



TROOPS BEING BLESSED BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE: AN EPISODE OF THE 1794 INSURRECTION.

From the painting by Von Stachiewicz.

THE POLAND OF TO-DAY:

THE POLISH NATIONAL MUSEUM AT RAPPERSWYL, SWITZERLAND.

BY A. DE BURGH.*

*Illustrated from Photographs specially taken for this article by Valentin Bischof,
Custodian at Rapperswyl.*

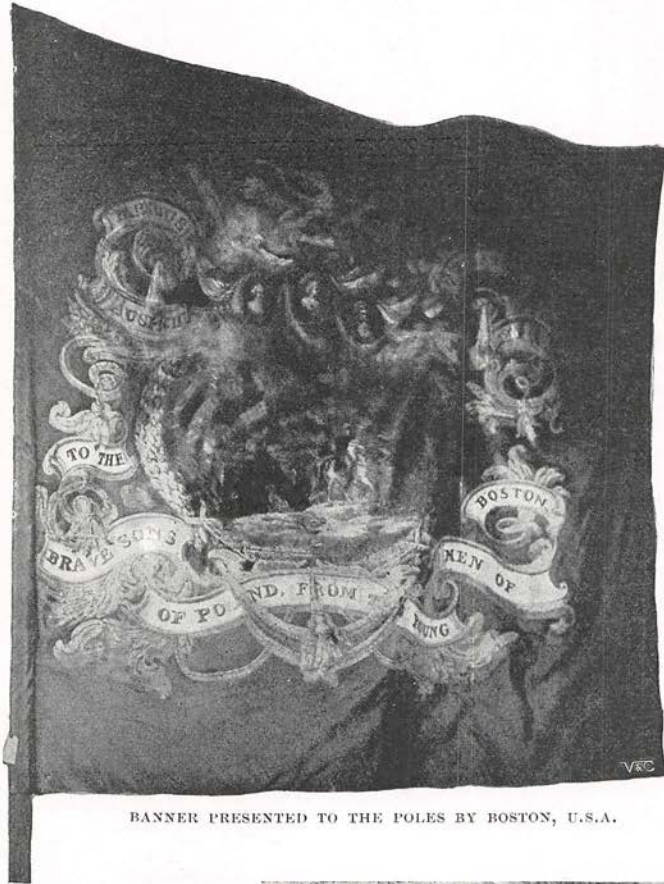
AMONG the many instances the world has known of nations struggling for freedom, independence — even for their very existence — none has ended more pathetically than that of the brave and noble children of Poland, who, overwhelmed by the enormous legions of three great Powers, were doomed to see their country ruthlessly divided between their enemies — Russia, Austria, and Prussia.

Whatever our exact political sympathies, when we find a nation, after a century of misfortunes, defeats, and disasters, still retaining vitality and hopefulness, we cannot but admire such a people. The terrible reverses

which Poland has met with, and its entire disappearance as an individual State, were not able to break the spirit of the Poles themselves; and their patriotism and love for their extinct kingdom burn as brightly as ever, while they still cherish the hope that Poland will some day rise again from out her ruins.

Deprived of their country by their conquerors, driven from the home of their ancestors, the Poles at last found an asylum in hospitable Switzerland, and established a centre at the old Castle in Rapperswyl, on the Lake of Zurich, a shrine devoted to keeping alive the ever-flickering flame of Polish nationality, and a place of pilgrimage for all the sons of Poland whom their country's fate has consigned to exile.

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BANNER PRESENTED TO THE POLES BY BOSTON, U.S.A.

The Castle dates from the twelfth century, when it was built by Count Rudolf of Habsburg; but it soon passed by marriage settlements to the Counts of Homburg, and later became the property again of a branch of the powerful Habsburgs, whose descendants to this day occupy the throne of Austria - Hungary. In 1350 both the Castle and town of Rapperswyl were completely destroyed during a war between Zurich and the Rapperswyl people. From 1354-1415 the Dukes of

Habsburg-Austria reigned in the rebuilt Castle. Rapperswyl passed through many vicissitudes, till at last in 1805 it became incorporated into the Canton of St. Gall, in the Swiss Republic. In 1870 the late Polish Count Plater purchased the Castle and restored it, and installed in it a Polish museum, which was solemnly opened on October 23rd, 1870.

Already, in 1868, some Polish patriots, assisted by Swiss and Austrians, had erected a national monument near the old Castle, in memory of the hundredth birthday of the fight for independence and liberty.

