

THE AUTHOR, TO HER FRIENDLY READERS.

Written for the new edition of "Thaddeus of Warsaw," forming one of the series called "The Standard Novels."

To such readers alone who, by the sympathy of a social taste, fall in with any blameless fashion of the day, and, from an amiable interest, also, in whatever may chance to afford them innocent pleasure, would fain know something more about an author whose works have brought them that gratification than the cold letter of a mere literary preface usually tells: to such readers this—something of an egotistical—epistle is addressed.

For, in beginning the republication of a regular series of the novels, or, as they have been more properly called, biographical romances, of which I have been the author, it has been considered desirable to make certain additions to each work, in the form of a few introductory pages and scattered notes, illustrative of the origin of the tale, of the historical events referred to in it, and of the actually living characters who constitute its personages, with some account, also, of the really local scenery described; thus giving, it is thought, a double zest to the entertainment of the reader, by bringing him into a previous acquaintance with the persons he is to meet in the book, and making him agreeably familiar with the country through which he is to travel in their company. Indeed, the social taste of the times has lately fully shown how advantageous the like conversational disclosures have proved to the recent republications of the celebrated "Waverley Novels," by the chief of novel-writers; and in the new series of the admirable naval tales by the distinguished American novelist, both of whom paid to the mother- country the gratifying tribute of making it their birthplace.

Such evidences in favor of an argument could not fail to persuade me to undertake the desired elucidating task; feeling, indeed, particularly pleased to adopt, in my turn, a successful example from the once Great Unknown—now the not less great avowed author of the Waverley Novels, in the person of Sir Walter Scott, who did me the honor to adopt the style or class of novel of which "Thaddeus of Warsaw" was the first,—a class which, uniting the personages and facts of real history or biography with a combining and illustrative machinery of the imagination, formed a new species of writing in that day, and to which Madame de Staël and others have given the appellation of "an epic in prose." The day of its appearance is now pretty far back: for "Thaddeus of Warsaw" (a tale founded on Polish heroism) and the "Scottish Chiefs" (a romance grounded on Scottish heroism) were both published in England, and translated into various languages abroad, many years before the literary wonder of Scotland gave to the world his transcendent story of Waverley, forming a most impressive historical picture of the last struggle of the papist, but gallant, branch of the Stuarts for the British throne. [Footnote: It was on the publication of these, her first two works, in the German language that the authoress was honored with being made a lady of the Chapter of St. Joachim, and received the gold cross of the order from Wirtemberg.]

"Thaddeus of Warsaw" being the first essay, in the form of such an association between fact and fancy, was published by its author with a natural apprehension of its reception by the critical part of the public. She had not, indeed, written it with any view to publication, but from an almost resistless impulse to embody the ideas and impressions with which her heart

and mind were then full. It was written in her earliest youth; dictated by a fervent sympathy with calamities which had scarcely ceased to exist, and which her eager pen sought to portray; and it was given to the world, or rather to those who might feel with her, with all the simple-hearted enthusiasm which saw no impediment when a tale of virtue or of pity was to be told.

In looking back through the avenue of life to that time, what events have occurred, public and private, to the countries and to the individuals named in that tale! to persons of even as lofty names and excellences, of our own and other lands, who were mutually affected with me in admiration and regret for the virtues and the sorrows described! In sitting down now to my retrospective task, I find myself writing this, my second preface to the story of "Thaddeus of Warsaw," just thirty years from the date of its first publication. Then, I wrote when the struggle for the birthright independence of Poland was no more; when she lay in her ashes, and her heroes in their wounds; when the pall of death spread over the whole country, and her widows and orphans travelled afar.

