vigour, Peter the Great (or Peter the copyist?) declares war against the nationality of his country; he forbids the Russians to be Russians, shaves them, and makes Germans of them. A frightful invasion of foreign intriguers takes possession of Russia. They have never left it; they are yet reigning. They have replaced the nobility. Courtiers and minions, bureaucrats and lords, with a double tyranny, imperial and seigneurial, they have crushed and flattened the Russian soul. They could not Germanize it; so they have annihilated it.

This was the second operation. The third, which I will presently explain, and perhaps the cruelest of the three, is that which is at this moment taking place in property, and in the conditions of serfdom. Here again, and more than ever, Russia will

be found marching, for the third time, in the opposite direction to the rest of Europe. Under her apparent immobility, she goes on retrograding into barbarism, a fearful progress against nature; serfdom is not barbarous enough, she goes back to the ancient slavery. ( )

( ) [It is boldly asserted that in this terrible increase of misery the population augments rapidly. But who can say any thing of this with certainty? who knows Russia?—M. de Falloux said at the tribune, with a remarkable intrepidity of ignorance: *Russia, in 1789, had thirty-three millions of souls* (what does he know about it?), *and now she has seventy millions* (how does he know that?). What do the Russians and the Russians' friends really desire when they throw out at random these extravagant figures? To terrorize Europe? No doubt that Russian communism, by its improvidence, is likely enough to increase the population; but this very improvidence, murderous in such a climate, cruelly decimates it, especially in the first years; an immense majority of infants are born only to die.—How could Russia get at correct statistics? Statistical science is a thing of yesterday. France, the only state which could have them, being the most centralized, could not, even in 1826, obtain a satisfactory census. (See for this a very judicious man, M. Villermé).—The latest observer, and the most serious of those who have visited Russia, M. Haxthausen, notwithstanding all his respect for the Russian Government, confesses that nothing can be based upon the statistical documents which he publishes. He establishes, by several good reasons, that it is impossible to know the population of the towns, it is so moveable. As for the rural districts of Russia, they are so little known yet, that there are in the forests whole villages of which the police do not even know the names; these are especially of dissenters who have fled from religious persecutions.—The floating population is immense; many change their country to change their condition. They who receive on their lands fugitive serfs, and so acquire possession of them, are careful, in order to conceal them, to put them under the names of some dead serfs. Thence those prodigious longevities which are seen no where but in Russia. Such an one lives two or three men's lives, a hundred and fifty years, and more.—Does the population increase? Slowly, if we may judge of the empire by some of the best known governments, for instance that of Kharkof, which had in 1780 800,000 souls, and in 1838 1,150,000. (See the special and valuable work of Passek, on the government of Kharkof.)

For the rest, whether the population increases more or less rapidly is a fact of secondary importance, in comparison with another *very certain* fact : which is that the race deteriorates, in energy, force, and vitality. Behold at the reviews, even the best, those of the Russian guards, those poor pale faces, those dim and lifeless eyes. The race has noticeably changed in the last thirty years, both through the progress of misery and from the abuse of spirituous liquors.]

NOTE BY M. MICHELET

The most strange of these sad novelties so contrary to the European spirit is that Russia fancies she is imitating Europe. And Germany first. The profound German genius in its three idealities, philosophy, music, and poetry, is just what is least copied. The German, when not an idealist, is but a sorry sort of man. But it is that which Russia adopts. The clerk and the corporal, the writing desk and the cane, this is what she has borrowed of Germany.

Serfdom weighs but the more cruelly, when it becomes pedantic and systematic, like the German overseer who now manages the estates. The Russian master, careless, fickle, and fantastic himself, lets pass more than one fancy of the serf. The German lets nothing pass. Under his tiresome discipline mere dejection kills the poor Slavonian genius, with its independent mobility, its sweet, gentle melodies, its lightsome existence, free as that of a bird in the woods.

That melancholy chaunt of a man who appeared gay and lively was the very soul of the Slavonian. That done, all was at an end. The gloomy empire of silence! hardly in the forest depths one hears some few ancient notes, uttered with bated breath. Language dries up, speech is drained in this empire. Look at the nation of the Cossacks, a nation once poetical, it became mute on the day in which it fell into the icy hands of Russia.

Twice there was reason to think that this people, awakened and grown strong, would take wing, reenter into life, and seek its place among the nations. Suwarof, a real Russian, a crafty madman, a buffoon, a fanatic, roused the Russian soul and gave it a momentary impulse. Napoleon and 1812, the danger of their sacred Moscow, the tsar summoning *his children*, drawing the relics from

the sanctuary and having them borne before the army,—here too was a powerful popular incitement. The desire also was strong to go into France, to see Paris, the Moscow of the West, to learn that Russia is not all the world. A dream of that remained, and a transmission of accounts. Nothing indicates however that any legends have sprung out of it. The Russian soul is too sick and suffering to sport thus among the flowers of poesy. It has rather turned toward negation.

