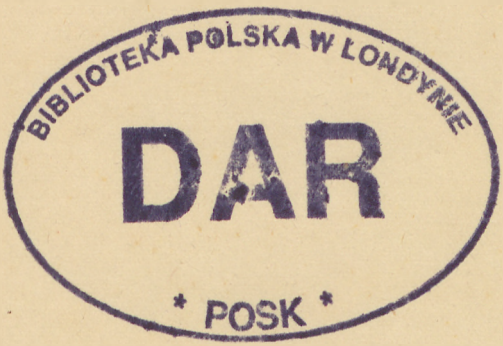
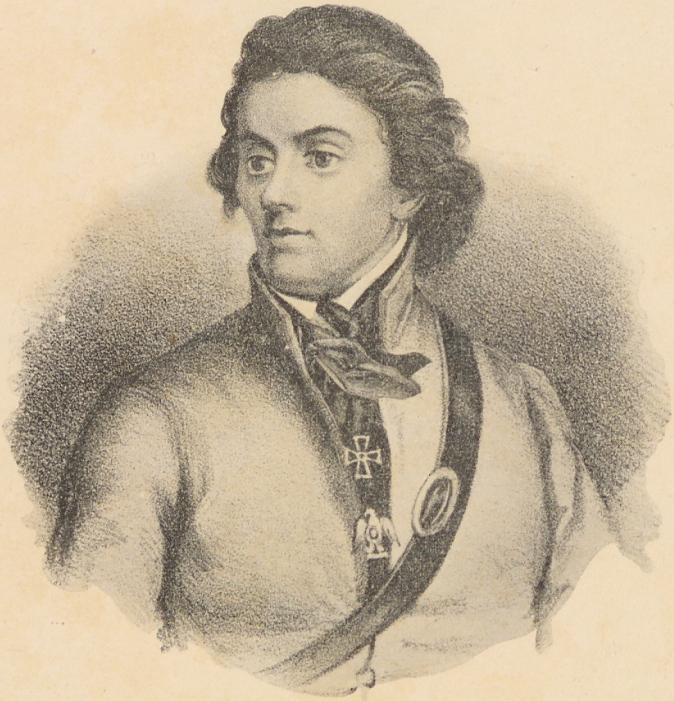


KOŚCIUSZKO

A Biography



Lith. of F. Michelin
180 *Fulton St.*

KOŚCIUSZKO

KOŚCIUSZKO

A Biography

by

MONICA M.
GARDNER

Revised Second Edition
Edited by
MARY CORBRIDGE

George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
LONDON

First published in 1920
Entirely revised and reset in 1942

Printed in Great Britain by the
WOODBRIDGE PRESS LTD., GUILDFORD

To

WIESŁAWA CICHOWICZÓWNA

I affectionately dedicate this
book upon the national hero
of her country

PREFACE

THE history of a life devoted to one cause often begins with an experience in youth which, seemingly unimportant, stirs a dominant chord in our essential being, and leaves a lasting memory: this memory may eventually become a deciding factor in the choice of interests and pursuits.

Such was the beginning of Monica Gardner's life-long study and work on Polish literature and history. As a young girl she came across a book on one of the phases of Poland's struggle for independence—the Rising of 1863. The all-sacrificing, desperate heroism of that fight appealed to her idealism, while the Polish defeat and the subsequent reprisals kindled her burning sense of justice. The impression was ineffaceable.

She began to study Polish, and through years of patient work acquired a complete mastery of the written language both in prose and poetry. When in 1911 she published her first book, a brilliant monograph on *Adam Mickiewicz, the National Poet of Poland,* she was already fully conscious of her vocation. In the preface to that book she writes: "By some strange turn of fate Mickiewicz, well known in other countries, suffers an equally inexplicable and a most regrettable neglect among us." She made it her life task to repair that regrettable neglect and to speak to her countrymen not only of Mickiewicz, but of Polish literature and national tradition in general. In it she sought and found values of eternal human interest. Mickiewicz was to her one of those who are "ever journeying . . . ever striving . . . to the far peaks of the highest things in life" (Preface).

The great Polish literature of the Romantic era held her attention for many years. The book on Mickiewicz was followed by an important monograph on the poet *Zygmunt Krasiński.* A corresponding study on Juliusz Słowacki which would have completed the trilogy on the great prophet poets of Poland was destined to remain unfinished. In *Poland, a study in National Idealism,* she gave a further exposition of national philosophy. Another book had for its subject *Henryk Sienkiewicz,* the author of *Quo Vadis,* and the first of Poland's two novelists to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

In the field of history Monica Gardner wrote a biography of *Kościuszko,* of which the present book is the second, revised edition, and another of *Queen Jadwiga,* Poland's venerated ruler at the end of the 14th century. *Stories from Polish History* and

the charming descriptive book *Poland* were intended for young readers.

Many articles on other Polish writers, editing work, and numerous translations, some as yet unpublished, complete the scope of her literary activities.

As an exponent of Polish culture in this country, Monica Gardner was the first to obtain free access to, and make full use of Polish sources and commentative literature, through a thorough understanding of the Polish language. Thus her approach to the subject was first hand and bears the hall mark of stalwart truth. She came to know and to understand the soul of Poland. The quality of her work secures for it a far more lasting position than is often that of pioneer books : her preparatory study is thorough, her treatment scholarly and conscientious, the exposition clear and well arranged, the style fastidious; her artistic sensitiveness, shaped outside the confines of English, on French and Italian literature, is vivid and critical. It is worth mentioning that even to-day, when younger scholars have taken up and organized Polish studies in this country and in America, Monica Gardner's works on Polish literature still retain their position unchallenged as almost unique studies on the subject from an English pen.

A new edition of her book on *Kościuszko* seems particularly suitable to-day. Kościuszko is the hero of Poland's first fight for freedom. The tragic failure of his and his nation's solitary and uneven struggle against the crime of the partitions had its immediate historic result in Prussia's growth to power. The lust for domination which asserted itself in that brutal dismemberment of Poland is now unleashed again: permitted by the blind indifference of Europe to go unhindered a hundred and fifty years ago, its rapacious claws are to-day stretched out once more, not over one country only, but over the entire globe.

The essential features of Kościuszko's character stand out well in Miss Gardner's study. He is a true pattern of a democrat in his unconditional, self-obliterating fidelity in the service of an Ideal, in his conception of social justice which was far advanced beyond that of his day, in his clear-sighted historical vision. The life of that champion in the cause of freedom for the Old and the New World is indeed well worth remembering in our world of Democracy which—as he did in the past—is fighting to-day in a life and death struggle against tyranny.

There is a tinge of the irony of fate in the fact that Monica Gardner who all through her life steered a lonely course battling with the indifference of the public and of the publishers, was called away at the moment when the storm of world events brought the object of her studies into prominence in this country, and her

services were sought after as never before. Nothing tied her to London except her work for Poland. But this she would not abandon. When the enemy aircraft was beginning to roar over the night sky of London, she used to sit down to her writing table and resume her work. "This is *my* form of war with Hitler"—she used to say. Death found her when the revision of this book was practically completed. She was killed by a German bomb in the big raid on London on April 17th, 1941.

With the true British spirit, she died at her post—a soldier's death.

MARY CORBRIDGE.

London, January, 1942.

CONTENTS

Note on the Pronunciation of Polish Names

c = ts, as the tz in Switzerland.

ć, ci + a vowel, c before i = a softened sound of English ch (as in cheat).

cz = a (hard) sound of English ch.

ch = strongly aspirated h, as in Scottish loch.

dz = d + z pronounced in very quick succession (cf. ts, above).

dzi + a vowel = a softened sound of English j (as in jam; cf. ci + a vowel, above).

j = as y in yeast, yes.

ł = a peculiarly Polish letter, pronounced by the majority of Polish speakers as the English w.

ń, ni + a vowel, n before i = a softened n, as in Bunyan.

ó = oo, as in mood.

rz = a (hard) sound as for s in measure, or the French j, as in Jean.

ś, si + a vowel, s before i = a slightly hissed and softened sound of sh.

sz = a (hard) sound of English sh.

w = v.

ż = rz, above.

zi + a vowel = a slightly hissed and softened sound as for s in measure (cf. si + a vowel, above).

The ending -wski, -wska is pronounced -fski, -fska, or simply -ski, -ska.

The names spelled in Polish with the letter ą as Dąbrowski, Kołłątaj, Zajączek, are spelled in this book as this letter is pronounced: Dombrowski, Kołłontaj, Zajonczek.

The stress in Polish falls almost invariably on the penultimate syllable.

Chapter One

The Youth of Kościuszko

THE great national uprisings of history have for the most part gone down to time identified with the figure of a people's hero: with some personality which may be said in a certain manner to epitomize and symbolize the character of a race. "I and my nation are one": thus Poland's greatest poet, Adam Mickiewicz, sums up the devotion that will not shrink before the highest tests of sacrifice for a native country. "My name is Million, because I love millions and for millions suffer torment." If to this patriotism oblivious of self may be added an unstained moral integrity, the magnetism of an extraordinary personal charm, the glamour of a romantic setting, we have the pure type of a national champion. Representative, therefore, in every sense is the man with whose name is immortally associated the struggle of the Polish nation for her life—Tadeusz Kościuszko.

Kościuszko was born on February 4, 1746, during Poland's long stagnation under her Saxon kings. The nation was exhausted by wars forced upon her by her alien sovereigns. Her territories were the passage for Prussian, Russian, and Austrian armies, traversing them at their will. With no natural boundaries to defend her, she was surrounded by the three most powerful states in Eastern Europe who were steadily working for her destruction. In part through her own impracticable constitution, but in greater measure from the deliberate machinations of her foreign enemies, whether carried on by secret intrigues or by the armed violence of superior force, Poland's political life was

at a standstill, her parliament obstructed, her army reduced. Yet at the same time the undercurrent of a strong movement to regeneration was striving to make itself felt. Far-seeing men were busying themselves with problems of reform; voices were raised in warning against the perils by which the commonwealth was beset. New ideas were pouring in from France. Efforts were being made by devoted individuals, often at the cost of great personal self-sacrifice, to ameliorate the state of the peasantry, to raise the standard of education and of culture in the country. Under these conditions, in the last years of the independence of Poland, passed the childhood and youth of her future liberator.

Kościuszko came of a class for which we have no precise equivalent, that ranked as noble in a country where at that time the middle classes were unknown, and where the ordinary gentry, so long as they had nothing to do with trade, showed patents of nobility, irrespective of means and standing. His father, who held a post of notary in his Lithuanian district and who owned more than one somewhat modest estate, was universally respected for his upright character, which, together with his aptitude for affairs, caused his advice and assistance to be widely sought through the district. Kościuszko spent his boyhood in the tranquil, wholesome, out-of-door life of the Lithuanian countryside. The home was the wooden one-storied dwelling with thatched, sloping roof and rustic veranda, in aspect resembling a sort of glorified cottage, that long after Kościuszko's day remained the type of a Polish country house. His upbringing was of the simplest and most salutary description. There was neither show nor luxury in his home. The family fortune had been left to his father in an embarrassed condition: his father's care and diligence had for the time saved it. The atmosphere that surrounded the young Kościuszko was that of domestic virtue, strict probity. He had before his eyes the example of the devoted married life of his parents. He went freely and intimately among the peasants on his father's property, and thus learnt the strong

love for the people that dictated the laws he urged upon his country when he became her ruler.

Unpretending as was his father's household, its practice was the patriarchal hospitality that marked the manners of the Poland of two hundred years ago, as it does to-day. Friends and relations came and went, always welcome, whether expected or unbidden. We have a delicious letter from Kościuszko's mother, Tekla, to her husband on one of the numerous occasions when he was away from home on business, in which, fondly calling him "my heart, the most beloved little dear Ludwik and benefactor of my life," she begs him to send her wine, for her house is filled with "perpetual guests," and will he try and procure her some fish, if there is any to be had, "because I am ashamed to have only rye-porridge on my table."[1]

She was a woman of remarkable force of character and practical capacity; it was she who gave Kościuszko his early education. Left a widow with four children under age, of whom Tadeusz was the youngest, she, with her clear head and untiring energy, managed several farms and skilfully conducted the highly complicated money matters of the family. Tadeusz's home schooling ended with his father's death when the child was twelve years old. He then attended the Jesuit college at the chief town in his district, Brześć. He was a diligent and clever boy who loved his book and who showed a good deal of talent for drawing. He left school with a sound classical training and with an early developed passion for his country. Already Timoleon was his favourite hero of antiquity because, so he told a friend fifty years later, "he was able to restore his nation's freedom, taking nothing for himself."

