

PREFACE.

THE advent of Kossuth in the United States, and the intense interest universally felt in the cause which he represents, create a demand for an American biography of the distinguished man, and a condensed history of the struggle that summoned him to the council-chamber of State, and to the field of battle. Notices of both have appeared, and excellent books on Hungary are accessible to all. But many current sketches of the Magyar Chief, and the scenes through which he passed, are incorrect. Besides, the people have neither time nor inclination to study the annals of any nation, in detached fragments, or elaborate detail; a comprehensive view of great events and men, is the more popular and useful narrative. The volume now offered to the reader is designed to meet this want. Not only were a number of foreign works consulted, among which the interesting Memoirs of Count

Pulzky and his Lady, and the Annals of Klapka, may be particularly mentioned; but other important facts were furnished by the Count, and by permission the volume is dedicated to him, though it was not possible to submit the pages to his eye for correction.

The brief Introduction by Mr. Greeley is a spirited glance at the mission of gifted leaders in revolutionary times. A large part of the Appendix was compiled from sources approved by the noble Hungarian to whom allusion has been made.

This volume is therefore added to the records of a singular and brave people, whose pantings after freedom have an impersonation in LOUIS KOSSUTH, with the hope that while it is not devoid of interest, it may elevate the aims of youth, and teach again the lesson that *goodness* alone can confer immortality—that *moral excellence* embalms the memory of even humble benefactors of a struggling race.

INTRODUCTION.

GREAT men, it not made, are at least proved by great occasions. But for the latter, we might possess but could not certainly recognize and assuredly distinguish the former. How many a "mute, inglorious Milton" has gone down to the grave unheard of beyond the narrow area of his village or neighborhood, for want of those opportunities which proclaim the Patriot and Hero, we may not know; but we may judge approximately from the fact that a spirit of popular resistance to tyranny has very rarely been crushed for want of a fit and competent leader of the aroused, determined masses. The names of Leonidas, of Arminius, of Tell, Washington, Kosciusko, Hofer, Palafox and hundreds of others are inseparably blended with the great struggles whereof they were severally the chiefs, and they serve as a cheering assurance to oppressed nations throughout all time that the arms of a stout-hearted and despot-hating people, when nerved by bold and virtuous hearts to strike for Liberty, will never be paralyzed by the want of a competent head to direct their efforts.

Of the many popular leaders who were upheaved by the great convulsions of 1848 into the full sunlight of European celebrity and American popular regard, the world has already definitively assigned the first rank to Louis Kossuth, Advocate, Deputy, Finance Minister, and finally Governor of Hungary. Though not originally of the dominant or Magyar race, he became of that proud, gallant and able race the fervently loved and thoroughly trusted leader and champion. Though by birth and education of the middle class, he was freely, unanimously chosen the chief of a Constitutional State, wherein aristocracy had held almost boundless sway for centuries, and wherein the aristocratic element, though no longer fortified by exclusive privileges under the law, was still essentially formidable. In a tremendous struggle which rocked ancient monarchies to their foundations, which was irradiated by genius, daring heroism, and the noblest spirit of self-sacrifice

—wherein almost every day was marked by some memorable event and hundreds developed qualities which would have honored any nation—the name of Kossuth towered throughout peerless and alone. To him, far more than to that Carnot of whom it was originally affirmed, belongs the credit of having “organized victory.” Against a dynasty whom they had been trained for three centuries to honor and obey—against the whole power of one of the greatest military empires of our age—against a most sanguinary and formidable insurrection into which the perfidious arts of Austria drew nearly half the population of Hungary itself—Kossuth had few resources to oppose but those found in the justice of his cause and the thrilling might of his eloquence. With these he created armies, munitions, money, credit and supplies, by virtue of which the Austrian legions were hurled from the heart of Hungary back across the frontier to the vicinity of their own capital, tracking their flight by the lavish effusion of their blood. Never was a revolutionary government more promptly or more formidably subjected to the stern ordeal of the sword, and never was one more completely successful. Unlike nearly ever other nation revolting against Usurpation, Perfidy and Despotism, Hungary, when she first formally declared her independence, had already proved her ability to maintain it. She had proved her self-sufficiency a fact before she asserted it as a right. And the subsequent interposition of the Russian Autocrat, at the solicitation of the Austrian Court, to crush beneath his colossal weight the liberties of Hungary, so far from disproving the independence of the latter, is a striking confirmation of its intrinsic justice and verity. When an Empire so formidable as the Austrian confesses, by soliciting foreign aid, that it is unable to govern a neighboring State, it plainly admits that its right to do so, if it ever had any, has ceased to exist.