One thing which has struck them seriously is the learning at last that Moscow was burned by their tsar. For a long while, in their respect, in their filial sentiments, they obstinately denied that *their father* had done such a thing. It was the French, they said. Light broke in on them at last, spite of all their denials. Not only did the last emperor burn the sacred city, but he also demolished it, and without any necessity, in the midst of peace. He pulls down and rebuilds the Kremlin, with a barbarous indifference to the old religions of the Russian people. He has sold in the open streets, by public auction, the venerable furniture of the ancient tsars (to replace them with new), the seats of the Ivans, of Dimitri Donski.

These tsars of German breed reveal every instant their profound ignorance of the people they govern, and of what is best in them.

Examples :

Nicholas was ignorant of the force of an oath with a Russian, and that, having once taken an oath, he feels himself strongly bound by it, and can not believe himself free until at least he has been regularly and legitimately released. He demanded on his accession, without delay or explanation, the immediate obedience of the troops which had just made oath to Constantine. Thence arose that terrible and so legitimate revolt, of which the conspirators took advantage.

Alexander was ignorant of the basis of Russian life, the family. Otherwise this prince, by no means cruel, would not have made the barbarous attempt of his military colonies. It seemed to him quite natural to introduce an unknown guest, a soldier, into the narrow hut of the peasant, to make a soldier sleep between his

wife and daughter. Nor was he at all embarrassed how to marry the soldiers spread through the commune. All the girls in the village on one side, and the soldiers on the other, drew lots together. Number 1 among the soldiers wedded Number 1 of the girls: that was all the arrangement. Dreadful revolts arose from it. The Cossacks showed an indomitable opposition to these brutalities. The stick and the knout could do nothing with them. They suffered themselves to be cut to pieces, but they did not obey.

What is no less remarkable, and does infinite honour to the hearts of the Russians, is the impression made on them by the misfortunes of Poland. We have already seen this at the moment when Kosciusko was picked up on the field of battle. But it is especially in the *Memoirs* of his companion Niemcewicz, that we must read of the beginnings of this moral reaction. The Russian soldiers who guarded him had no confidant but their Polish prisoner. At night, not without peril, they came about him, to sigh and groan, to tell him their longings, to ask him if their military service would never be abridged, and if they should ever see again their homes.

Behold how Poland penetrates, invades the Russian soul. A single Polish prisoner in a citadel, a single one incorporated in a regiment, shocks and troubles all. And yet the man has said nothing. What has he done? Nothing. He has groaned in the night. And thence the moral shock has begun, and goes on, and gains ground. They think of it, they reason about it.—He is a man though, this prisoner; he suffers, he has not the look of a guilty man.—From the day in which the soldier says this to himself, and sets himself to reflect, from this day, I say, his heart is in revolt.

Upon what was this empire built? Upon faith, on a brutal, barbarous, blind faith, pitiless even toward itself, which led to the annihilation of the mind and of the individual. When the boyard impaled by Ivan cried out during the two days of his terrible agony—‘My God, save the tsar!’—then, no doubt, the Russian empire was firm.

Through what is it tottering? I will name it: through doubt. That has entered into it. And to the honour of human nature pity has done as much as aught else toward it.

Every body knows, at least from engravings, that sanctuary of Russia, the Kremlin, those massive and bizarre constructions, those monster-palaces, which breathe the Mongol genius, and which one would be tempted to call a petrification of Terror. It seems as if these monsters of fairy-land once lived, and had been turned to stone at the sight of Ivan the Terrible. In vain Napoleon laid hands upon it; in vain the dreadful fire enveloped the Kremlin. It remained firm. . . . In our days it weakens, its granite base is trembling, and there are moments in which the sublime spires seem drunk and staggering. . . . Why? Ah, for a very little thing. A breath in its foundations, a plaint in the caverns of its churches, a low wail through the imperial tombs. . . . Every body has heard, all but one. . . . What then is this thing so feeble and yet so strong, which makes the towers to tremble? A sigh.

The sacred sighing of nature against an unnatural world, a wail of the mingled sorrows of two nations! . . . It is not shut up there; it has ascended, increasing like a waterspout. . . . It is not lost in the forests, in the morasses; it has taken possession of them, and the forests have begun to groan, the waters to sob, the firs to weep!

Have a care! this man without care, at once light and melancholy, who sang at his work his monotonous chaunt, has now sung enough; he dreams, and he has entered the realms of thought. He will think henceforward, and always.

And I am about to tell you all his thought in one phrase, which comprizes both it and also the great change which since thirty years has been made in his condition: *Born a serf, he will die a slave.*

A serf, he stood upon and was rooted in the land; he was a tree, resigned like a tree; he vegetated in misery and peace; the imprudent tyranny of his masters has uprooted him.