In 1763 the long and dreary reign of Augustus III, the last Saxon king of Poland, came to an end. Russian diplomacy, supported by Russian cannon, placed Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, the lover of Catherine II, upon the Polish throne in 1764. The year following, Kościuszko, an unknown boy of nineteen years of age whose destiny was

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*. Cracow, 1894; later edition, 1906.

strangely to collide with that of the newly elected and last sovereign of independent Poland, was entered in the Corps of Cadets, otherwise called the Military School, in Warsaw. Prince Adam Czartoryski, a leading member of the great family, so predominant then in Polish politics that it was given the name of "The Family" *par excellence*, frequently visited Lithuania, where he possessed immense estates. Young Tadeusz attracted his interest, and it was through his influence that the boy was placed in an establishment of which he was the commandant and which, founded by the King, who was related to the Czartoryskis, was under immediate Royal patronage. Technically speaking, the school was not a military academy, but the education was largely military and the discipline was on military lines. Above all, it was a school for patriotism.

The admission of the candidate was in the nature of a semi-chivalrous and national function, bearing the stamp of the knightly traditions of Poland. On the first day Kościuszko was formally presented to the commandant, to the officers and to the brigade to which he was to belong. He embraced his new comrades, was initiated into the regulations and duties of the life before him and examined upon his capabilities. On the following day he gave in his promise to observe the rules, and with a good deal of ceremony was invested with the deep blue uniform of the cadet. But this was merely the probation of the "novice," as the aspirant was termed. A year's test followed, and then if judged worthy the youth received in the chapel his final enrolment. All his colleagues were present in full dress carrying their swords. High Mass was sung, which the "novice" heard kneeling and unarmed. The chaplain then laid before him his high obligation to his country; subsequently the proceedings were adjourned to the hall or square, where the brigadier proffered the neophyte's request for his sword. With the brigadier's hand on his left arm, on his right that of the sub-brigadier—the sub-brigadiers being the senior students—the candidate was put through a string of questions, reminiscent of those adminis-

tered to a probationer taking the religious vows. One is typical: "Hast thou the sincere resolve always to use this weapon which thou art about to receive in defence of thy country and thy honour?" On the youth's reply, "I have no other resolve," arms were presented, drums rolled, and the senior officer girded the new soldier with his sword, and placed his musket in his hand to the accompaniment of moral formulas. The young man then made a solemn promise not to disgrace his comrades by any crime or want of application to his duties. Led to his place in the ranks, he presented arms, each brigade marched away, led by its brigadier, and the day concluded with a festive evening.

The catechism that the cadet learnt by heart and repeated every Saturday to his sub-brigadier—it was written by Adam Czartoryski—was of the same patriotic description. Next to the love of God it placed the love of country. "'Can the cadet fear or be a coward?" was one of its questions, with the response, "I know not how to answer, for both the word and the thing for which it stands are unknown to me." This was no mere ornamental flourish: for a dauntless courage is one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Polish race, whether of its sons or daughters. No opportunity was lost, even in the textbooks of the school, to impress upon the students' minds that above all their lives belonged to Poland. "You who have found your country in this most lamentable condition must people her with citizens ardent for her glory, the increase of her internal strength, her reputation among foreigners, the reformation of what is most evil in her government! May you, the new seed, change the face of your country." Thus the foreword of an encyclopædia that Adam Czartoryski wrote for these boys.

In this environment Kościuszko spent the most impressionable period of his youth. Even as a cadet he was distinguished not merely for his ability, but still more for his dogged perseverance and fidelity to duty. Tradition says that, determined to secure all the study that he could, he persuaded the night watchman to wake him on his way

to light the stoves at three in the morning by pulling a cord that Kościuszko tied to his left hand. Truth and sincerity breathed in his every act and word. The strength that was in him was tempered by that peculiar sweetness which was native to him all his life, and which in later manhood drew men as by magic to his banners, even as in his school-days it won the respect and love of his young comrades. The esteem in which his fellow-cadets held him is illustrated by the fact that on an occasion when they were mortally offended by some slight put upon them at a ball in the town they chose Kościuszko as their spokesman to present their grievances to the King, who took a personal interest in the school. Something about the youth attracted the brilliant, highly cultured sovereign, the man who wavered according to the emotion or fear of the moment between the standpoint of a patriot or of a traitor. After that interview he often sent for Tadeusz; and when Kościuszko passed out of the school as one of its head scholars or officers, he was recommended to Stanislas Augustus as a recipient of what we should call a State travelling scholarship.

In 1768 Kościuszko's mother died, leaving her two daughters married, the eldest, spendthrift, and favourite son out on his own, and Tadeusz still a cadet. With his mother's death Kościuszko's financial troubles began. For the greater part of his life he never knew what it was to have a sufficiency of means. His brother held the estate and apparently the control of the family money, that was no considerable sum and had in latter years diminished. Public affairs, moreover, were now assuming an aspect that threatened the very existence of Kościuszko's country. Catherine II's minister, Repnin, with Russian armies at his back, ruled the land. The Poles who stood forward in a last despairing attempt to deliver their country were removed by Russian troops to exile and Siberia. Then in 1768 rose under the Pułaski father and sons that gallant movement to save a nation's honour that is known as the Confederation of Bar. For four years the confederates fought in guerilla warfare all over Poland, in forest, marsh,

hamlet, against the forces of Russia which held every town and fortress in the country. These things were the last that Kościuszko saw of the old Republic of Poland. In the company of his friend Orłowski, who had been one of four cadets to receive the King's stipend, he departed from his country in 1769 or 1770 with the intention of pursuing his studies abroad.

Five years passed before Kościuszko saw his native land again. Very little is known to us of that stage of his history. It is certain that he studied in the school of engineering and artillery in Mézières and conceivably in the Ecole Militaire of Paris. He took private lessons in architecture from Perronet, and followed up his taste for drawing and painting. Sketches from his hand still remain, guarded as treasures in Polish national museums. French fortifications engaged his close attention, and by the time he left France he had acquired the skill in military engineering that saved a campaign in the New World and that defended Warsaw in the Old.

It is said that Kościuszko prolonged his absence abroad rather than return to see the enslavement of his country without being able to raise a hand in her defence. For in 1772 Russia, Austria, and Prussia signed an agreement to partition Poland between them, which, after a desperate resistance on the part of the Polish Diet, was carried out in 1775. Austria secured Galicia, Prussia a part of Great Poland and, with the exception of Toruń and Danzig, what was since known as "Prussian" Poland, while to Russia fell the whole of Lithuania.

All this Kościuszko watched from afar in helpless rage and bitterness of soul. His peace of mind was further destroyed by his increasing financial difficulties. Little enough of his share of his father's fortune could have remained to him, and he was in debt. The Royal subsidy had ceased when the treasury was ruined by reason of the partition of Poland. Moreover, Stanislas Augustus was never a sure source on which to rely when it came to the question of keeping a promise or paying his dues. The

greater part of Kościuszko's career is that of a man pitted against the weight of adverse circumstance. It was inevitable that he who threw in his lot with an unhappy country could have no easy passage through life. But even apart from the story of his public service his life was dogged by disappointment and harassing care.

Somewhere in the year 1774 he at last returned home. A youth of twenty-eight, possessed of striking talent and freshly acquired science, he now, with his fiery patriotism and character as resolute as ardent, found himself in the country that he panted to serve condemned to inaction of the most galling description. The King who had been his patron was the tool of Catherine II and through her of Russia. Russian soldiers and officials overran even that part of Poland which still remained nominally independent, but of which they were virtual masters. There was no employment open to Kościuszko. A commission in the small army that survived the partition was only to be had by purchase, and he had no money forthcoming. All that he could do was to retire into the country, while he devoted his energies to the thankless task of disentangling the finances that the elder brother, Józef Kościuszko, was squandering right and left. The relations between this riotous brother and Tadeusz, himself the most frugal and upright of youths, were so painful that the latter refused to remain in the old home that had not yet gone, as it did later, to Józef's creditors. He therefore in true Polish fashion took up his abode in the houses of different kinsfolk, often staying with his married sisters, and especially with that best beloved sister, Anna Estkowa. Between him and her there was always the bond of a tender and intimate affection, to which their letters, still preserved in Polish archives, bear eloquent testimony.

At this time occurred the first love affair of the hero, who never married. Among the manor-houses that Kościuszko visited was that of Józef Sosnowski. He was Kościuszko's kinsman and had been his father's friend. Tadeusz was a constant guest at his house, and with one of the daughters,

Ludwika, he fell in love. Various tender passages passed between them, without the knowledge of the parents but aided and abetted by the young people of the family, in an arbour in the garden. But another destiny was preparing for the lady. The young and poor engineer's aspirations to her hand were not tolerated by the father whose ambition had already led him into dealings that throw no very creditable light on his patriotism, and that had Kościuszko known he would certainly never have frequented his house. Over the gaming tables Sosnowski had made a bargain with his opponent, a palatine of the Lubomirski family, in which it was arranged that the latter's son should marry Ludwika Sosnowska. Getting wind of the Kościuszko romance, he privately bade the girl's mother remove her from the scenes; and when one day Kościuszko arrived at the manor he found the ladies gone.

The bitter affront and the disappointment to his affections were accepted by Kościuszko with the silent dignity that belonged to his character; but they played their part in driving him out of Poland. Whether the story that Ludwika fled to take refuge from the detested marriage imposed upon her in a convent, whence she was dragged by a ruse and forced to the bridal altar, as long afterwards she wrote to Kościuszko,[1] was a romantic invention of her own or an embroidery, after the fashion of her century, on some foundation of fact, it is impossible to say; but it is certain that through her unhappy married life she clung fondly to the memory of her first and young lover. At a critical moment in Kościuszko's career we shall find her stepping in to use her rank and position with Stanislas Augustus on his behalf.

With home, fortune, hopes of domestic happiness, all chance of serving his country, gone, Kościuszko determined to seek another sphere. He left Poland in the autumn of 1775.

Poverty constrained him to make the journey in the cheapest manner possible. He therefore went down the

[1] If the letter in question is authentic. See p. 32.

Vistula in a barge, one of the picturesque flat-bottomed craft that still ply on Poland's greatest river. On his way he would, observes his chief Polish biographer, have seen for the first time, and not the last, the evidence before his eyes that his country lay conquered as his boat passed the Prussian cordon over waters that once were Polish. Thus he came down to the port of Danzig, with its quaint old-world gabled buildings, then still Poland's, but which Prussia was only biding her time to seize in a fresh dismemberment of Polish territory.

Dead silence surrounds the following six months of Kościuszko's life. Every probability points to the fact that he went to Paris, where he had studied so long and where he had many friends and interests. America was endeavouring to enlist the help of France in her conflict with Great Britain. The air was full of the story of a young country striving for her independence; and it is not surprising that when next the figure of Kościuszko stands out clearly in the face of history it is as a volunteer offering his sword to the United States in the cause of freedom.

Chapter Two

The Fight for American Freedom

In the early summer of 1776 Kościuszko crossed the Atlantic on the journey to America that was then in the likeness of a pilgrimage to a wholly strange land. He found the country palpitating in the birth-throes of a nation rising to her own. Not only was she carrying on the contest with Great Britain by arms, but democratic resolutions, appeals for freedom for all men, were being read in the churches, proclaimed at every popular gathering. What a responsive chord all this struck in Kościuszko's heart we know from his subsequent history.

Kościuszko's best documented historian ruthlessly dismisses the story that he presented himself to Washington with the request that he might fight for American independence, and that in reply to Washington's query, "What can I do for you?" his terse reply was, "Try me." His first employment was in the old Quaker city of Philadelphia where, in company with another foreign engineer, a Frenchman, he was put to work fortifying the town against the British fleet's expected attack by the Delaware.

After some months of this work in Philadelphia, Kościuszko was taken over by Gates for the northern army, and sent to report upon the defences of Ticonderoga. Gates approved of his suggestion of planting a battery upon the summit of Sugar Loaf Hill; but at this moment Gates was relieved of his command, and Kościuszko's ideas were set aside for those of native Americans to whom his plan was an unheard-of innovation. The authorities soon saw their mistake. "For the love of God let Kościuszko return here,"

wrote Wilkinson when sent by the commander to inspect the work, "and as quickly as possible." But it was then too late. The English fleet was on Lake Champlain, and Kościuszko's design was vindicated by the British carrying it out themselves. He, meanwhile, was fortifying Van Schaick, with the result that the army of the States, retreating in disorder before Burgoyne, could retire on a safe position. Kościuszko's personal privations and discomforts were considerable. He did not so much as possess a blanket, and had perforce to sleep with Wilkinson under his. He was then sent on by Gates, who was again in command, to fortify the left bank of the Hudson. He chose the vicinity of Saratoga.

With justifiable pride the Poles point to the part played by their national hero in the victory at Saratoga which won for America her alliance with France and her recognition as an independent nation by Louis XVI. The Americans on their side freely acknowledged that Kościuszko's work turned the scale in their favour. Gates modestly diverted the flood of congratulations of which he was the recipient by the observation that "the hills and woods were the great strategists which a young Polish engineer knew how to select with skill for my camp"; and his official report to Congress states that "Colonel Kosciuszko chose and entrenched the position." Addressing the President of Congress at the end of the year 1777, Washington, speaking of the crying necessity of engineers for the army, adds: "I would take the liberty to mention that I have been well informed that the engineer in the northern army (Kosciuszko, I think his name is) is a gentleman of science and merit."[1] The plan of the fortifications that saved Saratoga is preserved in Kościuszko's own hand among Gates's papers, and traces of them could as late as 1906 be still discerned among beds of vegetables.