This beautiful monument, consisting of a graceful column crowned with the national emblem of the Polish Eagle, was transferred into the picturesque and ancient courtyard of the Castle, where the walls are almost completely hidden by creepers and ivy.

It is surprising to notice how the museum, inaugurated not quite thirty years ago,



THE LIBRARY OF THE MUSEUM.



RAPPERSWYL, WITH VIEW OF CASTLE AND CHURCH.

has grown already to be one of the most valuable and interesting historic collections of the Continent of Europe.

Before we pass to the description of some of the treasures to be found there, we must refer to a ceremony which took place at Rapperswyl some few years back—the celebration of the transfer of the heart of Kosciusko from the fortress of Zurich to a mausoleum specially erected to receive it at the Castle. This last of the great Polish patriots is but a name in history to the present generation, so that it may be well to give a short sketch of his career.

Thaddeus Kosciusko was born in 1746 in Lithuania. He was descended from an old family of small landed proprietors and began his education at Warsaw. So successful was he as a student that it was decided to send him to Versailles to continue his studies, then to Brest, and finally to Paris. Upon his return to his own country he was given a captain's commission in the artillery; but an unfortunate attachment to the daughter of a rich and proud nobleman, who would under no circumstances consent to a marriage, decided young Kosciusko, in 1777, to leave Poland for Paris, whence he sailed with the French fleet to aid the North American Colonies in their struggle for independence. He rose to the rank of general of a brigade, and only returned in 1786, after the States were free, to his native country. For three years he lived a retired life, until, at the reorganisation of the army in 1789, he was appointed major-general.

The adoption of the new constitution in 1791 was followed by war with Russia, during which General Kosciusko conducted himself

with conspicuous valour and skill, holding at Dubienka with 4,000 men an army of 20,000 Russians at bay. Stanislaw, then King of Poland, eventually agreed to a humiliating peace, whereupon Kosciusko resigned his commission and retired into private life.

In 1794 the Poles once more rose against their oppressors; a general insurrection took



THE CASTLE OF RAPPERSWYL, FROM THE SOUTH.



POLISH BANNER USED DURING 1863.

place, and Kosciusko was called to Cracow and by acclamation nominated Generalissimo and Dictator. At his first battle with the Russians, he, with 5,000 patriots, completely defeated them, although their army was much larger than his. However, poor Poland was not strong enough to fight against Russia's and Prussia's combined armies. In one of the most terrible conflicts against enormous odds Kosciusko fell seriously wounded, and his army was routed. Two years he spent as prisoner in St. Petersburg, but gained his liberty after the accession of

Czar Paul II., when he sailed for England and afterwards for America. The love for his country, perhaps also the hope of getting yet another chance to strike for the independence of his countrymen, soon brought him back to Europe; and he lived for nearly seventeen years at Fontainebleau, where he became personally acquainted with Napoleon I. In 1806 he gave a splendid proof of his patriotism by refusing to allow Napoleon to use his name to incite a rising in Poland against Russia. He was too well aware of the fact that the Corsican had no love for the Polish people and only wished to have their help for his own purposes. Never did the Poles accept the forged address to his country as a genuine one coming from Kosciusko.

In 1815 the great Polish general and dictator settled in Switzerland, where he occupied himself

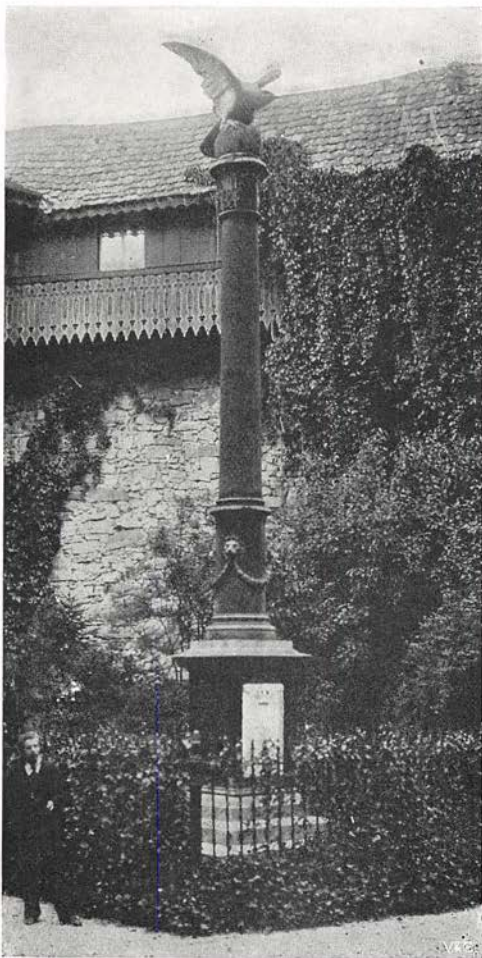
with farming and agriculture. His death on October 17th, 1817, was the result of an accidental fall from his horse.