The nobles, detaching portions of their estates for sale or for partition, thought they were only cutting off the land, and they were cutting off the man. He lived less in himself than in the commune; they have broken this living whole in which all the life of the Russian peasant was harmonized in an immemorial commun-

ism. In the land passing from hand to hand in the circle of the commune, like the wine-cup circulating at a banquet, the Slavonian had his moral basis.

This is not all. The commune broken up and the land divided, they have abridged his portion of this land. 'If your family is too numerous, go, go and earn your bread as carpenter, gardener, boatman of the Wolga; go and bring us back the money!'

This is hard, unjust. If he was serf, it was the serf of the land, not a moveable serf, but a serf in a family, in the commune, surrounded by the consolations, the alleviations of their common toil; no matter, he is resigned; he goes;—he returns faithful, he brings back. . . . But then, that is not enough, they have built immense houses, the horror of the Russians, frightful hulks, which they call workshops, factories, where men are sent and sold to labour and die under the lash. Sold? No! I deceive myself; the philanthropic emperor has forbidden his being sold. They hire a man for 90 years.

A poor, mild, feeble race, altogether dominated by natural feelings, which saw the State in the family, and a father in the lord. . . . It was a spectacle to smile at, and yet affecting, when a new lord arrived at the village; they all wept with joy: 'Little father!' cried they: and they flung themselves on their knees, told him all their woes, all the affairs of their families; several loudly confessing themselves to him.

The father of fathers, the tsar! what was this, then? Great God! they confounded in their prayers *the tsar of the world and the tsar of heaven*.

This filial sentiment, so strong in the Russian soul, to what terrible proofs has it not been put? Is yonder greedy lord, who sells his men, a father? Is he a father, this tsar, who so little protects you, that you prefer being a serf to being free?

This world which little by little is losing its idea, its antique basis, *paternity*, rests not yet upon the new basis, *the law*, the government of man by himself.

O desert! O void! O nothingness! No more father! Not yet a law!

Less desolate those great Tartar platforms, where the bare earth, salt and sterile, knows nothing in nature except the whistling of the sharp Siberian wind.

The Russian government is at this moment producing a terrible thing. By maintaining an absolute separation, like a sanitary cordon, between the Russian populations and the rest of the world, it in no way hinders these populations from losing their ancient moral idea, and it does hinder them from receiving the Western idea which would replace them upon a new basis. It keeps them empty and morally null, without defence against the suggestions of the evil spirit and the temptation in the desert.

When it is said that one of us, of the West, is a doubter, a sceptic, it is never absolutely true. Such an one may be a doubter of history, but a firm believer in chemistry or physics. Every man here has faith in something; the soul is never void. But there in that all-ignorant, barbarous world, which they keep void of mind, and which is becoming void of tradition, if this state should last, if man should descend the slope of doubt, nothing would stop him there, nothing could be made a counterpoise or balance; we should have the dreadful spectacle of a demagogy without ideas, without principle or sentiment; a people which would march toward the West, in a blind movement, having lost its soul and will, and striking at random, a terrible automaton, like a galvanized corpse, which yet can strike and slay.

What shall save Russia from this infernal perdition, and Europe from the necessity of exterminating the drunken and mad giant?

It is above all poor Poland. What is best in Russia at this moment, what reattaches it to Humanity and God, is the heart-stirring which Poland has aroused in it.

## XV.

## WHAT POLAND CAN DO BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.

All that we have said about the moral nothingness at which Russia is arriving is feeble in comparison with what the Russians themselves have said of it. This state is so dolourous, that, gagged and muzzled as they are in the depth of their *in pace*, these poor mutes have not the less broken out. Some, like the illustrious admiral Tchitchakof, have in open desperation, quitted the country. Others remaining, have bought with their lives the happiness of one hour's freedom, by crying out—'Russia is dead.'

We might divine this sad mystery in the desolate poems of their later poets, full of mourning, of sceptical irony. But these indirect avowals have not satisfied the Russian soul; it was too oppressed for that.

One morning in a review generally discreet and faintly-coloured, the Moscow *Telescope*, an article, escaping through some absence of mind in the censors, made all Europe tremble. This article, signed (Tschadaef), was the epitaph of the empire, and that of the author also; he knew that to write of these things was to accept death, more than death, tortures and unknown prisons. At least he relieved his heart. With a funereal eloquence, an overwhelming calmness, he composed as if the last will and testament of his country. He demands from it an account of all the bitternesses inflicted on whoever dares to think, he analyzes with desperate, inexorable profundity, the punishment of the Russian soul; then turning from it with horror, he curses Russia. He tells it, that *it has never existed* humanly, that it represents *only a gap in human intelligence*, declares its past to have been useless, its present to be superfluous, and that there is no future for it.