The question of the defence of the Hudson was now being agitated. West Point, the so-called Gibraltar of the Hudson, was chosen for its commanding position on the

[1] Jared Sparks, *Writings of George Washington.* Boston, 1847.

heights above the river, and the work of fortifying it was finally conferred, over the head of the French engineer, Radière, upon Kościuszko. "Mr. Kosciuszko," wrote McDougall, the general now in command of the northern army, to Washington, Gates being employed at the Board of War, "is esteemed by those who have attended the works at West Point to have more practice than Colonel Radière, and his manner of treating the people is more acceptable than that of the latter; which induced General Parsons and Governor Clinton to desire the former may be continued at West Point."[1] Washington acceded to McDougall's request and confirmed the appointment of the Pole, not only because he was the more able engineer, but especially, adds Washington, because "you say Kosciuszko is better adapted to the genius and temper of the people."[2] A few months later Washington ordered Kościuszko to submit his plans to the approval of an inferior officer. Kościuszko, who never sought distinction or pushed his own claims, did not permit himself to resent what was, in fact, a slight; but quietly went forward in his own thorough and painstaking manner with the business entrusted to him.

Kościuszko's work at West Point was the longest and the most important of his undertakings in the United States, and is inseparably connected in the American mind with his name. Nothing is now left of his fortifications; but the monument raised in his honour by the American youth, with the inscription: "To the hero of two worlds" remains a grateful tribute to his memory. That the military students of the United States can look back to West Point as their Alma Mater is in great measure Kościuszko's doing. When it was first resolved to found a training school in arms for the young men of the States, Kościuszko urged that it should be placed at West Point, and suggested the spot where it now stands.

He was at West Point for two years. Here, if we do not accept the legends and conjectures of former meetings, he met Washington for the first time. He had two thousand

[1] Jared Sparks, *Writings of George Washington.* [2] *Ibid.*

five hundred workmen under him, whom he treated with the courtesy and consideration that always distinguished his dealings with his fellow-men, whether his equals or subordinates. The story goes that with his own hands, assisted by his American workmen, he built himself some sort of shanty in the hope of one day receiving his own countrymen as his guests. It is a fact that, true to the Pole's passion for the soil, he laid out a little garden, still known as "Kościuszko's Garden," where he loved to spend his leisure hours, alone with his thoughts of Poland. Times were hard at West Point and provisions scanty. Washington himself could not sufficiently furnish his table, and Kościuszko naturally fared worse; but out of the pay that he could ill afford and from his own inadequate stores the Pole constantly sent provisions to the English prisoners, whose misery was extreme. It is said, indeed, that had it not been for Kościuszko's succour our prisoners would have died of want. Many years later a Pole, who collected the details of Kościuszko's American service, fell sick of fever in Australia. An English shopkeeper took him into his house and tended him as though he were his own—for the reason that he was a compatriot of the man who had saved the life of the Englishman's grandfather when the latter was a starving prisoner at West Point.

The West Point episode of Kościuszko's career came to its end in the summer of 1780, when he asked Washington to transfer him to the southern army. The motive of the request was that, without having given Kościuszko notice, Washington had removed a number of his workmen. The correspondence that passed between them was courteous but dry. The relations between the liberator of America and the champion of Poland's freedom were, indeed, never of the nature exacted by romance. They were confined to strict necessity, and held none of the affection that marked the intercourse of Gates and Nathaniel Greene with their Polish engineer. The precise reason of this is hard to fathom. It has been ascribed to Kościuszko's intimacy with Gates, Washington's adversary, or, again, to Koś-

ciuszko's extreme reserve—which latter conjecture, in view of the warm and enduring friendships that the hero of Poland won for himself in the New World, seems curious.

Gates, now nominated to the command of the southern army, had at once requested that Kościuszko should be sent to him. "The perfect qualities of that Pole," he wrote to Jefferson, "are now properly appreciated at headquarters, and may incline other personages to putting obstacles against his joining us; but if he has once promised we can depend upon him."

Washington gave the required permission, to which Kościuszko replied from West Point on August 4th:

"The choice your Excellency was pleased to give me in your letter of yesterday is very kind; and, as the completion of the works at this place during this campaign, as circumstances are, will be impossible in my opinion, I prefer going to the southward to continuing here. . . . I shall wait on your Excellency to pay due respects in a few days."[1]

A French engineer took Kościuszko's place, and the latter had not long left when the treachery of the new commandant of West Point, Arnold, was disclosed by the capture of André. Before Kościuszko had time to reach the southern army his old friend Gates was defeated at Camden, and in consequence disgraced. Nathaniel Greene, after Washington the greatest general of the American Revolution, was appointed his successor. While awaiting in the south Greene's arrival to take up his command Kościuszko was for some time among the planters. He thus saw the coloured slaves at close quarters, and was brought face to face with the horrors of the slave trade. It was probably then that he learnt that profound sympathy for the American negro which, seventeen years later, dictated his parting testament to the New World.

Through the whole campaign of the Carolinas, the most brilliant and the most hardly won of the American War, Kościuszko was present. When Greene arrived he found himself at the head of an army that was starving. His

[1] Jared Sparks, *Writings of George Washington.*

troops had literally not enough clothing required for the sake of decency. He was without money, without resources. He resolved to retire upon the unknown Pedee river. Immediately upon his arrival he sent Kościuszko up the river with one guide to explore its reaches and to select a suitable spot for a camp, charging upon him as great celerity as he could compass. Kościuszko rapidly acquitted himself of a task that was no easy matter in that waste of forest and marsh. In the words of an American historian: "The surveying of the famous Kościuszko on the Pedee and Catawba had a great influence on the further course of the campaign." The campaign was carried on in a wild country of deep, roaring rivers, broken by falls, and often visited by sudden floods. The frequently impassable swamps breathed out poisonous exhalations. Rattlesnakes and other deadly reptiles lurked by the wayside. The hardships were great that Kościuszko, together with the rest of the army, endured. There were no regular supplies of food, tents and blankets ran out, the soldiers waded waist-deep through rushing waters. Often invited to Greene's table, where the general entertained his officers with a kindliness and cordiality that atoned for the poor fare which was all that he could offer them, Kościuszko was regarded with strong affection and admiration by a man who was himself worthy of the highest esteem. Kościuszko's office, after the survey of the river, was to build boats for the perilous transport of the army over the treacherous and turbulent streams of the district. Greene writes: "Kościuszko is employed in building flat-bottomed boats to be transported with the army if ever I shall be able to command the means of transporting them."[1] The boats of Kościuszko's devising and other services of his contributed to the saving of Greene's army in the retreat from Cornwallis, which is among the finest exploits of the War of Independence. Greene triumphantly passed the Dan with Cornwallis on his heels, and thus definitely threw off the British pursuit. Kościuszko was

[1] William Johnson, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathaniel Greene.* Charleston, 1822.

then despatched to fortify Halifax, but was soon recalled to assist in the siege of Ninety Six, a fort built with heavy stockades originally as a post of defence against the Red Indians. The night before the siege began Greene with Kościuszko surveyed the English works. It was dark and rainy, and they approached the enemy so close that they were challenged and fired at by the sentries. The mining operations that Kościuszko directed were of an almost insuperable difficulty, and his Virginian militiamen struck. By his persuasive and sympathetic language Kościuszko rallied them to the work; but finally Greene abandoned the siege.

When the campaign changed to guerilla warfare Kościuszko fought as a soldier, not as an engineer. At the battle of Eutaw Springs, where the licence of the American soldiers pillaging the British camp and murdering the prisoners lost Greene a decisive victory, we hear of Kościuszko as making desperate attempts to restrain a carnage which horrified his humane feelings, and personally saving the lives of forty-one Englishmen. Peace and the defeat of Great Britain were in the air, but hostilities still dragged on, and Kościuszko fought through 1782 near Charleston with distinction. After the gallant Laurens had fallen, his post of managing the secret intelligence from Charleston passed to Kościuszko. "Kosciuszko's innumerable communications," says the grandson and biographer of Greene, "exhibit the industry and intelligence with which he discharged that service."[1] Kościuszko possessed all the Polish daring and love of adventure. He would sally forth to carry off the English horses and cattle that were sent to pasture under guard, protected by English guns from the fort. He succeeded in capturing horses, but the cattle were too closely protected. Or, accompanied by an American officer named Wilmot, he would cross the river to watch or harry the English on James' Island. One of these expeditions, when Kościuszko and his companion attacked a party

[1] George Washington Greene, *Life of Nathaniel Greene.* New York, 1871.

of English woodcutters, has the distinction of being the last occasion on which blood was shed in the American War. They were surprised by an ambuscade, and Wilmot was killed. At length Charleston fell. On December 14, 1782, the American army entered the town in a triumphal procession, in which Kościuszko rode with his fellow-officers, greeted by the populace with flowers and fluttering kerchiefs and cries of "Welcome!" and "God bless you!" Greene's wife, a sprightly lady who kept the camp alive, had joined him outside Charleston. Her heart was set on celebrating the evacuation of Charleston by a ball, and, although her Quaker husband playfully complained that such things were not in his line, she had her way. The ball-room was decorated by Kościuszko, who adorned it with festoons of magnolia leaves and with flowers cunningly fashioned of paper.

Peace with England was now attained. Kościuszko had fought for six years in the American army. The testimony of the eminent soldier in whose close companionship he had served, whose hardships he had shared, whose warmest friendship he had won, that of Nathaniel Greene, best sums up what the Pole had done for America and what he had been to his brother-soldiers. "Colonel Kosciuszko belonged"—thus Greene—"to the number of my most useful and dearest comrades in arms. I can liken to nothing his zeal in the public service, and in the solution of important problems nothing could have been more helpful than his judgment, vigilance and diligence. In the execution of my recommendations in every department of the service he was always eager, capable, in one word impervious against every temptation to ease, unwearied by any labour, fearless of every danger. He was greatly distinguished for his unexampled modesty and entire unconsciousness that he had done anything unusual. He never manifested desires or claims for himself, and never let any opportunity pass of calling attention to and recommending the merits of others."[1] All those who had been thrown

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

together with him in the war speak in much the same manner. They notice his sweetness and uprightness of soul, his high-mindedness and delicate instincts, his careful thought for the men under his command. Even Harry Lee ("Light Horse Harry"), while carping at Kościuszko's talents, to the lack of which, with no justification, he ascribes Greene's failure before Ninety Six, renders tribute to his engaging qualities as a comrade and a man. But Kościuszko's services did not in the first instance receive the full recognition that might have been expected from the new Republic. He alone of all the superior officers of the Revolution received no promotion other than that given wholesale by Congress, and was forced to apply personally to Washington to rectify the omission. In language not too cordial, Washington presented his request to Congress, which conferred upon Kościuszko the rank of brigadier-general with the acknowledgment of its "high sense of his long, faithful and meritorious services." The recently founded patriotic Society of the Cincinnati, of which Washington was the first president, elected Kościuszko as an honoured member. Its broad blue and white ribbon carrying a golden eagle and a representation of Cincinnatus before the Roman Senate, with the inscription: "Omnia relinquit servare Rempublicam," is often to be seen in the portraits of Kościuszko, suspended on his breast.

Kościuszko was now a landowner of American soil, by virtue of the grant by Congress of so many acres to the officers who had fought in the war. Friendship, affluence, a tranquil life on his own property, that most alluring of prospects to a son of a race which loves Mother Earth with an intense attachment, lay before him in the New World. To him nothing was worth the Poland that he had left as an obscure and disappointed youth.

For all these years his heart had clung to the memory of his native land. On the rocks of West Point he had walked in solitude under the trees of his garden, and sat by the fountain which is still shown, yearning with an exile's home-sickness for his country. At times, probably very

rarely in days of long and difficult transit and when communications for a fighting-line were doubly uncertain, letters crossed between Kościuszko and friends in far-off Poland. "Two years ago I had a letter from him," wrote Adam Czartoryski in 1778, as he requested his correspondent to ascertain from Benjamin Franklin what had become of the youth in whom he had been interested; "but from that time I have heard nothing of him." [1] Some sort of correspondence was carried on by Tadeusz with a friend and neighbour of his in his old home, Julian Niemcewicz, the poet and future politician, later to be Kościuszko's companion in the Rising and his fellow-prisoner and exile. Niemcewicz, wrote the Princess Lubomirska who had been Ludwika Sosnowska, to Kościuszko in America, "has told me that you are alive, he gave me your letter to read, and I in my turn hasten to tell you through Julian that in my heart I am unalterably and till death yours." [2]

The letter, the same in which the lady gives the remarkable account of her marriage to which we have already alluded, left Kościuszko cold. The first romance of his youth had naturally enough been driven off the field by stirring and strenuous action in a new hemisphere. He never married, but he was always markedly chivalrous and courteous to women, among whom he had warm friendships.