So ended a man who, but for the overwhelming odds that were against him, would have gained for himself a place among the most renowned generals of his time, for there never was a more skilful and daring soldier, a more intrepid and brave leader; and to this day his name is not only revered by everyone who has Polish blood in his veins, but his noble and chivalrous patriotism, free as it was from any desire for self-

glorification, has secured him a lasting fame in history.

Kosciusko's death took place in Solothurn, in the house of a Swiss friend to whom he left his heart as a legacy; the trust was accepted, and the heart, placed in a silver urn, was deposited in one of the towers of the fortress of Zurich.

Rapperswyl Castle, the future visible home



NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE COURTYARD OF THE CASTLE OF RAPPERSWYL.

of Poland's exiled sons and daughters, was deemed eminently appropriate as the final resting-place of the patriot's heart, and it was resolved to build a special mausoleum to receive it. This was completed early in 1897. The Polish colony in Paris largely contributed to the cost of erecting this worthy receptacle of the precious relic, and organised its unveiling celebration.

The mausoleum consists of a tower of porphyry, in the inner vault of which stands a bronze urn resting on a pedestal of black marble. On the pedestal is chiseled the effigy of Kosciusko, standing out above the Polish Eagle



COUNT LADISLAUS PLATER, FOUNDER OF THE MUSEUM.

with outspread wings. The Muse of History lifts a veil from the head of the hero with her right hand, and with her left holds a trumpet. Above the effigy is the inscription: "Resurgat Polonia." The inner walls of the vault are decorated with some beautiful fresco paintings. Several wreaths are laid upon the urn, one of them being of massive gold.

The museum itself consists of various large halls and rooms, in which the collection



MICKIEWICZ ROOM, IN THE MUSEUM.



PORTRAIT OF KOSCIUSKO.

Painted in 1817 by an Englishman, Richard Ramsay Reinagle.

of treasures is displayed. There are many valuable relics to call to mind the most illustrious time of Poland's greatness. To name but a few, there are paintings executed either by Polish artists or by others depicting scenes of Poland's history; a remarkable collection of cameos, with representations of great events, or of renowned personages,

connected with the history of the Polish nation: a variety of Polish national costumes and uniforms of ancient and modern times; Polish coins and medals; some fine works from the sculptor's hand, and a very valuable library of 70,000 volumes, with a large quantity of interesting and rare manuscripts, which is open to the savants and scholars of all nations. The portal leading into the Castle is simple, and superscribed with these words: "Musée Historique Polonais."

The corridors and halls are tastefully ornamented with armour, flags, banners, and large maps. One room is entirely devoted to the memory of Kosciusko, and contains, besides a life-like portrait in oils and a bust of the patriot, his bedstead, parts of his uniform, and many smaller effects, which are as precious to the Poles as those of Nelson are to us. Below his marble bust we read: "He has fought for freedom and the rights of mankind!" On the sides of the alcove in which stands the bedstead hang two beautiful banners, one used by the patriots during their rising in 1863, on which is embroidered the Polish Eagle; the other given "to the brave sons of Poland by the young men of Boston." This banner is indeed a work of art. On the walls of this room we find paintings depicting scenes of the terrible catastrophes during the wars of independence and the so-called insurrections—bleeding fathers, murdered youths, weeping and wailing mothers, sisters, wives, and children.



IN THE TRENCHES OF WARSAW FORTRESS, 1863.

From the painting by Pietrowski.



POLISH PRISONERS ON THEIR WAY TO SIBERIA, 1863.

From the painting by Grottger.

Here is also a very interesting cup, which was presented by the town of Dantzic to King Sobieski.

The principal and largest room is replete with historical objects and with works

of art by Polish artists, including many interesting portraits and some excellent work in marble. Several items in this room especially appeal to English visitors—two splendid banners (one a Union Jack), given



STREET FIGHT IN WARSAW, 1861.

From the painting by P. R. Fleury.

to the Polish people by the inhabitants of Birmingham, and a giant address containing the names of more than 100,000 Englishmen, expressing sympathy for the Poles in their struggle for their national heritage.