The emperor had this man shut up in a mad-house. But Russia, pierced to the heart, believed that he had reason. She has been silent. Since 1842, not a single Russian reproduction, good or bad. That terrible article has really shut and sealed the tomb.

In the tomb there is a spark. We by no means subscribe to the anathemas of Tschadaef. ( )

( ) [The spark! is it not in an admirable pamphlet, just appearing. The author, a born Russian, but endowed on the other side with the most generous blood of the Rhine, writes our tongue with an heroic vigour, which breaks the anonymous and reveals everywhere the great patriot. I have read and reread it ten times with wonder. Methought I saw the old heroes of the North tracing with their pitiless steel the sentence of this miserable world. Alas! it is not only the condemnation of Russia, it is that of France and Europe.—‘We flee from Russia,’ says he, ‘but all is Russia; Europe is a dungeon.’ While Europe has such men, however, nothing is to be despaired of yet.—*Of the development of revolutionary ideas in Russia*, by Iscander.] NOTE BY M. MICHELET.

Below we see a people weak, but exceedingly elastic, which can yet raise itself. And it will raise itself some day by help of the brotherhood of Poland.

Above we see men, very few, but admirable, heroes! . . . What else can we call the men of the 14th of December, they who, alone, in the very maw of the dragon, attempted so bold a stroke? How give any other name to the glorious martyr Bakounine, now buried in chains in a Russian dungeon? Oh! great heart! noble nature! brother beloved of Poland and of France, forgive me for the severe things I have said of the land you love. God is my witness that, if sometimes my hand trembled in writing these lines upon Russia, it was from thought of you (you whom I know not), it was you only whom I feared to wound. Should it happen that my book may pierce the walls in which you are confined, let it tell you that our hearts are full of you, and our eyes of tears as we think of you, and that the world feels the burden of your fetters.

Why, notwithstanding our lively, our ardent sympathies for the great Russian patriots, have we deemed it our duty so freely to utter our opinion of Russia? It is because, alas! it has hitherto

been impossible for us to distinguish between the Russian people and the government which crushes it. As yet we see their illustrious citizens alone. They are citizens of the world much more than citizens of Russia. Revolts are frequent in that country; but a revolution, when will that come? There must first be a community of ideas, which as yet nothing indicates.

Then, we have had to look at Russia en masse, provisionally, and simply as a force—a barbaric force, a world without law, *a world hostile to the Law*, which in this sense makes no progress, which on the contrary retrogrades and goes back to antique barbarisms, which admits not modern civilization, except to dissolve the western world and slay law itself.

The world of Law has its frontier where it was in the middle ages, on the Vistula and the Danube.

Russia admits nothing from us except the evil. She absorbs, draws toward her, all the poison of Europe. She renders it back augmented and more dangerous.

When we admit Russia, we admit the cholera, dissolution, death. 'What! philosophers!'—exclaims in its blandest tones the young Russian school which flourishes in our reviews: 'would you stand aloof from your brothers? Where is your philosophy? Where your philanthropy?'

Such is Russian propagandism, infinitely varied, according to peoples and countries. Yesterday she told us: 'I am christianism.' To-morrow she will say to us: 'I am socialism.'

She employs journalists, men of fashion, witty and charming women. How refuse the cup from the fair hands of Medea?

Here she has articles, books, even engravings skilfully exhibited in our public walks. On the Danube there are Russian songs which she has circulated, songs made by the emperor's official poets, to lead the Servians, the Bulgarians, etc., to put themselves into the protecting hands of Russia.

This propagandism in Poland has a sinister character, which recalls the services of Austria before the Gallician massacre.

Russia has employed a terrible means of becoming popular with the peasant,—her cruel persecution of the Jews, continued more

cruelly by the yearly carrying off of their children.—Dreadful flatterer of the people, who without doing them any good seduces them by evil done to others! It is true, an inquiry has also been ordered, toward ameliorating the lot of the cultivators. Not followed up, and without result, it does not the less induce the peasants to believe that the tsar interests himself in their behalf.

What shall the Polish proprietor do now? He is between two abysses.

Russia irritates the peasant against him, by saying: 'He does nothing for you.'

And when he endeavours to do any thing, he is a marked and suspected man. Some morning, under any pretext, carried off, thrown into a chest, jolted to death over fifteen hundred leagues, he will go to inhabit for ever the country whence none return.

I know it too well, Poles! under this terrible government it is difficult for you to change the condition of the people. The most part of reforms are perforce adjourned to the days of freedom.

Morally you may do much. Though the law is powerless, though action is interdicted, nothing can chain the heart.

May I dare to form one wish, to desire one practical thing, which hardly could be hindered? Do away, as far as you can, with the middle-men who separate you from the cultivator; send away the steward, the agent, the overseer. Busy you yourselves with your land and with those who cultivate it. Live among them, with them; love them: all is gained.

'One must love to be loved': said General Hocho.