Now that the war had ended Kościuszko only waited to wind up his affairs in America, and then he could keep away from his country no longer. He started for Europe in July, 1784, landed in France, and reached Poland in the same year. From America he brought an enhanced attraction to the democratic ideas that were gaining vogue in Europe, and which had had a hold over him from his youth. Still more, he had seen with his own eyes the miracle of a national struggle. He had fought and marched side by

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

[2] *Op. cit.* While Korzon does not vouch for the authenticity of this letter, of which the original text has not been found, he considers that certain of its details lead to the belief that some such letter was in fact written.

side with ragged, starving, undisciplined, unpaid men who had carried off the victory against a powerful nation and a regular army. With that memory burnt into his soul, ten years later he led a more desperate throw for a freedom to him incomparably dearer—his country's.

Chapter Three

The Years of Peace

WHEN Kościuszko returned to his native land, that great wave of a nation's magnificent effort to save herself by internal reform, which culminated in the Constitution of the 3rd of May, was sweeping over Poland. Equality of civic rights, freedom of the peasant, a liberal form of government, political and social reforms of all descriptions, were the questions of the hour. The first Commission of Education to be established in Europe, the precursor of our modern Ministry of Education, that had been opened two years before Kościuszko left Poland, and on which sat Ignacy Potocki and Hugo Kołłontaj, both afterwards to be closely associated with Kościuszko in his war for national independence, was founding schools, refounding universities, and raising the level of education all through the country. Roads were built, factories started, agriculture and trade given fresh impetus. A literary and artistic revival set in, warmly encouraged by Stanislas Augustus, who gathered painters, musicians, and poets around him in his brilliant court. All this was done by a dismembered nation upon whose further and complete destruction the three powers that had already partitioned her were resolved.

Coincident with these last days of Poland's political existence that hold the tragic glory of a setting sun is the one tranquil span of Kościuszko's life. His sister's husband had managed his affairs so generously that his old home had been saved for him. Here Kościuszko for four years led the retired life which was most to his taste, that of a country farmer and landowner in a small way, his peace

only disturbed by the financial worries handed on to him by his brother.

Soldierly simplicity was the note of Kościuszko's rustic country home. The furniture of the small sleeping apartment consisted of a bed and by its side a table on which lay Kościuszko's papers and books, conspicuous among the latter being the political writings of the great contemporary Polish reformers—Staszyc and Kołłontaj—which to the Pole of Kościuszko's temperament were bound to be fraught with burning interest. His coffee was served in a cup made by his own hand; the simple dishes and plates that composed his household stock were also his work, for the arts and crafts were always his favourite hobbies. There was a garden well stocked with fruit-trees which was the delight of Kościuszko's heart. On a hillock covered with hazels he laid out walks, put up arbours and arranged a maze that wound so craftily among the thicket that the visitor who entered it found no easy exit. The maze may still be seen, together with the avenue of trees that was planted by Kościuszko himself. His interest in his domain was unfailing. When far away from home, in the midst of his military preoccupations, while commanding in the Polish army, he wrote minute directions to his sister on the importation of fresh trees, the sowing of different grains on the farm.

Although Kościuszko was an ardent farmer, his farm brought him no great returns; and this by reason of the sacrifices that he made to his principles. As a Polish landowner he had many peasants working on his property. By the legislation of that day, common to several countries besides Poland, these peasants were to a great extent under his power, and were compelled to the *corvée*. Such a condition of things was intolerable to Kościuszko. The sufferings of his fellow-men, equal rights for all, were matters that ever touched him most nearly. Many others of his countrymen were earnestly setting their faces against this abuse of serfdom and, even before the measure was passed by law, as far as possible liberating the serfs on their estates. That

at this time Kościuszko entirely freed some of his peasants appears certain. It was not then practicable to give full freedom to the remainder; but he reduced the forced labour of all the men on his property, and that of the women he abolished altogether. His personal loss was considerable. He was not a rich man. His stipend from America, for one cause or another, never reached him, and thanks to his brother his private means were in so involved a condition that he had to summon his sister to his help and contract various loans and debts.

This favourite sister, Anna Estkowa, lived not far, as distances go in Poland, from Kościuszko's home. She and her husband and son were often guests in Kościuszko's house, and he in hers. She frequently had to come to his rescue in housekeeping emergencies, and the correspondence between them at times takes a very playful note. "Little sister," or "My own dear little sister," alternates with the title used by the brother in jest: "Your right honourable ladyship." Or again he calls her by epithets remarkable to the English ear, but which in Lithuania are terms of close intimacy, and correspond to the rough and endearing language of a fondly attached brother and sister in our own country. He sends her a packet of China tea or a wagon filled with barley that was forced to turn back on account of the bad state of the roads; while she is requested to buy him "about four bottles of English beer: I will pay you back when I see you." Sometimes she is treated to a friendly scolding when she fails to fulfil Kościuszko's commissions to his liking. "Why did you not buy more almonds in their shells, or at least four spoons?" [1]

Kościuszko loved his retirement, and was happiest in his own cherished garden; but he by no means led the life of a hermit, and was fond of visiting the country houses of his friends in the sociable open-hearted manner of his race. His frank kindliness and courtesy made him a welcome guest; and the favourite amusement of the soldier who had gained fame in the New World was to play "blind man's

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko*, edited by L. Siemieński, Lwów, 1877.

buff" and other youthful games with the young people of the house. Although he lived far from the turmoil of publicity and out of the reach of events, his thoughts, as we know from his letters and from rough notes that exist in his handwriting, were much taken up with the crisis through which his country was passing. Education for the masses, a citizen army of burghers and peasants, were two of the reforms for which Kościuszko most earnestly longed, and in which, in advance of his epoch, he saw a remedy for crying evils. It was a moment when the attention of thoughtful men was riveted on great national problems, for the famous Seym was now sitting that from 1788 to 1791 was engaged in the task of framing for Poland the enlightened Constitution that, were it not for the armies of Prussia and Russia, would have saved her. One of its early enactments was the remodelling of the Polish army. Kościuszko's standing was now for the first time to be publicly recognized by the Government of his country, and his talent impressed into her service. His old love, the Princess Lubomirska, here reappears in his history, writing a letter to the King, with the request that Kościuszko should be given a military command. If to the modern reader it comes with something of a shock, as Korzon remarks, that a woman considered her intervention needed to push the claims of a soldier who had so greatly distinguished himself, we must remember that Kościuszko was then scarcely known in Poland. His service had been foreign; he belonged to a quiet country family that had nothing to do with affairs of state. Apart from the Princess's propaganda, Kościuszko's name was sent up for recommendation to the Seym, and the Lithuanian magnate who, among others, proposed it spoke before the assembly of Kościuszko as a man "who possesses high personal qualities, and, as he learnt to shed his blood for a foreign country, will assuredly not grudge it to his own." Kościuszko was present; and as he heard these words he politely rose from his place on a bench and bowed. Kościuszko was no frequenter of courts or lover of palaces; but his interests obliged him to

present himself to the King, who remembered him as the promising youth to whom his favour had been given when a cadet. The upshot of all this was that he received the commission of major-general in the Polish army on the 1st of October, 1789.

His first command was in the country districts of Great Poland, not far from the frontiers of that part of Poland which since the first partition had been under Prussian dominion. While busy training soldiers his thoughts turned often to his little estate which he had placed in the charge of his sister.

"See that the Dutch cheeses are made," he writes to her. "Please put in the grafts given me by Laskowski, and in those places where the former ones have not taken. Tomorrow sow barley, oats. Plant small birches in the walk immediately behind the building." [1]

In the course of his duties Kościuszko had constantly to make journeys to Warsaw on business. When there he entered into close relations with those noblest of Poland's patriots and reformers, Ignacy Potocki and Hugo Kołłontaj, both holding office under the Crown and employed in drawing up the reforms that the Great Diet was passing. Here, too, Kościuszko often saw his friend, Niemcewicz, who was bringing out patriotic plays and taking an active part among the enlightened political party. The high esteem in which Kościuszko was held, not merely by those who loved him personally but by men who only knew of him by repute, may be illustrated by a letter addressed to him, not then, but later, by Kołłontaj, in which the latter tells Kościuszko that words are not needed to express how much he prizes the friendship of one "whom I loved, honoured and admired before fate granted me to know you in person." [2]

In 1790 Prussia concluded a defensive and offensive alliance with Poland, which, as the sequel shows, she was prepared to break at the psychological moment, in order to secure Polish help in the probable Prussian war against an

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*
[2] *Letters of Hugo Kołłontaj.* Poznań, 1872.

Austrian-Russian coalition. Poland began to make ready for the field. Kościuszko was sent southwards, to Lublin, where he remained for the summer months. His employment was to train the recruits for approaching active service. Against the difficulties always to beset him throughout his career of lack of ammunition and want of funds, he devoted himself to his task with the energy and foresight that were customary with him. He was ordered in August to move to Podolia, on the frontiers of which the Russians were massing. He stayed in that district for many months until the July of 1791.

It is clear from various expressions in Kościuszko's letters, that the soldier, who was no longer young, was yearning for domestic happiness. And now, in the turmoil of warlike preparations, he fell in love with a girl of eighteen, Tekla Żurowska, the daughter of a noble owning two estates. The courtship between the general bordering on middle age—he was then forty-five—and this child in her teens has given us Kościuszko's love-letters, tender and playful, but not impassioned. The girl's family was staying in the town that was Kościuszko's headquarters, and so near Kościuszko's rooms that the lovers could watch each other from their windows. Seeing one of Kościuszko's officers leave his general's house in haste, Tekla, with the assurance of her years, wrote a rebuke to her lover for getting rid of his subordinates with greater speed than was seemly. Kościuszko replied by informing her what the business had been between himself and the soldier in question: "but I greeted him fine and politely, and if he went away quickly it was because he saw a great many unfinished papers before me." [1]

There was another Tekla on the scenes, Tekla Orlewska, a cousin of the first Tekla, whose friendship and sympathy were given both to Kościuszko and the girl he loved. "To the two Teklas" Kościuszko pens this letter.

"For the notebook sent me"—this to Tekla Żurowska—"I thank you very much, although it is somewhat undur-

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*

able, not suitable for use. 'Twas a pity for little hands to labour at such a passing thing: a pity to wear eyes out over so small a form of writing which it must overstrain the eyes to read: it would have been better instead to have written more. I know not to whom I must write, whether to the first Tekla or to the second; but what I do know is that I love the first and am the greatest friend to the second."

But although Tekla's mother warmly encouraged Kościuszko's cause, her father looked askance at his daughter's suitor: either on account of the disparity of age between them, or, which seems more probable, for the reason that Kościuszko possessed neither large estates nor a great family name. On one occasion Kościuszko, not finding himself pressed to make a longer stay under the Żurowski roof, took an early departure, telling Tekla that:

"It is always a bad thing for the uninvited to stay on. Through my natural delicacy I understood that I was one too many. . . . I kiss your little feet, and when you are dining with an Englishman and Frenchman forget not the Pole who wishes you well." [1]

But at times he attempted to keep the young lady in some sort of discipline.

"Going to dine two miles off"—the Polish mile, be it observed, is more than three times the length of ours—"is a very bad thing," not for herself, he hastens to add: "four miles for your delicate mother are too much, and I am afraid lest she should feel it. As for you, if it were eight, all the better." [2]

Again: "Please write more clearly, for I lose half of the pleasure; or if you will write in pencil, wet it in water, then the letters will not be rubbed out." [3]

The ill-founded rumour that in Kościuszko's youth he had intended to run off with Ludwika Sosnowska had reached the ears of Tekla's father. Certain enemies of Kościuszko's did their best to slander him yet further. The result was a scene of the sort more familiar a hundred

[1] *Op. cit.* [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

and fifty years ago than now: a girl throwing herself weeping at the feet of an enraged parent, the determination of the father remaining implacable. The history of it was duly handed on to the absent Kościuszko, who answered:

"I return you, but bathed with tears, your good-night." He charges Tekla not to let her mother, who regarded Kościuszko with sincere affection, fret herself sick over what has happened.

To Tekla's mother he wrote:

"I cannot, God knows, I cannot keep silence or send letters, for what I have heard and read has struck me like a thunderbolt. You do not bid me write again, my little mother"—here he uses one of the caressing untranslatable Polish diminutives. "I see that you have been prevailed upon by his [her husband's] persuasions. I see that I shall be parted from her for ever. . . . I will always act according to the bidding of the mother who is mine and the mother of her who will always be in my heart." [1]

He then went off to manœuvres. But the lovers had by no means given up hope. They continued their correspondence, and Kościuszko sent her father a formal request for her hand, to receive an unmitigated refusal, repeating the absurd charge that Kościuszko had intended to abduct the daughter. To this Kościuszko replied with dignity and respect. Żurowski's answer was to remove his family to his Galician estate, and the affair was finished.

Korzon notices that at the moment of Kościuszko's rebuff at the hands of his Tekla's father, who was after all nobody more than an ordinary landowner, the rejected suitor had several thousand soldiers under his command, and in days when wild and lawless acts were not unknown, and not difficult of execution in a country where conditions were unsettled and communications long, it would have been easy enough for him to have carried his way by sheer force. But outrage and violence against another's rights, defiance of law and honour, were foreign to Kościuszko's whole trend of character.