The life of Louis Kossuth, truly portrayed, has for us many impressive lessons; among them that of “the uses of Adversity.” When the patriotic young advocate and editor was suddenly snatched from his friends and his labors, and hurried to the dungeons of Buda, the captive and victim of a gigantic, irresistible despotism, he may well have regarded that arrest as the termination of his efforts for his country, the death-blow to his hopes of her emancipation. Yet a few years sufficed to develop the truth that the stern ordeal of the malefactor’s dungeon, without limitation of sentence or rational hope of deliverance, was an essential preparation for the memorable part which he was destined in the order of Providence to play in the not distant drama of Hungary’s liberation. But for that ordeal, he might have been a leading Liberal

orator in the Diet, but would not have been called by the nation’s undivided voice to be the chief, the champion, the embodiment, the animating soul of her heroic struggle for Independence. And, thus instructed and strengthened by the past, we may rationally, confidently trust that his more recent prostration and exile are but preludes to a still more triumphant restoration to a place in the government corresponding to that which he has never forfeited nor ceased to hold in the hearts of his countrymen.

Nor can we over-value the lesson taught us by Kossuth of the essential oneness of humanity, the unity of interests, and the consequent atrocity and madness of all wars waged for glory, for conquest, or the base phantom misnamed national honor. It has been the fashion of our Fourth-of-July orators for two generations to boast of ours as the only land in which *true* liberty is understood and appreciated—in which the golden mean between anarchy and despotism has been attained—in which men could submit to be governed without ceasing to be free. But at the very height of our self-complacency, a voice from the far Pannonia of Roman history breaks upon our ears, which even our self-conceit cannot mistake for aught but a true and living utterance from the great heart of humanity. With the eloquence of Demosthenes and the sublime fervor of Isaiah, it utters burning words which call men of diverse creeds and races to the battle-field in which the rights of all are to be asserted, the usurpations of the crafty few, however entrenched and hoary, are to be overborne and stricken down. At first we pause to wonder how this dweller by the far Danube, this Hun, this almost Asiatic, had learned those great truths which we have supposed discoveries of Jefferson and the special property of our own Republic; but, pausing, we discover that this child of Attila has not merely imitated our fathers in their immortal declaration, but that what with them were figures of rhetoric, or at least barren abstractions, are with him living and practical verities. They *declared* all men rightfully born free and equal, but left one million of their own countrymen in slavery, in part to their individual selves; he grappled boldly with serfdom and abolished it; they *declared* all men by nature entitled to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;” he apportioned lands without charge to the emancipated serfs, so as to insure them the means of supporting life, enjoying liberty, and pursuing happiness in the homes of their childhood. Who can rationally deny, therefore, that the great principle of equal rights was better understood and more faithfully regarded in Hungary in 1848, than it was in America in 1776? And how could the sincere lovers of human rights among us refuse to

accord to Kossuth a welcome as hearty and as imposing as that paid, a quarter of a century earlier, to the great and good La Fayette? How could they hesitate to hang upon his eloquent words and catch inspiration for new struggles for freedom and humanity from the light of his kindling eye, the sound of his trumpet voice?