This people demands of you more than freedom, more than property, which it has so well deserved, more than social equality,—it demands especially your friendship.

We know your grandeur of heart. They who have loved even to their scaffolds, could they not love their poor compatriots?

The peasant has reason to love your old Polish Republic, which required of him a tribute so feeble, so light, in comparison with today's, which sheltered him from the barbarians behind that knightly people of a million lances, of whom not a man, for ages, died elsewhere than on the battle-field.

And you sons of these knights! love, admire this people, which, in your terrible and so unequal struggles against Russia, gave you those valiant scythemen, the terror of the Cossacks; which fought without asking if the reconquered freedom would be for it; which, in the Polish legions, ennobled, itself a knight, under the flag of France, marched step by step by you, and by its incredible exploits placed itself beside you on the equality of glory.

Polish nationality, so cruelly attacked, mutilated in its territory, broken in the existence of its worthiest men, furiously pursued by arbitrary power and law, depends always upon you to strengthen it and make it more solid than it was. This time let it be revealed in outlawry, elsewhere than in the State which is always vulnerable. Found it in the human soul, in the sanctuary of all life; strike its root in that which is not assailable by nor accessible to tyrants, in the mutual love of man and in fraternity.

If actions are forbidden you, feelings are not. Show a willingness, love; no one can mistake the signs. The brotherhood of heart, a willing equality, is easily manifested.

If you can not yet change the social state of the inhabitants of your fields, you can change their minds. You have been hindered from founding schools; but each of you is a school. Do not shut yourselves up in your solitary houses, to languish, and wait, and die, to turn and turn again within you the sharp iron of grief. Go forth, come among the people, share the men's toils, go down into the furrow, follow the plough; tell them so many things of which they are ignorant, alas! and which are in their heart of hearts, the deepest depths of their being. This people, such has been the terrible effect of its long miseries, does not even know itself. If it recollected itself! How it would be lifted up! What a warm and potent cordial would enter into its breast!—The culture which it should have, is not, as is thought by some, the mere learning one moment to read (to forget it next day, having neither books nor leisure). What it wants, and what it would greedily receive, are its own memories freshened and reawakened, its olden glories. It is Poland itself.—Tell it of your great wars against the Turks, and of Europe defended by you; tell it of John Sobieski, the deliverance

of Vienna, the safety of Germany; tell it of the old Slavonian song, which was one day repeated to it by a pope.—Some envoys of Poland, being at Rome, asked of the pope some relics, to make a present of them to their churches. They got this answer from him: ‘Poor folk! why do you come here to ask for relics? . . . Have you then forgotten the old song of your land: *O Poles! Poles! open wherever you will the earth of Poland, take of it all that you can take, everywhere it is martyr dust.*’

A grand avowal, a noble answer, which does honour to the Italian. Poland has its sanctity in itself, not in the Rome of the popes. The city of the catacombs will never restore it to life, no more than the gift of miracles. The Rome which is being resuscitated under our eyes, is the Rome that hates the popes, the true Rome of antiquity.

In a sublime Polish song (*the Vision of Christmas Night*) the dome of Saint Peter’s is seen rent and sinking down. And the last of the Poles, in a last devotion for that which they have adored, still support this dome on the points of their lances.

Rome does not support Poland. Poland still supports Rome,—that Rome which is the friend of Russia, which receives this Phalaris drunken and red with Christian blood.

Have a care, Poles! since he has prayed beneath this dome, it falls, it gives way, nothing will arrest its fall, it descends into the gory mud . . . Your obstinate fidelity will do nothing to hinder it.

See what catholicism has done in Ireland. Dreadful destiny! the population subsists in numbers, but the race has disappeared, has lost its vitality, is neutralized, is vanishing away. Look at the sterility of Spain since the days of Philip II. See how for ages the faith of slaves, the faith of the dead, has kept Italy as if shut up in a tomb. And lastly France, ah! what a wound is given her by catholicism! a wound to be never staunched—accursed of Italy.

Pray, do not lose sight of the first origin of your misfortunes. You were in the sixteenth century the most tolerant, the mildest of peoples, as well as the most warlike. The jesuits’ invasion of Poland, their persecutions, have sundered from you, and given over to your enemies, your brethren of the Greek ritual, the Cossacks.

This keen lance, which since has pierced the heart of Poland, what gave it to Russia, if not catholicism?

It was catholicism again which, in the middle of the last century, excluding dissenters from the royal election, gave Russia a pretext, and rendered her popular in Europe as the defender of religious freedom against the Polish clergy.

They, who would now base your nationality on that which lost you, are your cruelest enemies. Knowingly or not, they are ruining you. By presenting catholicism as the essential character of Polish nationality, they drive far from you for ever your younger brothers of the Danube, the Slavonians, sons of the Greek Church, who, if Poland proclaim itself a stranger to them in the opposition of its faith, will listen to Russia.