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*

It is said—and the story is attractive—that years later Tekla's hand was one of the first to cast earth on the mound raised to his memory in Cracow.

Chapter Four

The First Fight for Poland

In 1791, amidst an outburst of national rejoicing, was passed the Polish Constitution of the 3rd of May. Polish music and song have commemorated the day—to this hour the Polish nation dedicates each recurrent anniversary to its memory—when Poland triumphantly burst the shackles that were sapping her life and stood forth in the van of European states with a legislation that evoked the admiration of Burke, Walpole, and the foremost thinkers of the age. The old abuses were swept away. A constitutional and hereditary monarchy was established. Burghers were granted equal civic rights with the nobility, the condition of the peasants was ameliorated. Freedom was proclaimed to all who set foot upon the soil of Poland.

New life now lay before the transfigured Polish state. But an internally strong and politically reformed Poland would have dealt the death-blow to Russia's designs of conquest. Catherine II's policy was therefore to force back internal anarchy upon the nation that had abjured it, and to prevent the new Constitution from being carried into effect. She had in her hand a minority of Polish nobles who had no mind to part with their inordinate privileges that the new laws had abolished, and who regarded a liberal constitution with distrust and disfavour. At the Empress's instigation the chief of the malcontents, Felix Potocki, Xavery Branicki, and Severin Rzewuski, went to Petersburg to lay their grievances before her. Out of this handful of Polish traitors Catherine formed a confederation, supported by Russia; and in the spring of 1792 she

formally declared war upon Poland. Such is the tragic story of the Confederation of Targowica, the name that has gone down to odium in the history of Poland, its members held as traitors by Polish posterity and by the majority of their contemporaries.

While events were thus hurrying on in his country Kościuszko, himself ready to strain every nerve in her cause, wrote in the April of 1792 to his friend, Michał Zaleski:

"I well know and am convinced of your character, heart and patriotism; but, as your talents, judgment, wit, and general knowledge of law are well known, so I should wish that you would be of assistance to your country. . . . It is a sure fact that every citizen, even the most unimportant and least instructed, can contribute to the universal good, but he to whom the Almighty has given understanding of affairs greater than that of others . . . sins when he ceases to be active. . . . We all ought to unite in one aim: to release our land from the domination of foreigners, from the abasement and destruction of the very name of Pole. . . . Let there be universal education. . . . On ourselves depends the amendment of the government, on our morals; and if we are base, covetous, interested, careless of our country, it is just that we shall have chains on our necks, and we shall be worthy of them."[1]

Through the spring of 1792 Kościuszko was preparing the division of the army under his command for the war with Russia. His were still the heart-burnings that he was to experience whenever he was at the head of men, those of a commander who had neither sufficient soldiers, ammunition, nor provisions. On the 21st of May the King delivered a stirring speech to the Diet. "You behold deeds," he said, alluding to the Confederation of Targowica, "that aim at the destruction of the authority and existence of the present Diet and of the restoration of our entire independence. You behold the open support of those compatriots who are committing violence against the welfare and will of our country. You behold, therefore,

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

the indispensable necessity that we should prepare as best we can by every measure to defend and save our country. Whatever, honourable Estates, you are pleased to resolve I will not only accede to, but I hereby declare that I will take my place in person wheresoever my presence shall be called for." Probably those of his audience who knew the King best took his words at their true value.

On May 22nd the Russian army crossed the frontier. Poland appealed to the terms of her treaty with Prussia, and requested the Prussian state to come to her assistance. Prussia threw off the mask and disavowed her treaty obligations; and the Poles were left to their own resources. The division of the Polish army which defended Ukraine was hopelessly outnumbered, ill-prepared, badly armed: numbers equalled, according to Kościuszko's computation, one single column of the Russian army; it was pitted against seasoned soldiers, trained in successful war; but the fire of patriotism ran high through its ranks. The commander-in-chief was young Józef Poniatowski, the nephew of the King. He was to become one of the most popular of Poland's heroes, as the brilliant leader of a Polish army during the Napoleonic wars; but at this moment he was a youth of twenty-eight, whose military knowledge was wholly negligible, and who owed his high position to his family connections. The only Polish general who had any experience of war was Kościuszko, who on this account had some differences with the prince during the course of hostilities; and with Kościuszko, for all Poniatowski's devoted service of his country, rests the chief fame of the Ukraine campaign.

The story of that two months' campaign is one of a gallant struggle of a little army, now winning, now losing, inflicting losses upon a superior enemy, but driven back by overwhelming numbers. During all these weeks of desperate fighting Kościuszko's bravery and skill often saved the critical moment. In his dispatches to the King, whose arrival in the Polish camp was daily looked for, and who never came, Poniatowski praises Kościuszko as doing great

service, "not only by his courage, but also by his singular prudence." On one occasion when the Polish army was in danger of annihilation, he thrust back the attack of the whole Russian army with heavy loss to the Russians. It was, thus Poniatowski declares in his report to the King, thanks "to the good and circumspect dispositions of General Kościuszko that our retreat was continued in unbroken order." The subsequent safe passage of the army over the river is again ascribed to Kościuszko. But the battle of Dubienka, fought on the banks of the Bug between the marshes of Polesie and Galicia, saw the end of that stage of his nation's hope for freedom.

Kościuszko has left a manuscript account, written in the nature of a rough sketch, of the Ukraine campaign.[1] It passed into the keeping of Stanislas Potocki, one of the great pioneers of educational reform in Poland, not to be confounded with his ill-famed namesake, Felix Potocki. In it Kościuszko gives with brevity and characteristic modesty the account of the battle: how, with Poniatowski unable to render assistance, and the safety of the whole Polish army depending upon Kościuszko, "left to himself," to cite his own words—he invariably employs the third person—he threw up defences and prepared for the Russian attack. Through the day of July 18th he stood with his small force, repelling the enemy with sanguinary loss to the latter. One of his officers who fought by his side told afterwards how he had seen Kościuszko in the hottest fire calm and collected as though taking a stroll. The battle only closed when towards evening the Russian commander, Kachowski, fell upon the Poles from the side of Galicia, so that, hopelessly outnumbered, they were compelled to retreat. The retreat through the forest on a pitch-dark night was led by Kościuszko, says an eyewitness, "with the utmost coolness and in the greatest order," directing an incessant fire on the pursuing Russians that told heavily upon them. Kniaziewicz, Kościuszko's friend, later one of the distinguished

[1] Printed in Edward Raczyński's *Pictures of Poles and of Poland in the Eighteenth Century.* Poznań, 1841.

leaders in Napoleon's Polish Legions, here played a gallant part.

It has been pointed out that the honours of the day fell, not to the winner of the field of Dubienka, but to the vanquished: to Kościuszko, not to the Russian general, Kachowski. Pole and Russian alike speak of the valour that fought on, refusing defeat till hope was no more. The immediate result so far as Kościuszko was personally concerned was the acknowledgment of his services by the King in the shape of promotion and the nomination he greatly desired to the command of one of the chief regiments in the Polish army, with all the affluence that these rewards bestowed upon a man who had never hitherto enjoyed wealth. His fame, too, travelled beyond the confines of his country, and the Legislative Assembly in Paris conferred upon him the title of Citizen of France.

But the battle of Dubienka was only a week old, and the army was eager for fresh action, when the King gave in his adherence to the Confederation of Targowica; in other words, sold himself and his nation to Russia. The echoes of his speech to the Diet, calling upon the nation to fight till death, vowing that he was ready to make the sacrifice of his own life should his country need it, were still in the ears of those who had heard it. The army had waited in vain for him to place himself at its head; then Catherine II threatened him, and as usual he dared not disobey. "Yielding to the desire of the Empress," he told his subjects, "and to the necessities of the country," he condemned the proceedings of the long Diet in which he had recognized the salvation of Poland at that one great moment of his life when he had thrown in his lot with the noble party of patriotic reform; and now, as the mouthpiece of Catherine II, he pronounced the nation's only safety to lie with the promoters of Targowica. The most favourable view of Stanislas Augustus's conduct has little more to urge in his favour than that he was neither a fool nor a hero, saw no hope of success in the national movement, and preferred to throw in his lot with the other side. It was on

the 23rd of July that the King signed the Confederation of Targowica. The news fell as the sentence of death upon the Polish camp that was palpitating with patriotic ardour. In the presence of all his officers Poniatowski wrote to the King as plainly as he dared: "News is here going through the camp which surely must be spread by ill-disposed men who wish evil to Your Majesty, as though Your Majesty would treat with the betrayers of our country. The degradation of cringing to the betrayers of our country would be our grave." [1]

The army was, however, bidden by the King to lay down arms, and was recalled to Warsaw. "It is impossible to express the grief, despair, and anger against the King," wrote Kościuszko several months later as he collected his memories of the campaign in the manuscript notes referred to above. "The Prince-General himself gave proof of the greatest attachment to the country. All recognized the King's bad will, since there were still means of defeating the Russian army." Kościuszko was present at one of the conferences held after the arrival of the Royal mandate between the Polish commander and Kachowski; and he could not restrain tears of wrath as he took stock of the Russian officers whom he was convinced that, were it not for treachery at headquarters, Poland could have overcome. Honour forbade the Polish officers to retain their commissions any longer in a service that was no more national, but that was in the domination of Russia and of those who were playing into her hands. On the march back to Warsaw, Poniatowski sent in his resignation to the King, and on another page of the same document Kościuszko—followed by hundreds of others—in a few laconic words laid down his tardily and hardly won command.

"Since," his note runs, "the change in the national conditions are contrary to my original oath and internal convictions, I have the honour to request Your Royal Majesty for the favour of signing my resignation."

"TADEUSZ KOŚCIUSZKO."

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

"We have sent our notes to the King," writes Kościuszko to his warm friend, Adam Czartoryski's wife, to whom he poured out the wounds of his heart, bleeding at the sight of the terrible danger under which his country was being submerged, "requesting for our resignations, and for this reason, that in time we may not be drawn into an oath against our convictions, that we may not be colleagues of those three [Branicki, Felix Potocki, and Rzewuski], and for fear that the King, if we requested later on for our resignations, will by that time not have the power to grant them to us. Therefore, we wish to secure ourselves, declaring to the King that if there is nothing against the country in these negotiations [with Russia], and if those personages will not be in the army, then we will serve, and withdraw our resignations. I expect to be in Warsaw this week, where I shall assuredly find out something more certain about this change. . . . Oh, my God! why wilt Thou not give us the means of rooting out the brood of the adversaries of the nation's happiness? I feel unceasing wrath against them. Day and night that one thought is forced upon me, and I shudder when I think what end may befall our country." [1]

He reached Warsaw, and was summoned by the King to an audience. Then a dramatic scene took place. The plain, reserved soldier, the Puritan patriot as a Polish historian calls him, was confronted with the monarch who was a trained orator, to whom elegance of dress and manner were a study of moment, whose handsome face and captivating address had won him the favour—a fatal gift for Poland—of the Semiramis of the North. Against every cajolement of one who was an adept in the arts of blandishment, promise and flattery, Kościuszko had but one argument: that of the straightforward devotion that saw his country outraged, and that would accept no compromise where duty to that country and to his own honour were concerned. In his boyhood Kościuszko had been in marked manner dependent on the King's favour. Now—as at a later crisis in their mutual relations—it is clear that, however out-

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

spoken his language to his sovereign, Kościuszko never forgot a subject's respect. Let him tell what passed in his own words:

"The King strongly urged me, sought to persuade, to convince me, finally sent me ladies known as being in relations with him, if only we would not abandon him and would not insist on our resignations. I always gave him the same unvarying answer, shattering all his arguments, so that he was at times embarrassed how to answer me. At last with tears I told him that we had deserved some consideration, fighting for our country, for the state, for Your Royal Majesty, and that we will never act against our convictions and our honour. . . . No one has yet chosen publicly to proclaim those scoundrels as infamous traitors. I alone have said this openly in the presence of the King, to which he answered: 'Leave them to their shame.'"[1]

Kościuszko thus remained master of the situation. Stanislas Augustus was silenced before an integrity that would not bend before him. On August 17th the Russian army entered Warsaw as conquerors. The King was virtually a prisoner, for whom neither side felt compassion or respect, in the hands of Russia. By a rescript of Catherine II the Polish army was drafted into small divisions and scattered through the country, thus rendered powerless. The reforms of the Constitution were set aside. Russia ruled the country behind her puppets, the leaders of Targowica. The second partition was only a question of time.