Yes, Kossuth has visited our shores—even as I write, his presence hallows and ennobles this chief city of the western world. He is here, though unconsciously, to rebuke the degeneracy and factiousness of our partisan squabbles, the hollowness of our boasted love of liberty, if we turn a deaf ear to the cry of the oppressed in either hemisphere, the sordidness of our common life and the meanness of its aims. He is here to arouse us to a consciousness of the majesty of our national position and the responsibilities it involves; to show us that we cannot safely sleep while despots are forging chains for the yet unfettered nations, as well as to bind more securely their present victims; that, even if we have no regard for others' rights, we must assume an attitude of resistance to the expanding dominion of the Autocrat if only to secure our own. That "God hath made of one blood all the nations that dwell on the face of the earth,"—that we should "do to others as we would have them do to us,"—that we have no right to repel solicitude as to the fate of tyranny's victims, by the callous question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—that the free nations of earth cannot afford, even were they base enough to wish, to leave each other to be assailed in succession by the banded might of despotism, and so overwhelmed and crushed—these are solemn truths which Governor Kossuth is among us to proclaim and enforce with the earnestness of a martyr's conviction and an exiled patriot's zeal.

God grant that he may leave our soil nerved and armed for the great work before him—strengthened not by words of cheer only, but by substantial and bounteous aid. The American people are spending at least one hundred millions of dollars annually for the gratification of vicious appetites and as much more in the indulgence of sumptuous tastes and ostentatious display—why should the hope that they will give or lend a few millions to free Hungary, and thereby insure the speedy emancipation of all Europe, be deemed chimerical? Ten millions would be but one dollar to each adult free person in the Union; is that too much to expect for such a cause? All Europe south of the Niemen is to-day a smothered volcano—only a signal is needed to insure its bursting into a magnificent eruption. This explosion cannot be delayed beyond the middle of 1852: the practical question for to-day is, Shall the republicans of Europe be armed, organized, prepared

and united, as with means they may and will be, or shall they be divided, crippled, destitute, isolated, and so cut off in detail as they were in 1849?—There can be no question as to the leadership of the general movement—the finger of history (may we not venture to say of Providence?) points unerringly to Louis Kossuth as marked out for that position. The prayers of millions are with him; the hopes of hundreds of millions rest upon him. His success will lift the crushing weight of despotism from off the breast of prostrate humanity, and bid her rise and walk forth erect, redeemed and disenthralled. Who cannot give *something* in aid of such a cause? Who can hesitate to pray and labor and hope for its success?

But, even if, in the inscrutable Providence of God, the upheaval for which the millions are now preparing be destined to temporary miscarriage and discomfiture, the great Hungarian will not, cannot fail. "His fame at least is secure." His character has stood the ordeals of poverty, of sudden eminence, of courtly temptation, of bondage, of exaltation, of unbounded sway, of triumph, of deepest calamity, of exile, of strangers' adulation and of reviving hope, and has nobly overcome them all. He may be called to die in a palace or a dungeon, in his prime or in decrepitude, amid tears or execrations, but his place in history is already fixed and cannot be changed. Among orators, patriots, statesmen, exiles, he has, living or dead, no superior. His throne is in the heart, and he can only be disrowned by tearing that heart from the breast of humanity. Or, rather, let me close with the noble tribute of LOWELL, Bard of Freedom, and, after him, say—

"A RACE of nobles may die out,
A royal line may leave no heir;
Wise Nature sets no guards about
Her pewter plate and wooden ware.

"But they fall not, the kinglier breed,
Who starry diadems attain;
To dungeon, axe and stake succeed
Heirs of the old heroic strain.

"The zeal of nature never cools,
Nor is she thwarted of her ends;
When gapped and dulled her cheaper tools,
Then she a saint and prophet spends.

"Land of the Magyars! though it be
 The tyrant may relink his chain,
 Already thine the victory,
 As the just Future measures gain.

"Thou hast succeeded; thou hast won
 The deathly travail's amplest worth;
 A nation's duty thou hast done,
 Giving a hero to our earth.

"And he, let come what will of woe,
 Has saved the land he strove to save;
 No Cossack hordes, no traitor's blow,
 Can quench the voice shall haunt his grave

"*I Kossuth am; O Future, thou
 That clear'st the just and blott'st the vile,
 O'er this small dust in reverence bow,
 Remembering what I was erewhile.*

"*I was the chosen trump wherethrough
 Our God sent forth awakening breath;
 Came chains? Came death? The strain He blew
 Sounds on, outliving chains and death.'*"