Wretched priests! is it not enough to have, two centuries ago, laid bare the flank of Poland, to have disarmed it of its valiant barrier, the Cossack nation; and now you deprive it of its brothers, these new allies which the bounty of Providence is raising up to it? These Slavonians, born yesterday as a people, look on all sides, seeking relations, needing to love a great nation, seeking for brothers. Shall Poland say to them 'I am not your sister,—I have my Gods; seek you your Gods!'

I do not propose to you, Poles! to renounce your belief. I know you are faithful; you will never know what it is to desert it. This faith, I do not ask you to abjure, but to comprehend, to extend and aggrandize it. Like all children, you have long enough repeated words; men in years and suffering, it is time to get to the idea. The God whom they set before you on the altar in such an image of stone, I bid you now perceive in mankind, in his image of flesh. The world's religion is no longer the selfish faith which seeks its salvation apart and goes solitarily to heaven. It is the salvation of all by all, the brotherly adoption of humanity by humanity. No more individual incarnation; God in all, and all Messiahs.

Who, in our days, feels not God stirring within him? Who, in his hours of suffering, feels not in his heart the future?

But it is not only to see and feel; it is necessary also to will,

and by an immense enlargement of heart accept in advance all the sacrifices which to-morrow the new world will impose upon us.

Who will not have to sacrifice? On whatever side I regard the nations who shall be the actors in the new drama, I see that before all action God is about to ask of each of them to give him what they most hold to; generally the old vice, the cherished vice, cultivated in the deepest soul. To Italy he will say: 'Give me thy old discords, thy spirit of isolation and local pride; I will have it for a sacrifice. Thou shalt be free only in unity.' To Germany he will say: 'Give me thy two spiritual vices, which, though opposite, thou findest means of holding in union: pedantry and reverie. Give me the sleepiness of thy *philistine* bourgeoisie. Give me thy faith in books, in all sorts of written lies.' To Hungary he will say: 'Valiant people! give thy pride; give thy old royalty ... Be a brother in the midst of thy brethren ... Is royalty worth brotherhood?'

In the great combat which is preparing the enemy is but little. The redoubtable enemy is in ourselves, in ourselves the evil to be feared ... And France! I dare not think of all that God may require of her, in order that she may be fit to act! ... Ah! people that even England has called *God's soldier*, think to what purification this title obliges thee. Remember that the knight was not allowed to use his sword till after the purification of both soul and body, the bath that washed out every stain. . . .

Who shall go before the world to the preparatory sacrifice, on the eve of the battle until night? Poland, as ever.

She has not waited. Her children have been the first to lay upon the altar an immense, an unheard of offering—their hate of Russia.

What remains is easier. It requires less effort. It is that, from the great to the small, from the small to the great, Poland should adopt and love herself.

I place my faith here, for this new revelation of the heart of this people, not only in the Poles, but especially in you, Polish women! ... The women of this nation had always the initiative. In the extremest perils, in the most heroic efforts, they did not quit