Radom was designated to Kościuszko as his headquarters; but his determination to serve no more under the betrayers of his country held firm. He remained two months longer in Warsaw in an abandonment of grief, choosing to seclude himself within walls rather than see the streets of the capital of Poland under the Russian heel. "He lives," reported the French Ambassador Descorchas, "with the sorrowful conviction that having faithfully served

[1] *Op. cit.*

his country he could not save her." [1] He received the news of the honours bestowed on him by the French government with an icy indifference bordering on discourtesy.[2] The last piece of business with which he concerned himself in the official capacity he was surrendering for honour's sake was to recommend to the King's notice several officers, including Kniaziewicz, for their gallantry in the late war. Amidst his heavy anxieties he made time to write to a friend, whose name we do not know, but who, to judge from the letter's closing words—"I bid you farewell embracing you a thousand times with the most tender affection for ever"—was one very dear to Kościuszko, begging him to relieve the necessities of some individual whose position in Warsaw without means had aroused the writer's pity.[3]

"Watering my native soil with my tears,"—thus he writes to Felix Potocki, in an outburst of the patriotic indignation that even his enemies respected—"I am going to the New World, to my second country to which I have acquired a right by fighting for her independence. Once there, I shall beseech Providence for a stable, free, and good government in Poland, for the independence of our nation, for virtuous, enlightened, and free inhabitants therein." [4]

He fell sick for sorrow at the thought of his nation's future. From his bed he wrote to Michał Zaleski, acquainting him with his intention of leaving Poland.

". . . . I shall enter no foreign service, and if I am forced to it by my poverty then I shall enter a service where there is a free state—but always with an unchanging attachment to my country which I might serve no longer, as I saw nothing to convince me of the amelioration of the government or that gave any hope for the future happiness of our country in the measures at present taken"—meaning, of course, under the rule of the Confederation of Targowica. "I would not enter into undertakings of which the end is unknown: I feared lest, if only indirectly, I should contribute to the unhappiness of the nation. I do

[1] W. T. Kozłowski, *Kościuszko's Mission to Paris in* 1793.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Letters of Kościuszko.* [4] *Op. cit.*

not doubt that there are men who are trying to serve their country, but I know not if they can, and if they are in the way of doing it. With my whole heart and soul I long that some one experienced in affairs could enlighten me, for I am in the darkness of night."[1]

Told in the light of subsequent events, from standing ground removed from the passion and confusion of a present strife, with, moreover, the diplomatic intrigues of Russia and Prussia laid open before our eyes by modern research, the issues of this period of Poland's history are intelligible enough; but to the combatants in the arena the line was not so defined. Some among the Poles of the period, even including men of no mean capacity, wavered as to whether Catherine II were not genuinely prepared to guarantee a free Poland under Russian protection. The leaders of Targowica have been branded with the name of traitors, and justly; but it seems as though they proceeded rather as hotheaded and unpatriotic malcontents than with the deliberate intention of betraying their country. Kościuszko was ill-versed, either by nature, training, or inclination, in the art of politics; but through this tangled web of perplexity and uncertainty, when present and future were equally enveloped in obscurity, his singleness of aim supplied him with the unerring instinct with which through the whole of his life he met and unmasked the pitfalls that were spread before the unhappiest and the most cruelly betrayed of nations. Under the dictates of this pure patriotism he directed himself unfalteringly through the most difficult and involved hours of his nation's history, allowing neither friendship, tradition, nor personal advantage to obscure for one moment the great object he had at stake—his country's good. He now laid down high rank, parted with fortune upon which his hand had barely had time to close, and prepared to face an uncertain future in a foreign land. On the eve of his departure from Poland he wrote to Princess Czartoryska:

[1] *Ibid.*

"I was faithful to my country; I fought for her and would have offered myself a hundred times to death for her. Now it seems as if the end of my services for her is at hand; perhaps this uniform which I am wearing will be the badge of shame. . . . I kiss your hands which have often dried tears shed for our country." [1]

Before leaving his native land, as far as he knew for ever, he sent, together with his farewell to the sister whom he never saw again, his last disposition of the home to which his heart clung with deep affection, and which was to be his no more. He bequeathed it to her, leaving her at liberty to bequeath it to whom she chose, but under the condition that the peasants from every house in the whole estate shall not do more than two days of forced labour for the men, and for the women none at all. "If it were another country where the government could ensure my will, I would free them entirely; but in this country we must do what we are certain of being able to do to relieve humanity in any way, and always remember that by nature we are all equals, that riches and education constitute the only difference; that we ought to have consideration for the poor and instruct ignorance, thus bringing about good morals. . . . Farewell! I embrace you with the tenderest heart."

He adds in a postscript: "Let [her son] give his children a good republican education with the virtues of justice, honesty, and honour." [2]

The letter has come down to us with its small clear handwriting, a few words in the postscript erased with the scrupulous neatness of the whole document. We can best realize how near the condition of the peasants lay to Kościuszko's heart when we reflect that it filled his parting communication to his sister, written at the moment when, full of sorrow and anxiety, he was going into the unknown road of exile. He left Poland in October, having won, says Korzon, the esteem of friend and foe alike. Before crossing the frontier into what was Polish soil, but since Austria

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.* [2] *Op. cit.*

had taken possession of it at the first partition was politically recognized as Poland no longer, he unbuckled his sword and, lifting his hands to heaven, prayed that he might be given once again to draw it in the defence of his dearly loved land.

Chapter Five

The Eve of the Rising

In Galicia, Kościuszko was welcomed by a crowd of sympathizers. The Czartoryskis, then residing on their Galician estates, showed him such marked proofs of their admiration that it was even said, without foundation, that Princess Czartoryska destined Kościuszko for the husband of one of the princesses. A married daughter drew his portrait, inscribing it, after the taste of the epoch, with the words: "Tadeusz Kościuszko, good, valiant, but unhappy." On his feast-day, October 28th, the ladies of the family presented him with a wreath woven of leaves from an oak planted by the Polish hero with whose name Kościuszko's is often coupled: Jan Sobieski, the deliverer of Christendom. At the banquet held on this occasion was present, not only Kościuszko's friend, Orłowski, like him banished and for the same reason, but a young son of the house who had fought in the recent Russo-Polish war, Adam Czartoryski, soon to be removed by Catherine II's orders as a hostage to the Russian court, and who in later life was one of the principal and noblest figures in Polish politics of the nineteenth century. We shall see his path again touching Kościuszko's at a critical juncture in the history of their nation.

The bitterness of an exile's wanderings, so familiar to the generations of Poles that followed through the unhappy years of the succeeding century, was now to be tasted by Poland's national hero. The Austrian Government took alarm at the evidences of popularity that were showered upon him. The Russian Government would not have his

presence near the Polish frontiers. On December 5th he was given notice by the Austrian authorities to quit the country within twelve hours.

"I am grieved to leave beloved Poland, my friends and so many hearts that were good to me," sadly writes Kościuszko. Secret police were opening letters sent by the post, so Kościuszko protected his correspondence by various precautions, a fictitious name and confidential messengers. "Bieda"— misfortune—was the pseudonym by which Kościuszko, his heart heavy with foreboding for his country and grief at her loss, signed himself as he set out for a foreign land. Cracow lay in his route. He tarried a few days in the beautiful old city that is the sepulchre of Poland's kings, and where he was after death to lie in the last resting-place of those whom his nation most honours. Thence he journeyed to Leipzig.

In Leipzig were the men of the nation whose minds and aims were in the closest sympathy with his. Kołłontaj, Ignacy and Stanislas Potocki, and the band of Poles who had been responsible for the drawing up of the Constitution of the 3rd of May, had gathered together in the Saxon city out of reach of Russian vengeance, where they could best concert measures for saving Poland. In January, 1793, the news reached them that Prussia, whose attitude in regard to treaties is no recent development, had helped herself to Great Poland, and to Toruń and Danzig, which she had so long coveted, while Russia took the south-east provinces of Poland and part of Lithuania.

But the camp of Polish patriots in Leipzig would not give Poland up for lost. "She will not remain without assistance and means to save her," wrote Kołłontaj. "Let them do what they will; they will not bring about her destruction." "Kościuszko is now in Paris"—this was early in 1793. "That upright man is very useful to his country."[1]

It was to France, which had won Kościuszko's heart in his youth, and whose help he had seen given to America

[1] *Letters of Hugo Kołłontaj.*

in the latter's struggle for her freedom, that he now made his way to beg a young Republic's assistance for his country. He was not a diplomat himself; the frankness with which he always spoke was well known: but Kołłontaj and Ignacy Potocki were behind him with their instructions. Fortune never favoured Kościuszko. He arrived in Paris shortly before the execution of Louis XVI. Albeit his principles and sympathies were passionately democratic such an act and the terror that followed it would have inspired a man of his stamp with nothing but horror and condemnation. The European coalition was formed against France: and Poland was forgotten. The second partition was effected in a Europe convulsed with war, that little noticed and scarcely protested against the dismemberment of a European state and the aggrandizement of two others, with its fatal consequence of Prussia's rise to power. The tale of the scene in the Diet of Grodno, convoked under the compulsion of the Russian armies to ratify the partition, is well known: how the few deputies who consented to attend sat with Russian cannon turned upon them, while Russian troops barred all the exits of the hall and carried off by night to Siberia those members who protested against the overthrow of their nation: how the group of Poles, deprived of all other means of defending their country, opposed an absolute silence to every proposal of their enemies, till the deed was signed that left only a shred of territory, in its turn doomed to fresh destruction, to the Republic of Poland.

From Lebrun, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kościuszko succeeded in winning the promise of financial assistance in the war for Polish independence that the national party was projecting; but shortly after his interview with Kościuszko Lebrun lost liberty and office. With Danton Kościuszko would have nothing to do, and in the sanguinary scenes of the Terror all public traces of the Pole are lost. Apparently he had no dealings with Robespierre or with any of the men who then sat in the French revolutionary tribunals. How strongly he abhorred their manner

of revolution is proved not only from expressions he let drop during his own dictatorship, but still more by his mode of proceeding when he himself was responsible for a new government of state.

Seeing that there was no prospect of gaining anything for Poland from France, Kościuszko remained in seclusion during his further stay in Paris, writing in the blood-stained city the record to which we have already alluded of the national war in which he had lately fought. In this work he freely criticizes all the errors on the part of its leaders which he had seen, and in vain pointed out to Poniatowski, during its course; but nothing could shake his conviction that the Polish cause could have triumphed. "If," he writes, "the whole army had been assembled beyond the Vistula with volunteers and burghers from the cities of Warsaw and Cracow, it would have risen to sixty thousand, and with a king at its head, fighting for its country and independence, what power, I ask, could have conquered it?" He refers to the sights he had beheld in the American War as a proof of what soldiers could do without pay, if animated by enthusiasm for a sacred cause. That patriotic fire, says he, burned as brightly in his own country: the Polish soldier, the Polish citizen, were equally ready to sacrifice all. "The spirit was everywhere, but no use was made of their enthusiasm and patriotism. . . . The weakness of the King without military genius, without character or love of his country, has now plunged our country, perhaps for ever, into anarchy and subjection to Muscovy."[1]

Thus wrote Kościuszko in the day when a peasant soldiery was unknown in Poland; and a few months later he was leading his regiments of reapers and boatmen to the national Rising.

There was nothing more for him to do in Paris. He was warned against going to England, for Kołłontaj received a broad hint from the British representative in Saxony that Kościuszko's presence would be both unwelcome to George

[1] MS. of Kościuszko in *Pictures of Poles and of Poland in the Eighteenth Century*, by Edward Raczyński.

III and profitless to the Polish cause. Kościuszko may then have gone on from France to Brussels, but in the summer of 1793 he was back in Leipzig in close consultation with Ignacy Potocki.

The condition of Poland was by now lamentable. Her position was that of a nation at the mercy of a foreign army. Russians garrisoned Warsaw, and their cannon dominated its streets. Poles were arrested in their own houses at the will of their Russian conquerors, and despatched to distant parts of Russia. Hidden confederations were being carried on all over Poland, preparing to rise in defence of the national freedom. In the teeth of the Russian garrison and of Catherine II's plenipotentiary, Igelstrom, Warsaw sent secret emissaries to the scattered remnants of the Polish army; and in the conferences that were held at dead of night the choice of the nation fell upon Kościuszko as the leader above all others who should avenge the national dishonour and wrest back at the point of the sword the independence of Poland. In the beginning of September, 1793, two Polish delegates carried the proposal to him where he still remained in Leipzig.

The great moment in the life of Tadeusz Kościuszko had now arrived. His fiery and enthusiastic soul leapt to its call; but with none of the headlong precipitance that would have been its ruin. Kościuszko was too great a patriot to disdain wariness and cool calculation. He never stirred without seeing each step clearly mapped out before him. He took his counsels with Potocki and his other Polish intimates in Saxony; then formulated his plan of the Rising. Each district of Poland and Lithuania was to be under the command of some citizen who would undertake secretly to muster the inhabitants to arms. The people could choose their own officers. Special insistence was laid on the duty of calling the peasants to the war. The Polish peasant had hitherto been counted incapable of bearing arms. Kościuszko overrode this ancient prejudice with results that have given one of its finest pages to the history of Poland.