One room is devoted to the memory of the Polish poet, Mickiewicz, and contains a fine full-length portrait of the bard whose words



STATUE OF KOPERNIKUS.

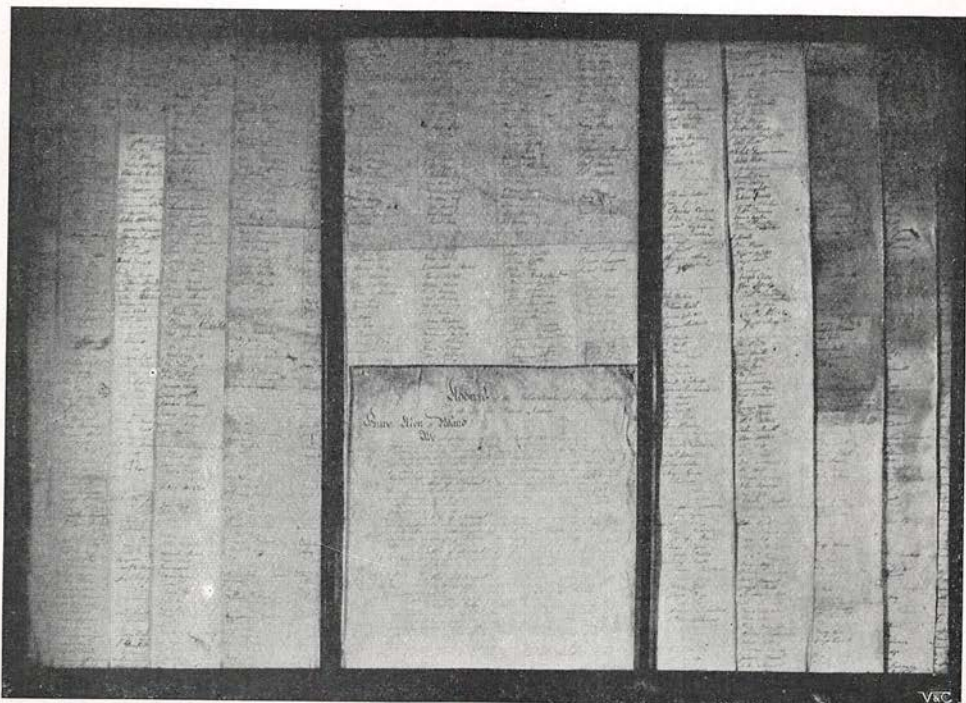


ALLEGORICAL PICTURE, OVER TWENTY FEET HIGH, REPRESENTING POLAND LYING DEAD.

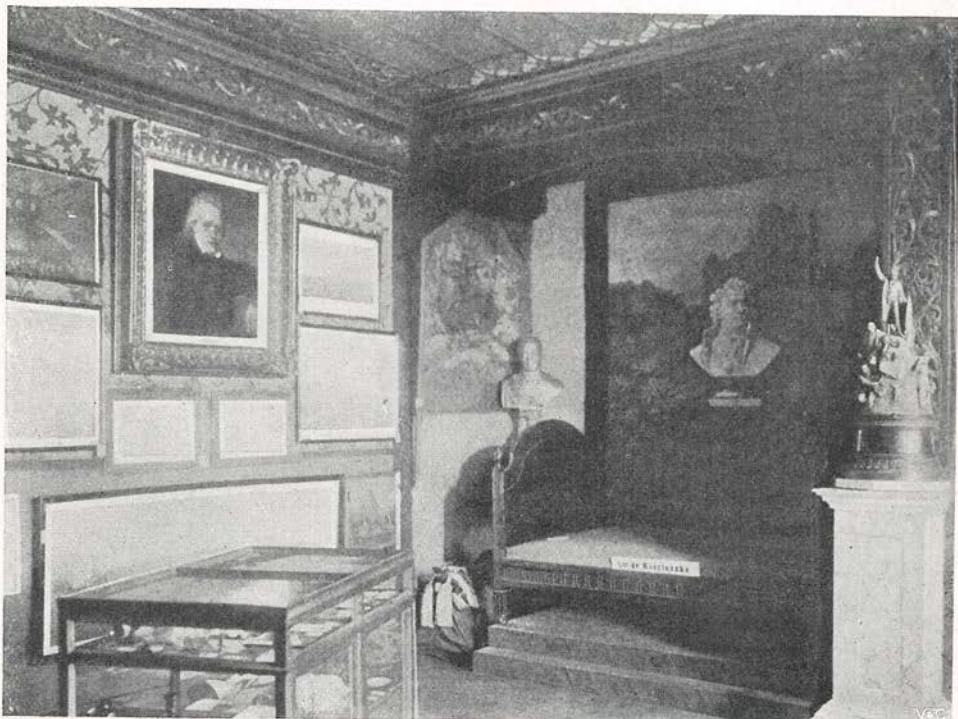
Painted by Maszynski.

