

From the Study of Louis Kossuth

LOUIS KOSSUTH
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.

After the close of the Diet, Kossuth, whose perseverance and zeal had gained force in proportion to the obstacles thrown in his way by the government, resolved in order to give unity to the efforts of the liberal party, to publish also manuscript reports of the proceedings and deliberations of the assemblies of the counties. The publicity given to the debates, which had previously died without an echo, the desire of political amelioration, the thirst for celebrity, the ardor of the young men who at that time crowded to the central assemblies, excited throughout the country an unparalleled ferment, and every day brought new recruits to the liberal party.

After the election came the discussion on the address to the throne. The conservative party wished to adhere to the hackneyed language of compliment. The liberal, headed by Kossuth, who was now minister of finance, and inspired by independence, 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, instead of the legal and proper ones. The magistrates refused to sign it, and the liberal placed the whole of the focus upon the journals of the Diet, and left the emperor unanswerable.

At the beginning of the year 1848, Baron Jellachich, at the head of a large army of Cossaks, entered Hungary, plundering, burning, and slaughtering as he proceeded. The emperor, in retaliation, ordered an army to march to the protection of the Hungarians. Kossuth exposed the wretched subterfuge, and declared his belief that there was an understanding by Jellachich and his master, and the event proved that he was right.

At this time he was forty years of age, and married to Theresa Meszlonyi, the daughter of a noble Magyar of Győr. Imprisonment had injured his naturally weak constitution, but there was no one who looked upon that calm, pale, sweet and expressive face, who did not feel himself drawn towards him by a strange sympathy. His fair hair scarcely covered the top of his head, and his oval face, surrounded by a magnificent dark beard, had a melancholy aspect.

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