In the days of my almost childhood,—that is, eight years before I dipped my pen in their tears,—I remember seeing many of those hapless refugees wandering about St. James's Park. They had sad companions in the like miseries, though from different enemies, in the emigrants from France; and memory can never forget the variety of wretched yet noble-looking visages I then contemplated in the daily walks which my mother's own little family group were accustomed to take there. One person, a gaunt figure, with melancholy and bravery stamped on his emaciated features, is often present to the recollection of us all. He was clad in a threadbare blue uniform great coat, with a black stock, a rusty old hat, pulled rather over his eyes; his hands without gloves; but his aspect was that of a perfect gentleman, and his step that of a military man. We saw him constantly at one hour, in the middle walk of the Mall, and always alone; never looking to the right nor to the left, but straight on; with an unmoving countenance, and a pace which told that his thoughts were those of a homeless and hopeless man—hopeless, at least, of all that life might bring him. On, on he went to the end of the Mall; turned again, and on again; and so he continued to do always, as long as we remained spectators of his solitary walk: once, indeed, we saw him crossing into St. Martin's Lane. Nobody seemed to know him, for he spoke to none; and no person ever addressed him, though many, like ourselves, looked at him, and stopped in the path to gaze after him. We often longed to be rich, to follow him wherever his wretched abode might have been, and then silently to send comforts to him from hands he knew not of. We used to call him, when speaking of him to ourselves, *Il Penseroso*; and by that name we yet not unfrequently talk of him to each other, and never without recurrence to the very painful, because unavailing, sympathy we then felt for that apparently friendless man. Such sympathy is, indeed, right; for it is one of the secondary means by which Providence conducts the stream of his mercies to those who need the succor of their fellow-creatures; and we cannot doubt that, though the agency of such Providence was not to be in our hands, there were those who had both the will and the power given, and did not, like ourselves, turn and pity that interesting emigrant in vain.

Some time after this, General Kosciusko, the justly celebrated hero of Poland, came to England, on his way to the United States; having been released from his close imprisonment in Russia, and in the noblest manner, too, by the Emperor Paul, immediately on his accession to the throne. His arrival caused a great sensation in London, and many of the first characters of the times pressed forward to pay their respects to such real patriotic virtue in its adversity. An old friend of my family was amongst them; his own warm heart encouraging the enthusiasm of ours, he took my brother Robert to visit the Polish veteran, then lodging at

Sablionière's Hotel, in Leicester Square. My brother, on his return to us, described him as a noble looking man, though not at all handsome, lying upon a couch in a very enfeebled state, from the effects of numerous wounds he had received in his breast by the Cossacks' lances after his fall, having been previously overthrown by a sabre stroke on his head. His voice, in consequence of the induced internal weakness, was very low, and his speaking always with resting intervals. He wore a black bandage across his forehead, which covered a deep wound there; and, indeed, his whole figure bore marks of long suffering.

Our friend introduced my brother to him by name, and as "a boy emulous of seeing and following noble examples." Kosciusko took him kindly by the hand, and spoke to him words of generous encouragement, in whatever path of virtuous ambition he might take. They never have been forgotten. Is it, then, to be wondered at, combining the mute distress I had so often contemplated in other victims of similar misfortunes with the magnanimous object then described to me by my brother, that the story of heroism my young imagination should think of embodying into shape should be founded on the actual scenes of Kosciusko's sufferings, and moulded out of his virtues!

To have made him the ostensible hero of the tale, would have suited neither the modesty of his feelings nor the humbleness of my own expectation of telling it as I wished. I therefore took a younger and less pretending agent, in the personification of a descendant of the great John Sobieski.

But it was, as I have already said, some years after the partition of Poland that I wrote, and gave for publication, my historical romance on that catastrophe. It was finished amid a circle of friends well calculated to fan the flame which had inspired its commencement some of the leading heroes of the British army just returned from the victorious fields of Alexandria and St. Jean d'Acre; and, seated in my brother's little study, with the war-dyed coat in which the veteran Abercrombie breathed his last grateful sigh, while, like Wolfe, he gazed on the boasted invincible standard of the enemy, brought to him by a British soldier,—with this trophy of our own native valor on one side of me, and on the other the bullet-torn vest of another English commander of as many battles,—but who, having survived to enjoy his fame, I do not name here,—I put my last stroke to the first campaigns of Thaddeus Sobieski.

When the work was finished, some of the persons near me urged its being published. But I argued, in opposition to the wish, its different construction to all other novels or romances which had gone before it, from Richardson's time-honored domestic novels to the penetrating feeling in similar scenes by the pen of Henry Mackenzie; and again, Charlotte Smith's more recent, elegant, but very sentimental love stories. But the most formidable of all were the wildly interesting romances of Anne Radcliffe, whose magical wonders and mysteries were then the ruling style of the day. I urged, how could any one expect that the admiring readers of such works could consider my simply-told biographical legend of Poland anything better than a dull union between real history and a matter-of-fact imagination?