and deeds did so much to give courage and hope to a despairing nation. Kopernikus, the Polish astronomer and scientist, is also immortalised by a beautiful statue representing the great thinker and discoverer, with some of his astronomical instruments.

We have only space to refer to these, a few of the many objects of general interest ;



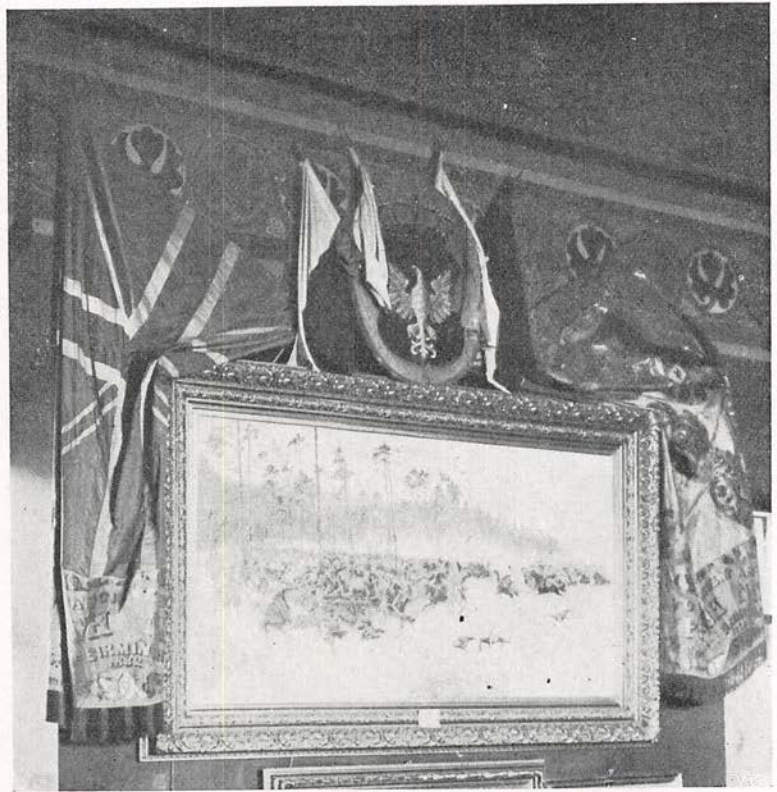
THE MONSTER ADDRESS FROM ENGLISHMEN TO THE POLES.



KOSCIUSKO ROOM, IN THE MUSEUM.

but anyone who visits this monument of a proud though distressful nation will be astonished at the richness of the museum and the library, and will not regret having made the pilgrimage.

The Castle itself is a picturesque specimen of mediæval architecture, and the "keep" at the south-western end of the building affords a most beautiful view of high, snow-clad mountains, with green lower slopes reaching down to the blue waters of the lake. On the south-western side of the Castle hill begins what is called the "Lindenhof,"



THE TWO BANNERS PRESENTED TO THE POLES BY BIRMINGHAM.



A DYING POLE WRITING, "POLAND IS NOT LOST YET!"
From the picture by Ch. Guilbert,

named from the ancient mighty line trees which shade the hill as it slopes slowly down to the lake-side.

Rapperswyl, which lies on the lower end of the Lake of Zurich, is in itself a place full of interest and replete with reminiscences of mediæval times. The town hall contains one of the finest collections of ancient drinking-cups in the world, and near by may be seen one of the oldest churches of middle Europe, dating from the tenth century. In the cemetery may be seen the grave of

Miss Caroline Bauer, the actress who became themorganatic wife of the Duke of Coburg, after the death of his spouse, Princess Charlotte, only daughter of King George IV. When called to the throne of Belgium he annulled this union, and Caroline married some years afterwards the Polish Count Plater, who lived at Rapperswyl. She died there, and her remains rest by the side of her husband's on the lovely hill which forms the "God's acre" of the township.



THE INTERIOR OF THE KOSCIUSKO MAUSOLEUM.