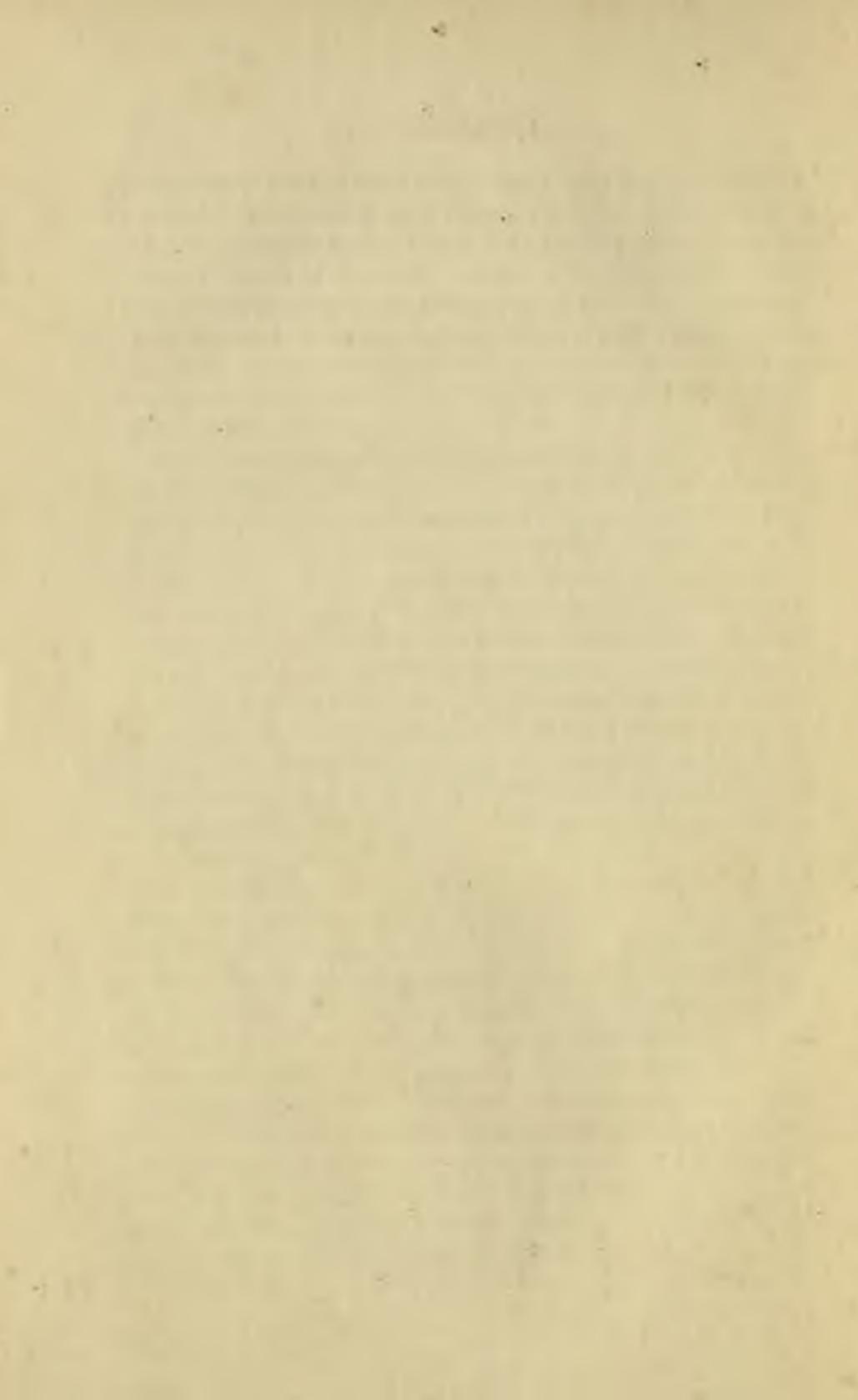
their husbands. Love is not a vain word in Poland. They followed them in their battles, they follow them to martyrdom. The mournful road, which through two thousand leagues of pines leads to the Siberian snows, is seen covered with long files of Polish women, their children in their arms, following with bleeding feet their fettered husbands, under the Cossack lances. Embracing this long punishment, and rendering it blessed by their sanctity, their love has conquered all the furies of tyranny, made a paradise of Siberia, rendering a hell a heaven.

Angels! throw wide your wings on a new heroism. Precede us again here upon this difficult road of voluntary poverty, in the simplicity of life which the time demands. Sweet is fraternity, but its way is rough. Many a one finds it too hard. Many a one will plead his family. 'They would be simple for themselves, say they; if they have any luxuries, if they can not make themselves poor, to fraternize with the poor, it is the wife who hinders them; they are lavish only for the beloved. Only the woman can enfranchise them.

For these last sacrifices, for this great throwing open of the heart which the situation commands, no less, O Poles! is needed than that native valour which placed you always in the van. On this new road also you again shall be the vanguard; you first shall pass the strait way and the narrow bridge over which so many others hesitate to pass.

Need I remind you of one of your finest memories, that rugged defile in Spain which by you has become immortal? 'Thrice,' says the warrior-bard who has sung of this exploit, 'thrice the French squadrons, like the dash of a powerful fountain, leaped to the mountain top. As often, cascade upon cascade, they rolled back into the abyss. . . . The French, for all their wealth of glory, found the mountain inaccessible, as heaven is to the rich man. Silently, impatiently, waited the Polish lancers. It is for you, cries their commander, tried travelers who have overleaped the Alpine snows and Syrian sands, it is for you to clear this way. The trumpet sounds, the lances plunge into the storm of grape. . . . And now all is quiet; the whole battery is silenced. . . . The white eagle rests upon the summit of Somo-Sierra.'

It is for you, this time again. May France have Poland with her on this new route, more rugged than Somo-Sierra. May she have her for companion and for sister! And should she step beyond her, she would not be jealous. She says to her—'Thy glory is my glory. . . . Let us go together to the sacrifice, and we shall lead the world. Let it follow us, the vanguard of human brotherhood!'



## THE POLISH NATIONAL HYMN.

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Our Poland is not lost  
 While yet we live;  
 What from us hath been forced  
 Force shall regive.  
 Despair's beginning valour-crown'd shall be:  
 March, march, ye Poles! God gives us victory.

Our Country calls her sons,—  
 Her tomb unseal'd:  
 My Poles, my trusty ones,  
 Swift to the field!  
 O Mother! holy Mother-country! we  
 Will rend thy foreign chains and set thee free.

For Freedom, for our Land,  
 Hasten to the fight!  
 Mere numbers ne'er command  
 Triumphal might.  
 Honour and Glory battle on our side:  
 How blest for the Beloved to have died.