He sent round messengers to the different provinces of Poland and Lithuania carrying his letters and instructions. He then went alone with his confidant Zajonczek to the Polish frontiers for the purpose of collecting information and sent Zajonczek, under a false name, to Warsaw. The report Zajonczek gave to Kościuszko on his return was not satisfactory. Matters were not as yet ripe for the undertaking. Financial means in the widespread ruin that had come upon Poland through the overrunning of her territories by a hostile soldiery were lacking, in spite of the private generosity of such a donor as the Warsaw banker, Kapostas. The difficulties of getting together a fighting force when Russian soldiers, closely supervising every movement of the Poles, occupied the country and the Polish divisions had been purposely drafted to great distances from each other by the Empress, were almost insuperable. The peasant rising upon which Kościuszko had built his best hopes was unprepared. But two elements remained that should, as pointed out by Zajonczek, consolidate and ensure a great national Rising: universal detestation of the Russian and limitless confidence in the chosen national leader. Kościuszko deemed it advisable to wait. It was impossible, he said after receiving Zajonczek's report, to build on such frail foundations; for it would be a sad thing to begin lightly and without consideration, only to fall. He himself, recognizable as he was through all Poland, was too well known to act as a secret propagandist in his own country; so in order to elude the attention of the three partitioning Powers he retired to Italy for some months. In Florence he found Niemcewicz. Niemcewicz tells how one night as he sat reading by his lamp the door burst open, the Polish greeting, "Praised be Jesus Christ," rang on the exile's ear, and a former colleague of the poet's hurried in with the simple words: "I have come for Kościuszko."[1] But the last act was played out in Dresden, which for long after Kościuszko's day remained a stronghold of Polish emigration. While Kościuszko was taking final delibera-

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *Recollections of My Times*. Paris, 1848.

tion there with Kołłontaj and Ignacy Potocki, two Poles came straight from Poland, and on their knees besought Kościuszko to give the word. The moment was now or never. Placards were being fastened mysteriously on the walls of Warsaw, calling to the Poles to rise. Patriotic writings were scattered broadcast, patriotic articles printed, in spite of the rigorous Russian censorship, in the Polish papers. Plays were acted in the theatre whose double meaning, uncomprehended by the Russians who sat in crowds in the audience, were fiery appeals to Polish patriotism. The streets of Warsaw, all Poland and Lithuania, were seething with agitation and secret hope. The suspicions of Igelstrom were aroused. He resolved to take over the arsenal in Warsaw and to disarm and demobilize the Polish army. In this dilemma Kościuszko was compelled to throw his all on one card or to fail. He therefore decided on the war; and in March, 1794, he re-entered Poland as the champion of her freedom.

Chapter Six

The Rising of Kościuszko

I

A BARN in the vicinity of the city has long been shown as the place where Kościuszko slept the night before he entered Cracow. The Polish general, Madaliński, who had evaded the Russian order to disarm, was the first to rise. At the head of his small force, followed by a hot Russian pursuit, he triumphantly led his soldiers down towards Cracow. At the news of his approach the Russian garrison evacuated the town, and Kościuszko entered its walls a few hours after the last Russian soldier had left it, at midday on March 23, 1794. It had been intended to convene the meeting of the citizens at the town hall on that same day; but the Act of the proclamation of the Rising proved to be so erroneously printed that it could not be published, mainly because Kościuszko was not an adept at putting his ideas into writing, and the numerous corrections were too much for the printers. The night was spent by Kościuszko in rewriting the manifesto which was to travel all over Poland, which was to be proclaimed from the walls and pulpits of Polish town and village, and despatched to the governments of Europe. The room yet remains where he passed those hours in the house of General Wodzicki who, when commanded by Russia to disband his regiments, had at Kościuszko's instigation secretly kept them together, paying them out of his own pocket, in readiness for the Rising.

The morning of March 24th dawned. With Wodzicki and several other soldiers, Kościuszko assisted at a low Mass in the Capuchin church, where the officiating priest

blessed the leader's sword. "God grant me to conquer or die," were Kościuszko's words, as he received the weapon from the monk's hand. At ten o'clock he quietly walked to the town hall. From all quarters of the city dense throngs had poured into the market-place, and pressed outside the town hall, overflowing on to its steps, surging into its rooms. In front of his soldiers Kościuszko stood before the crowds on the stone now marked by a memorial tablet, upon which on each anniversary of March 24th the Poles lay wreaths. That day, that scene, remain engraved for ever among the greatest of Poland's memories. As far as Kościuszko's gaze rested he saw his countrymen and countrywomen with eyes turned to him as to the deliverer of themselves and of their country, palpitating for the moment that he was about to announce, many of them wearing his portrait and carrying banners with the inscriptions: "Freedom or Death," "For our rights and liberty," "For Cracow and our country," or "Vivat Kościuszko." The drums were rolled, and in the midst of a dead silence the army took the oath of the Rising.

"I, N. N., swear that I will be faithful to the Polish nation and obedient to Tadeusz Kościuszko, the Commander-in-Chief, who has been summoned by this nation to the defence of the freedom, liberties, and independence of our country. So help me God and the innocent Passion of His Son."

Then Kościuszko himself stepped forward. With bared head, his eyes lifted to heaven and his hands resting on his sword, standing before his people surrounded by no pomp or retinue, in the simplicity that was natural to him, the new dictator of Poland in his turn took his oath:

"I, Tadeusz Kościuszko, swear in the sight of God to the whole Polish nation that I will use the power entrusted to me for the personal oppression of none, but will only use it for the defence of the integrity of the boundaries, the regaining of the independence of the nation, and the solid establishment of universal freedom. So help me God and the innocent Passion of His Son."

He then went inside the town hall. There he was greeted by cries of "Long live Kościuszko! Long live the defender of our country!" When silence was restored he delivered a speech, the exact terms of which are not accurately recorded; but it is known that he demanded of every class in the country to rally to the national banner—nobles, burghers, priests, peasants, Jews—and that he placed himself at the disposal of his people without requiring of them any oath, for, said he, both he and they were united in one common interest. Then he ordered the formal Act of the Rising to be read. It was received with an outburst of applause, and the clamour of rejoicing rang to the skies.

This Act was in part grafted on Kościuszko's personal observation of the American Declaration of Independence, but only in part. Kościuszko's own intensely Polish soul speaks through the document—the anguish of a Pole at the sight of his country's wrongs, the cry of a desperate but undespairing patriotism, the breathing of the spirit that should bring new life.

"The present condition of unhappy Poland is known to the world"—so the Act opens. "The iniquity of two neighbouring Powers and the crimes of traitors to the country have plunged her into this abyss. Resolved upon the destruction of the Polish name, Catherine II, in agreement with the perjured Frederick William, has filled up the measure of her crimes."

The treatment of Poland at the hands of Russia and Prussia is then recapitulated in accents of the burning indignation that such a recital would necessarily evoke. Of Austria Kościuszko makes no mention, for the reason that he believed, erroneously, as he was to learn by bitter experience, that her sympathies could be enlisted for the national movement.

"Overwhelmed with this weight of misfortune, injured more by treachery than by the power of the weapons of the enemies . . . having lost our country and with her the enjoyment of the most sacred rights of freedom, of safety, of

ownership, alike of our persons and of our property, deceived and played upon by some states, abandoned by others, we, Poles, citizens, inhabitants of the palatinate of Cracow, consecrating to our country our lives as the only possession which tyranny has not yet torn from us, are about to take those last and violent measures which patriotic despair dictates to us. Having, therefore, the unbroken determination to die and find a grave in the ruins of our own country or to deliver our native land from the depredations of tyranny and a shameful yoke, we declare in the sight of God, in the sight of the whole human race, and especially before you, O nations, by whom liberty is more highly prized than all other possessions in the world, that, employing the undenied right of resistance to tyranny and armed oppression, we all, in one national, civic and brotherly spirit, unite our strength in one; and, persuaded that the happy result of our great undertaking depends chiefly on the strictest union between us all, we renounce all prejudices and opinions which hitherto have divided or might divide the citizens, the inhabitants of one land and the sons of one country, and we all promise each other to be sparing of no sacrifice and means which only the holy love of liberty can provide to men rising in despair in her defence.

"The deliverance of Poland from the foreign soldier, the restoration and safeguarding of the integrity of her boundaries, the extirpation of all oppression and usurpation, whether foreign or domestic, the firm foundation of national freedom and of the independence of the Republic:—such is the sacred aim of our Rising."

To ensure its success and the safety of the country Kościuszko was elected as Poland's military leader and her civil head, with the direction that he should nominate a National Council to be under his supreme authority. The proclamation then enters into the details of his functions and those of the Council. He alone was responsible for the military conduct of the war. Its financial management, the levy of taxes for its support, internal order and the administration

of justice, were under the jurisdiction of the Council, to which was entrusted the task of endeavouring to gain foreign help and of "directing public opinion and diffusing the national spirit so that Country and Liberty may be the signal to all the inhabitants of Polish soil for the greatest sacrifices." All those who should act in any way against the Rising were to be punished by death. Emphasis was laid on the fact that the government was provisional, to rule only until the enemy should be finally driven out of Poland, and that it held no power of making a fresh constitution. "Any such act will be considered by us as a usurpation of the national sovereignty, similar to that against which at the sacrifice of our lives we are now rising." The head of the government and the National Council were bound by the terms of the Act "to instruct the nation by frequent proclamations on the true state of its affairs, neither concealing nor softening the most unfortunate events. Our despair is full, and the love of our country unbounded. The heaviest misfortunes, the mightiest difficulties, will not succeed in weakening and breaking the virtue of the nation and the courage of her citizens.

"We all mutually promise one another and the whole Polish nation steadfastness in the enterprise, fidelity to its precepts, submission to the national rulers specified and described in this Act of our Rising. We conjure the commander of the armed forces and the Supreme Council for the love of their country to use every means for the liberation of the nation and the preservation of her soil. Laying in their hands the disposal of our persons and property for such time as the war of freedom against despotism, of justice against oppression and tyranny, shall last, we desire that they always have present this great truth: that the preservation of a people is the highest law." [1]

For the first time in Poland—and it would have been an equal novelty in most other countries of the period—nobles and peasants side by side signed their adhesion to the Act among thousands of signatures. The levy of the military

[1] *Act of the Rising.* T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

forces, the arrangements for the taxation and the necessary business of the Rising, were at once set on foot, and Kościuszko spent the rest of March 24th in these affairs and in necessary correspondence. On the same day he sent out four more special addresses, one to the Polish and Lithuanian armies, a second to the citizens of the nation, a third to the Polish clergy, and a fourth to the women of Poland.

In the manifestos that Kościuszko issued all through the course of the Rising there is not only the note of the trumpet-call, bidding the people grapple with a task that their leader promises them will be no easy one; there is something more—a hint of the things that are beyond, an undercurrent of the Polish spirituality that confer upon these national proclamations their peculiarly Polish quality, emanating as they do from the pen of a patriot, whose character is typically and entirely Polish. Kościuszko appeals always to the ideal, to the secret and sacred faiths of men's hearts; but with that strong practical sense with which his enthusiasm was tempered and ennobled.

"Each of us has often sworn to be faithful to our mother country"—thus runs his manifesto to the Polish and Lithuanian armies. "Let us keep this faith with her once more, now when the oppressors, not satisfied with the dismemberment of our soil, would tear our weapons from us, and expose us unarmed to the last misery and scorn. Let us turn those weapons against the breasts of our enemies, let us raise our country out of slavery, let us restore the sanctity of the name of Pole, independence to the nation, and let us merit the gratitude of our native land and the glory dear to a soldier.

"Summoned by you I stand, comrades, at your head. I have given my life to you; your valour and patriotism are the surety for the happiness of our beloved country. . . . Let us unite more strongly, let us unite the hearts, hands, and endeavours of the inhabitants of the whole land. Treachery thrust our weapon from our hands; let virtue

raise again that weapon, and then shall perish that disgraceful yoke under which we groan.

"Comrades, can your endure that a foreign oppressor should disperse you with shame and ignominy, carry off honest men, usurp our arsenals, and harass the remainder of our unhappy fellow-countrymen at will? No, comrades, come with me; glory and the sweet consolation of being the saviours of your country await you. I give you my word that my zeal will endeavour to equal yours. . . .

"To the nation and to the country alone do you owe fidelity. She calls upon us to defend her. In her name I send you my commands. With you, beloved comrades, I take for our watchword: Death or Victory! I trust in you and in the nation which has resolved to die rather than longer groan in shameful slavery." [1]

To the citizens he wrote:

"Fellow-citizens! Summoned so often by you to save our beloved country, I stand by your will at your head, but I shall not be able to break the outraging yoke of slavery if I do not receive the speediest and the most courageous support from you. Aid me then with your whole strength, and hasten to the banner of our country. One zeal in one interest ought to take possession of the hearts of all. Sacrifice to the country a part of your possessions which hitherto have not been yours, but the spoils of a despot's soldiers."

He begs them to give men, weapons, horses, linen, provisions, to the national army, and then proceeds:

"The last moment is now here, when despair in the midst of shame and infamy lays a weapon in our hands. Only in the contempt of death is the hope of the bettering of our fate and that of the future generations. . . . The first step to the casting off of slavery is the risk taken to become free. The first step to victory is to know your own strength. . . . Citizens! I expect all from your zeal, that you will with your whole hearts join the holy league which neither foreign intrigue nor the desire for rule, but only the love of freedom, has created. Whoso is not with us is against us. . . .