Arguments were found to answer all this; and being excited by the feelings which had dictated my little work, and encouraged by the corresponding characters with whom I daily associated, I ventured the essay. However, I had not read the sage romances of our older times without turning to some account the lessons they taught to adventurous personages of either sex; showing that even the boldest knight never made a new sally without consecrating his shield with some impress of acknowledged reverence. In like manner, when I entered the field with my modern romance of Thaddeus of Warsaw, I inscribed the first page with the name of the

hero of Acre. That dedication will be found through all its successive editions, still in front of the title-page; and immediately following it is a second inscription, added, in after years, to the memory of the magnanimous patriot and exemplary man, Thaddeus Kosciusko, who had first filled me with ambition to write the tale, and who died in Switzerland, A. D. 1817, fuller of glory than of years. Yet, if life be measured by its vicissitudes and its virtues, we may justly say, "he was gathered in his ripeness."

After his visit to old friends in the United States,—where, in his youth, he had learned the art of war, and the science of a noble, unselfish independence, from the marvel of modern times, General Washington,—Kosciusko returned to Europe, and abode a while in France, but not in its capital. He lived deeply retired, gradually restoring his shattered frame to some degree of health by the peace of a resigned mind and the occupation of rural employments.

Circumstances led him to Switzerland; and the country of William Tell, and of simple Christian fellowship, could not but soon be found peculiarly congenial to his spirit, long turned away from the pageants and the pomp of this world. In his span he had had all, either in his grasp or proffered to him. For when nothing remained of all his military glory and his patriotic sacrifices but a yet existing fame, and a conscious sense within him of duty performed, he was content to "eat his crust," with that inheritance alone; and he refused, though with an answering magnanimity of acknowledgment, a valuable property offered to him by the Emperor of Russia, as a free gift from a generous enemy, esteeming his proved, disinterested virtues. He also declined the yet more dazzling present of a crown from the then master of the continent, who would have set him on the throne of Poland—but, of a truth, under the vassalage of the Emperor of the French! Kosciusko was not to be consoled for Poland by riches bestowed on himself, nor betrayed into compromising her birthright of national independence by the casuistry that would have made his parental sceptre the instrument of a foreign domination.

Having such a theme as his name, and the heroes his co-patriots, the romance of "Thaddeus of Warsaw" was no sooner published than it overcame the novelty of its construction, and became universally popular. Nor was it very long before it fell into General Kosciusko's hands, though then in a distant land; and he kindly and promptly lost no time in letting the author know his approbation of the narrative, though qualified with several modest expressions respecting himself. From that period she enjoyed many treasured marks of his esteem; and she will add, though with a sad satisfaction, that amongst her several relics of the Great Departed who have honored her with regard, she possesses, most dearly prized, a medal of Kosciusko and a lock of his hair. About the same time she received a most incontestable proof of the accuracy of her story from the lips of General Gardiner, the last British minister to the court of Stanislaus Augustus. On his reading the book, he was so sure that the facts it represented could only have been learned on the spot, that he expressed his surprise to several persons that the author of the work, an English lady, could have been at Warsaw during all the troubles there and he not know it. On his repeating this observation to the late Duke of Roxburgh, his grace's sister-in-law, who happened to overhear what was said, and knew the writer, answered him by saying, "The author has never been in Poland." "Impossible!" replied the general; "no one could describe the scenes and occurrences there, in the manner it is done in that book, without having been an eyewitness." The lady, however, convinced the general of the fact being otherwise, by assuring him, from her own personal knowledge, that the author of "Thaddeus of Warsaw" was a mere school-girl in England at the time of the events of the story.

How, then, it has often been asked, did she obtain such accurate information with regard to those events? and how acquire her familiar acquaintance with the palaces and persons she represents in the work? The answer is short. By close questioning every person that came in her way that knew anything about the object of her interest; and there were many brave hearts and indignant lips ready to open with the sad yet noble tale. Thus every illustrious individual she wished to bring into her narrative gradually grew upon her knowledge, till she became as well acquainted with all her desired personages as if they were actually present with her; for she knew their minds and their actions; and these compose the man. The features of the country, also, were learned from persons who had trodden the spots she describes: and that they were indeed correct pictures of their homes and war-fields, the tears and bursting enthusiasm of many of Poland's long expatriated sons have more than once borne testimony to her.

As one instance, out of the number I might repeat, of the inextinguishable love of those noble wanderers from their native country, I shall subjoin the copy of a letter addressed to me by one of those gallant men, then holding a high military post in a foreign service, and who, I afterwards learned, was of the family of Kosciusko, whose portrait he sent to me: for the letter was accompanied with a curiously-wrought ring of pure gold, containing a likeness of that hero. The letter was in French, and I transcribe it literally in the words of the writer:—

"Madame!