Land of our ancestors,  
 Land blood-bedew'd,—  
 Already thou art ours,  
 The foe subdued:

To arms, to arms, brothers! the eagle wings  
Speed o'er us and the fierce pursuer springs. <sup>a</sup>

Beside thee, Liberty!  
Fear is not heard;  
Faith—concord—unity,  
Our battle-word.

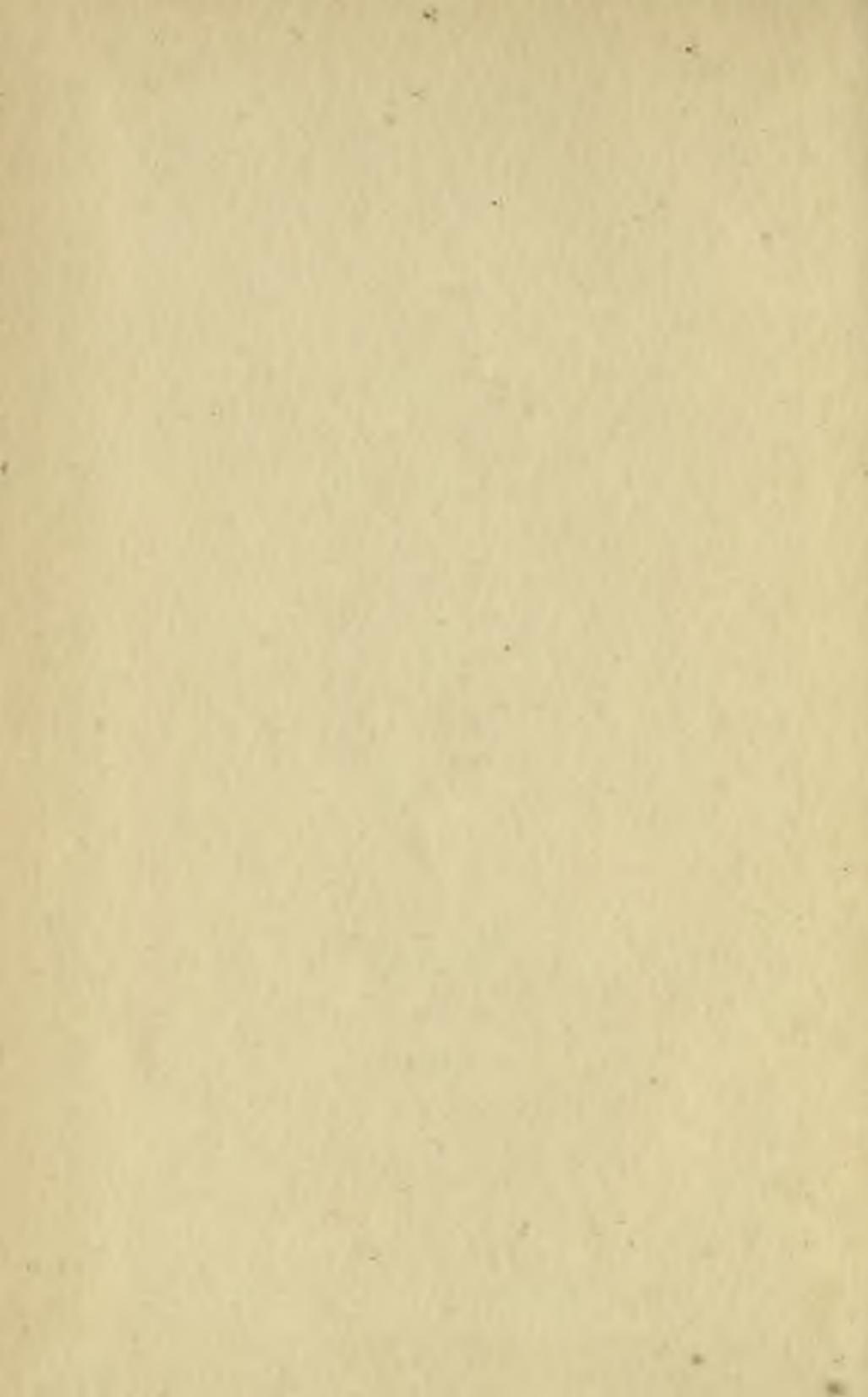
Despair's beginning valour-crown'd shall be:  
March, march, ye Poles! God gives us Victory.

*Photomicrograph*



<sup>a</sup> The Lithuanian banner bore on it an armed horseman in pursuit. The Lithuanian arms were quartered with those of Poland (*the White Eagle on a sanguine field*) after the Union of the two Countries in 1413. The Polish National Hymn was written for the Polish Legions serving under Dombrowski in Napoleon's Italian campaigns. The text from which we translate is that which (somewhat altered from the Hymn of the Legions) was used during the Polish Insurrection of 1831.







K