

LOUIS KOSUTH A Sketch of his Life and Public Career.

In 1835, the Hungarian Diet closed, after sitting for three years, during which they had endeavored, with particular success, to beat down some of the old bulwarks of feudalism. They accorded to the peasant the right of selling his own property—of moving freely from place to place; they protected him from the arbitrary exactions of his seigneur, and even took away from the latter the right of exercising judicial power. Before the conclusion of the sittings, an occurrence took place which produced a profound sensation all over Hungary. Two deputies rose in their places, and after condemning in strong terms the conduct of the Austrian court in employing the Hungarian regiments in the oppression of Italy, declared that the question of Polish independence was one which well deserved the attention of the Diet, and called upon them to do their utmost to save a sister nation from destruction. An address was accordingly drawn up and forwarded to the emperor, praying the cabinet of Vienna, to do all in its power to assure the existence of the Polish people. A cold official reply, promising nothing, was of course received; but that generous appeal was not without its effect, though it could do little for the salvation of a nation already laboring in the throes of death.

During these exciting discussions, there sat, alone, apart, in a corner of the chamber, a young man, who followed with profound attention—we might almost say, with religious fervor—the turns and changes of this parliamentary drama, worthy of figuring among the most glorious records of the age. He was a plain gentleman, not more than thirty years of age and of unassuming manners. His profession was that of journalism—one held in little repute at that time amongst the Magyars, and its members were, of course, suspected and even persecuted by the Austrians. The young man was Louis Kossuth. His parents came originally from Upper Hungary, in the county of Turzic, a district, inhabited by the Slaves, or Slovaks. About the beginning of the present century, the father of Kossuth, who had become thoroughly "Magyarized," left his native country and established himself at Buda-Pesth, in the county of Zemplin. While there, he had great difficulty in providing for the wants of his rapidly increasing family. With his older sister, Louis distinguished himself from his earliest years by his lively and precocious intelligence, his impulsive impetuosity, and easy and graceful manners. He was born on the 27th of April, 1802. He lost his father very early, and Madame Kossuth's impoverished circumstances scarcely afforded her the means of giving her sons a solid or extended education. Louis, however, after pursuing the elementary branches at the colleges of Sarospatak and Eperies, passed through a course of law and jurisprudence at the university of Pesth.

After he had obtained the diploma of an advocate, Kossuth was sent to the Diet of Pozsony as a proxy for an absent "magistrate," which procured for him the payment of his expenses for living, and a seat and a vote in the lower chamber.

About three hundred advocates supplied in this way the places of absent "magistrates." A witness of the oratorical triumphs of Szeghenvyi, Kossuth saw in them an incentive to emulation, which might aid in the development of his intellectual faculties, which were but now beginning to bud. His debut in the chamber was, however, by no means fortunate. If the lives of many of our own great lawyers and statesmen did not furnish us with many instances of failure of a similar kind, which afterwards proved to be but the preludes to brilliant success, it might excite our surprise that the first address of a man who owed his political elevation above all to his dazzling eloquence, should have been delivered with diffidence and difficulty, and have been passed over unnoticed by his auditory. The check and discouragement which he thus received caused him to turn his attention to other means of acquiring a public reputation. He conceived the idea of publishing a journal to record the proceedings of the deputies, of which no printed report had hitherto been given to the public.—He put his project immediately into execution, and as he was attached to the liberal party with all the ardor of youth and the deepest conviction, the speeches of the leaders of the opposition were published at full length, often amplified, and sometimes even embellished. The paper soon circulated over the whole of Hungary; but the government immediately took alarm and attempted to place it under an interdict. The minister, Chancellor Count Kovatsch, was, however, obliged to give

way before the clamors of the opposition, who pressed and persisted, until His Excellency the chief magistrate was compelled to yield, straight and patient as a child, who unused to courage, has much small and well formed, covered with a fine mustache, and his chin gracefully rounded, betrayed the hidden sweetness of a manly, living soul. He had little muscular strength, but a well-shaped form, and his hands had a softness, whiteness, and tapering beauty seldom found with a man.