"Un inconnu ose adresser la parole à l'auteur immortel de Thaddeus de Warsaw; attaché par tant de liens à l'héros que vous avez chanté, je m'enhardis à distraire pour un moment vos nobles veilles.

"Qu'il me soit permis de vous offrir, madame, l'hommage de mon admiration la plus exaltée, en vous présentant la bague qui contient le buste du Général Kosciusko:—elle a servi de signe de ralliement aux patriots Polonois, lorsque, en 1794, ils entreprirent de sécouer leur joug.

"Les anciens déposoient leurs offrandes sur l'autel de leurs divinités tutélaires;—je ne fais qu'imiter leur exemple. Vous êtes pour tous les Polonois cette divinité, qui la première ait élevée sa voix, du fond de l'impériale, Albion, en leur faveur.

"Un jour viendra, et j'ose conserver dans mon coeur cet espoir, que vos accens, qui ont retenti dans le coeur de l'Europe sensible, produiront leur effèt célestial, en ressuscitant l'ombre sanglante de ma chère patrie.

"Daignez agréer, madame, l'hommage respectueuse d'un de vos serviteurs le plus dévoué, &c. &c."

Probably the writer of the above is now returned to his country, his vows having been most awfully answered by one of the most momentous struggles she has ever had, or to which the nations around have ever yet stood as spectators; for the balance of Europe trembles at the turning of her scale.

Thus, then, it cannot but be that in the conclusion of this my, perhaps, last introductory preface to any new edition of "Thaddeus of Warsaw," its author should offer up a sincerely heartfelt prayer to the King of kings, the Almighty Father of all mankind, that His all-gracious Spirit may watch over the issue of this contest, and dictate the peace of Poland!

ESHER, *May*, 1831

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Having attempted a narrative of the intended description, but written, in fact, from the mere impulse of sympathy with its subject still fresh in my own and every pitying memory, it is natural that, after having made up my mind to assent to its publication, in which much time and thought has been expended in considering the responsibility of so doing, from so unpractised a pen, I should feel an increase of anxiety respecting its ultimate fate.

Therefore, before the reader favors the tale itself with his attention, I beg leave to offer him a little account of the principles that actuated its composition, and in regard to which one of the most honored heads in the author's family urged her "not to withhold it from the press;" observing, in his persuasions, that the mistakes which many of my young contemporaries of both sexes continually make in their estimates of human character, and of the purposes of human life, require to have a line of difference between certain splendid vices and some of the brilliant order of virtues to be distinctly drawn before them. "And," he remarked, "it appeared to be so done in the pages of my Polish manuscript. Therefore," added he, "let Thaddeus of Warsaw speak openly for himself!"

This opinion decided me. Though with fear and trembling, yet I felt an encouraging consciousness that in writing the manuscript narrative for my own private enjoyment only, and the occasional amusement of those friends dearest around me, I had wished to portray characters whose high endowments could not be misled into proud ambitions, nor the gift of dazzling social graces betray into the selfish triumphs of worldly vanity,—characters that prosperity could not inflate, nor disappointments depress, from pious trust and honorable action. The pure fires of such a spirit declare their sacred origin; and such is the talisman of those achievements which amaze everybody but their accomplisher. The eye fixed on it is what divine truth declares it to be "single!" There is no double purpose in it; no glancing to a man's own personal aggrandizement on one side and on professing services to his fellow-creatures on the other; such a spirit has only one aim—Heaven! and the eternal records of that wide firmament include within it "all good to man."

What flattered Alexander of Macedon into a madman, and perverted the gracious-minded Julius Caesar into usurpation and tyranny, has also been found by Christian heroes the most perilous ordeal of their virtue; but, inasmuch as they are Christian heroes, and not pagan men, worshippers of false gods, whose fabled examples inculcated all these deeds of self-absorbing vain-glory, our heroes of a "better revelation" have no excuse for failing under their trial, and many there be who pass through it "pure and undefiled." Such were the great Alfred of England, Gustavus Vasa of Sweden, and his greater successor in true glory, Gustavus Adolphus,—all champions of immutable justice and ministers of peace. And though these may be regarded as personages beyond the sphere of ordinary emulations, yet the same principles, or their opposites, prevail in every order of men from the prince to the peasant; and, perhaps, at no period of the world more than the present were these divers principles in greater necessity to be considered, and, according to the just conclusion, be obeyed. On all