He continued his labors with great success for some time, until a disagreement with his publisher deprived him of the voice of his journal. He gave all his attention to the projects for the material amelioration of the country, and in the ranks of those occupations he was found when the Diet was convoked in November, 1847. In the great county of Peth, the name of Szentkiralyi and Kossuth stood first upon the list of candidates. The former proved no obstacle in Kossuth's way, but he had to contend against the intrigues of the government, who, fearing his talents and energy, had put every engine in motion to prevent his return.—Bribery, corruption, intrigue, were all employed against him; but the liberal party were on the alert, and the court party were beaten.

After the close of the Diet, Kossuth,

whose voice of Austria and Russia combined to increase the difficulty, changed his policy of Kossuth's popularity prevented the military and executive powers acting in concert. As a last resource, in despair of healing the differences between them, on bringing the war to a successful issue, Kossuth, in an interview at Arad, resigned into Georgey's hands his editorial powers—a noble act, and one worthy of better results. Georgey only availed himself of his newly acquired authority to entreat his master and his army to die Russians. The rage and despair of the Hungarian soldiers when this resolution was made known to them knew no bounds. The officers broke their swords upon their knees, and cast the pieces at the feet of their craven general, whereat shot themselves with their pistols; and the hussars slaughtered their horses to prevent their falling into the hands of the foe they abominated. The Austrians never forgave the insult cast upon them by Georgey's express declaration that it was no Hungarian only that he surrendered; and in a spirit worthy of the wretched braggarts, who had turned their backs on twenty battle-fields, they wreaked their vengeance upon the helpless and unarmed, when the country was once more in their power.

After the election came the discussion on the address to the throne. The conservative party wished to adhere to the hallowed language of compliment. The liberals, headed by Kossuth, who was now minister of finance, and inspired by his eloquence, voted an address, complaining of the outrage upon their liberties committed by the government, in placing its own creatures at the heads of the counties. The magistrates refused, shrugging their shoulders, placed the whole of the fiefs upon the portraits of the Diet, and left the emperor unanswered. In 1848, Baron Jellachich, at the head of a large army of Cossacks, fierce, savage, the hereditary foes of the Magyars, entered Hungary, plundering, burning, and slaying, as he proceeded. The emperor, in fear from the revolt of the Viennese, repudiated the acts of this monster, and announced that an army would march to the protection of the Hungarians. Kossuth exposed the wretched subtlety, and declared his belief that there was an understanding by Jellachich and his master, and the event proved that he was right. Archduke Ferdinand, the wall of Pesth, the former, still breathing out vengeance and slaughter, threw off the mask, and produced the imperial commission authorizing him to dissolve the Diet and arrest Kossuth and all the other leaders. The crisis was terrible. All the Hungarian army was about to rally, fighting the battles of Andria against Charles Albert. At some sixty thousand men were available. The Diet voted arms and money, and declared that the emperor had forfeited the crown, and that the lawyers, scholars, statesmen, &c., the best in person at the head of the Hungarian army, and that Ferdinand had a just claim to the walls of Pesth. Finally to this formal, but naked, president of the national defense, submitted.

The war had now been fairly commenced, but not before every possible effort had been made to the emperor. But all petitions were disregarded; remonstrances produced additional violence and insult, and Hungarian deputies were sent back irritated and unsatisfied. Georgey, Beni, Dembinski, and a number of other able men, were placed at the head of the Hungarian armies, which were composed principally of levies hastily raised, half-armed, and ill-disciplined. But the zeal of all classes overcame every obstacle, and men of all ranks drew to arms with a fury ardor that carried everything before it. They commenced the brilliant series of victories, which fixed upon Hungary the gaze of all Europe, and exhibited a romantic bravery, combined with an amount of able generalship, and steady, prudent statesmanship, which has no parallel in the history of the world. Pain would we rehearse, if space allowed us, the particulars of half those brilliant fields, in which the Austrian generals, grown gray in war, at the head of veteran soldiers, were driven from post to post back to their own frontiers, by the fiery valor of the Magyar hussars and hounds, until from every fortress all over Hungary, the tricolor flag floated in proud triumph.

Austria, as every one knows, was at last obliged to call in the assistance of Russia; and whilst the negotiations were going on, the Hungarian Diet, to provide for this new emergency, named Kossuth governor-general of the kingdom, Bartholomew Szemere president of the council, Casimir Batthyany minister for foreign affairs, and Georgey, who was also commander-in-chief of the army, was appointed minister of war. But the army was obliged to retreat before the over-

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