sides of us we see public and private society broken up, as it were by an earthquake: the noblest and the meanest passions of the human bosom at contention, and the latter often so disguised, that the vile ambush is not even suspected till found within the heart of the fortress itself. We have, however, one veritable touchstone, that of the truest observation, "ye shall know a tree by its fruits." Let us look round, then, for those which bear "good fruits," wholesome to the taste as well as pleasant to the sight, whether they grow on high altitudes or in the humbler valleys of the earth; let us view men of all degrees in life in their actions, and not in their pretensions,—such men as were some of the Sobieski race in Poland, in every change of their remarkable lives. When placed at the summit of mortal fame, surrounded by greatness and glory, and consequent power, they evinced neither pride to others nor a sense of self-aggrandizement in themselves; and, when under a reverse dispensation, national misfortunes pursued them, and family sorrows pierced their souls, the weakness of a murmur never sunk the dignity of their sustaining fortitude, nor did the firmness of that virtue harden the amiable sensibilities of their hearts.

To exhibit so truly heroic and endearing a portrait of what every Christian man ought to be,—for the law of God is the same to the poor as to the rich,—I have chosen one of that illustrious and, I believe, now extinct race for the subject of my sketch; and the more aptly did it present itself, it being necessary to show my hero amidst scenes and circumstances ready to exercise his brave and generous propensities, and to put their personal issues to the test on his mind. Hence Poland's sadly-varying destinies seemed to me the stage best calculated for the development of any self-imposed task.

There certainly were matters enough for the exhibition of all that human nature could suffer and endure, and, alas! perish under, in the nearly simultaneous but terrible regicidal revolution of France; but I shrunk from that as a tale of horror, the work of demons in the shapes of men. It was a conflict in which no comparisons, as between man and man, could exist; and may God grant that so fearful a visitation may never be inflicted on this world again. May the nations of this world lay its warnings to their hearts!

It sprung from a tree self-corrupted, which only could produce such fruits: the demon hierarchy of the French philosophers, who had long denied the being of that pure and Almighty God, and who, in the arrogance of their own deified reason, and while in utter subjection to the wildest desires of their passions, published their profane and polluted creed amongst all orders of the people, and the natural and terrible consequences ensued. Ignorant before, they became like unto their teachers, demons in their unbelief,—demons in one common envy and hatred of all degrees above them, or around them, whose existence seemed at all in the way of even their slightest gratification: mutual spoliation and destruction covered the country. How often has the tale been told me by noble refugees, sheltered on our shores from those scenes of blood, where infamy triumphed and truth and honor were massacred; but such narratives, though they never can be forgotten, are too direful for the hearer to contemplate in memory.

Therefore, when I sought to represent the mental and moral contest of man with himself, or with his fellow-men, I did not look for their field amongst human monsters, but with natural

and civilized man; inasmuch as he is seen to be influenced by the impulses of his selfish passions—ambition, covetousness, and the vanities of life, or, on the opposite side, by the generous amenities of true disinterestedness, in all its trying situations; and, as I have said, the recent struggle in Poland, to maintain her laws and loyal independence, against the combined aggressions of the three most powerful states in Europe, seemed to afford me the most suitable objects for my moral aim, to interest by sympathy, while it taught the responsible commission of human life.

I have now described the plan of my story, its aim and origin.

If it be disapproved, let it be at once laid aside; but should it excite any interest, I pray its perusal may be accompanied with an indulgent candor, its subjects being of so new, and therefore uncustomary, a character in a work of the kind. But if the reader be one of my own sex, I would especially solicit her patience while going through the first portion of the tale, its author being aware that war and politics are not the most promising themes for an agreeable amusement; but the battles are not frequent, nor do the cabinet councils last long. I beg the favor, if the story is to be read at all, that no scene may be passed over as extraneous, for though it begin like a state-paper, or a sermon, it always terminates by casting some new light on the portrait of the hero. Beyond those events of peril and of patriotic devotedness, the remainder of the pages dwell generally with domestic interests; but if the reader do not approach them regularly through the development of character opened in the preceding troubled field, what they exhibit will seem a mere wilderness of incidents, without interest or end; indeed I have designed nothing in the personages of this narrative out of the way of living experience. I have sketched no virtue that I have not seen, nor painted any folly from imagination. I have endeavored to be as faithful to reality in my pictures of domestic morals, and of heroic duties, as a just painter would seek to be to the existing objects of nature, "wonderful and wild, or of gentlest beauty!" and on these grounds I have steadily attempted to inculcate "that virtue is the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness; that vice is the natural consequence of grovelling thoughts, which begin in mistake and end in ignominy."