[1] March 24, 1794. Given in *Letters of Kościuszko*, ed. L. Siemieński.

I have sworn to the nation that I will use the power entrusted to me for the private oppression of none, but I here declare that whoever acts against our league shall be delivered over as a traitor and an enemy of the country to the criminal tribunal established by the Act of the nation. We have already sinned too much by forbearance, and mainly by reason of that policy public crime has scarcely ever been punished." [1]

The man who wrote thus was the strictest of military disciplinarians; and yet he detested bloodshed and openly condemned all revolutionary excess. At a later moment in the war the friend who shared his tent tells how Kościuszko struggled with himself through a sleepless night in the doubt as to whether he had done well to condemn a certain traitor to the capital punishment which he could never willingly bring himself to inflict.

The manifesto to the clergy is on the ordinary lines. In that to the women of Poland Kościuszko is as ever courteous and chivalrous and ends as follows:—

"Women! I beg you for the love of humanity to make lint and bandages for the wounded. That offering from fair hands will relieve the sufferings of the wounded and spur on courage itself." [2]

Kościuszko's appeals to the nation soon found their response. Recruits flocked to the army, and money, weapons, clothing, gifts of all descriptions came pouring in. Polish ladies brought their jewels to the commander or sold them for the public fund; men and women cheerfully parted with their dearest treasures. The inventories range from such contributions as four horses with a month's fodder from a priest, "five thousand scythes" given by a single individual, yokes of oxen, guns and pistols, to bundles of lint, old handkerchiefs, and what was probably the most valued possession of its owner, set down in the list of donations as "the gold watch of a certain citizen for having dis-

[1] March 24, 1794. *Op. cit.*

[2] Cf. K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.* Vienna. 1909.

tinguished himself at Kozubów," where on March 25th one of the Polish detachments had engaged the Russians.

In the course of these patriotic presentations there occurred an episode that stands out among the many picturesque incidents in the story of Kościuszko's Rising. Three Polish boatmen came to the town hall to offer him twenty of their primitive flat-bottomed barges. Hearing of their arrival, Kościuszko pushed his way through the crowds thronging the building, till he reached the ante-room where stood the peasants in their rough sheepskin coats and mud-stained top-boots. "Come near me, Wojciech Sroka, Tomasz Brandys, and Jan Grzywa," he cried, "that I may thank you for your offering. I regret that I cannot now satisfy the wish of your hearts [by using the barges]; but, God helping and as the war goes on, then will our country make use of your gift." The peasants were not to be baulked of their desire to give their all to Poland. The spokesman of the trio, followed by his comrades, shook into his sheepskin cap the little sum of money that they had managed to scrape together and, smiling, handed it to Kościuszko, apologizing in his homely dialect for the poorly stuffed cap. Kościuszko flung the cap to an officer who stood by his side, crying, "I must have my hands free to press you, my beloved friends, to my heart." Drawn by that personal fascination which, united to the patriot's fire, invariably captivated all those who came into contact with Kościuszko, the simple boatmen fell on their knees before him, kissing his hands and feet.

Kościuszko remained in Cracow until the 1st of April, overwhelmed from six in the morning till far into the night by the affairs of the Rising, collecting his army, sending broadcast secret letters hidden in pincushions or otherwise concealed by the officers to whom they were entrusted. He was working against time with the Russians forming up against his scanty numbers. "For the love of our country make haste," is his ever-recurrent cry in his directions to his subordinates. On the 1st of April he left Cracow at the head of his small army, prepared to take the field against

the enemy. His long-cherished desire had been fulfilled; bands of peasants, some two thousand strong, had rallied to his flag, armed with their pikes and the scythes that won them the name, famous in Polish annals, of the "Reapers of Death." Mountaineers, too, came down in their brilliantly coloured garb from the Polish Carpathians. To all these men from the fields and the hills Kościuszko became not only an adored chief, but an equally beloved brother in arms.

On the 4th of April was fought the famous battle of Racławice.

Kościuszko was no invincible hero of legend. His military talent was undoubted, but not superlative and not infallible; yet Racławice was the triumph of a great idea, the victory, under the strength of the ideal, of a few against many. It lives as one of those moments in a nation's history that will only die with the nation that inspired it. The peasants turned the tide of the hotly fought battle. "Peasants, take those cannon for me. God and our country!" was Kościuszko's cry of thunder. Urging each other on by the homely names they were wont to call across their native fields, the peasants swept like a hurricane upon the Russian battery, carrying all before them with their deadly scythes, while Kościuszko rode headlong at their side. They captured eleven cannon, and cut the Russian ranks to pieces. Even in our own days the plough has turned up the bones of those who fell in the fight, and graves yet mark the battle lines. In the camp that night Kościuszko, with bared head, thanked the army in the name of Poland for its valour, ending his address with the cry, "Vivat the nation! Vivat Liberty!" taken up by the soldiers with the acclamation, "Vivat Kościuszko!" Kościuszko then publicly conferred upon the peasant Bartos, who had been the first to reach the Russian battery — he perished at Szczekociny—promotion and nobility with the name of Głowacki. Before all the army he flung off his uniform and donned, as a sign of honour to his peasant soldiers, their *sukmana*, which he henceforth always wore—the long

loose coat held with a broad girdle and reaching below the knee.

"The sacred watchword of nation and of freedom," wrote Kościuszko in his report of the battle to the Polish nation, "moved the soul and valour of the soldier fighting for the fate of his country and for her freedom." He commends the heroism of the young volunteers in their baptism of fire. He singles out his generals, Madaliński and Zajonczek, for praise. Characteristically he breathes no hint that he himself led the charge.[1]

"Nation!" he concludes. "Feel at last thy strength; put it wholly forth. Set thy will on being free and independent. By unity and courage thou shalt reach this honoured end. Prepare thy soul for victories and defeats. In both of them the spirit of true patriotism should maintain its strength and energy. All that remains to me is to praise thy Rising and to serve thee, so long as Heaven permits me to live."[2]

The Polish army was badly broken at Racławice; but the moral effect of the victory was great. The name of Kościuszko was alone enough by now to gather men to his side. "Kościuszko! Freedom! Our country!" became the morning and the evening greeting between private persons.

After the battle of Racławice, Kościuszko at once issued further calls to arms, especially urging the enrolment of the peasants. This measure was to be effected, so Kościuszko insisted, with the greatest consideration for the feelings of the peasants, all violence being scrupulously avoided, while the landowners were requested to care for the families of the breadwinners during their absence at the war. The general levy of the nation was proclaimed. In every town and village at the sound of the alarm bell the inhabitants were to rally to the public meeting-place with scythes, pikes or axes, and place themselves at the disposition of the appointed leaders. Thus did Kościuszko endeavour to realize his favourite project of an army of the people.

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*
[2] K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.*

Unable for lack of soldiers to follow up his victory, Kościuszko remained in camp, training his soldiers, and sending summonses to the various provinces to rise. The oaks still stand under which the Polish leader sat in sight of the towers of Cracow, as he cast his plans for the salvation of Poland. The spot is marked by a grave where lie the remains of soldiers who died at Racławice; and on one of the trees a Polish officer cut a cross, still visible in recent years.

Kościuszko's character held in marked measure that most engaging quality of his nation, what we may term the Polish sweetness; but it never degenerated into softness. His severity to those who held back when their country required them was inexorable.

"I cannot think of the inactivity of the citizens of Sandomierz without emotions of deep pain," he writes to that province, which showed no great readiness to join the Rising. "So the love of your country has to content itself with enthusiasm without deed, with fruitless desires, with the sufferings of a weakness which cannot take a bold step! . . . Believe me, the first one among you who shouts aloud the watchword of the deliverance of our country, and courageously gives the example of himself, will experience how easy it is to awaken in men courage and determination when an aim deserving of respect and instigations to virtue only are placed before them. Compatriots! This is not now the time to guard formalities and to approach the work of the national Rising with a lagging step. To arms, Poles, to arms! God has already blessed the Polish weapons, and His powerful Providence has manifested in what manner this country must be freed from the enemy . . . how to be free and independent depends only on our will. Unite, then, all your efforts to a universal arming. Who is not with us is against us. I have believed that no Pole will be in that case. If that hope deceives me, and there are found men who would basely deny their country, the country will disown them and will give them over to the national vengeance, to their own shame and severe responsibility."[1]

[1] K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.*

This language ran like a fiery arrow through the province: it rose. On all sides the country rose. Kościuszko's envoy carried to one of the Polish officers in Warsaw the terse message: "You have a heart and virtue. Stand at the head of the work. The country will perish by delay. Begin, and you will not repent it. T. Kościuszko." [1] By the time this letter reached its destination Warsaw had already risen.

For weeks the preparation for the Rising in Warsaw had been stealthily carried forward. Igelstrom had conceived the plan of surrounding the churches by Russian soldiers on Holy Saturday, disarming what was left of the Polish army in the town, and taking over the arsenal. The secret was let out too soon by a drunken Russian officer, and the Polish populace, headed by the shoemaker Kiliński, flew to arms. Then ensued the terrible street fighting, in which Kiliński was seen at every spot where the fire was hottest. Each span of earth, in the graphic phrase of a Polish historian, became a battlefield.[2] Through Maundy Thursday and Good Friday the city was lit up by conflagrations, while its pavements streamed with blood. When the morning of Holy Saturday broke the Russians were out of the capital of Poland, and all the Easter bells in Warsaw were crashing forth peals of joy. On the same day the citizens of Warsaw signed the Act of the Rising and the oath of allegiance to Kościuszko. Stanislas Augustus, who two weeks earlier had at Igelstrom's bidding publicly proclaimed Kościuszko to be a rebel and an outlaw, now went over to the winning side. On Easter Sunday the cathedral rang to the strains of the *Te Deum,* at which the King assisted. The news was brought into Kościuszko's camp in hot haste by an officer from Warsaw. It was in the evening. Drums beat, the camp re-echoed with song, and on the following morning a solemn Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated. No salvos were fired, in order to spare the powder. "Henceforth," joyfully cried Kościuszko in a manifesto to his

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*
[2] A. Chołoniewski, *Tadeusz Kościuszko.* Lwów, 1902.

country, "the gratitude of the nation will join their names" —those of Mokronowski and Zakrzewski, the President of Warsaw, who had been mainly responsible for the city's deliverance—"with the love of country itself. Nation! . . . These are the glorious deeds of thy Rising; but," adds Kościuszko, whose foresight and sober judgment were never carried away by success, "remember this truth, that thou hast done nothing so long as there is left anything still to be done." [1]

Three days after Warsaw was freed, Wilno, with a handful of soldiers rising in the night, drove out the Russian garrison, and the Russian army retreated through Lithuania, marking their way by atrocities which were but a foretaste of what awaited in no distant future that most unhappy land.

"The powerful God," says the proclamation of the Provisional Deputy Council of Wilno—"delivering the Polish nation from the cruel yoke of slavery has, . . . O citizens of Lithuania, sent Tadeusz Kościuszko, our fellow-countryman, to her holy soil to fulfil His will. . . . By reason of the valour of that man whose very dust your posterity will honour and revere, the liberties of the Poles have been born again. . . . At the very name of that noble man . . . another spirit has begun to govern the heart of the dweller in an oppressed country. . . . To him we owe our country! To him we owe the uplifting of ourselves, to his virtue, to his zeal and to his courage." [2]

The burden that rested on the shoulders of Kościuszko was one that would have seemed beyond the mastery of one man. He had to raise an army, find money, ammunition, horses, provisions. He had to initiate and organize the Rising in every province, bearing in mind and appealing to the distinctive individualities of each, dealing in his instructions not merely with the transcendentally difficult material matters of the Rising, but with involved moral questions. He was the military chief, responsible for the whole plan of

1 *Kościuszko.* Periodical Publication, 1893-6. Cracow.
2 K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.*

action of a war for national existence. He was the civil chief, chosen to rule the nation when the most skilful steering of the ship of state was requisite—when the government of the country, owing to dismemberment, foreign intrigues, foreign invasion, internal disunion, was in a condition of chaos. The soundest political acumen, the most unerring tact, was exacted of him. He must needs adopt whatever political measures he deemed necessary, no matter how hard of execution: many of these were innovations that he daringly carried out against every prejudice and tradition, because it was the innermost conviction of his soul that they would save his nation. No doubt Kościuszko's great talent for organization and application, and the robust strength of his character, would, in part at least, have borne him through his herculean task; but it was in the power of the idea that we must find the key to his whole leadership of the struggle for his nation which in the history of that nation bears his name. Where Poland was concerned obstacles were not allowed to exist—or rather, were there merely to be overcome. Personal desires, individual frictions, all must go down before the only object that counted.

"Only the one necessity," he writes to Mokronowski, reassuring the General in brotherly and sympathetic style as to some unpleasantness that the latter was anticipating—for, with all his devotion to the common end, Kościuszko never failed to take to his heart the private griefs, even the trifling interests, of those around him—"the one consideration of the country in danger has caused me to expect that, putting aside all personal vexations, you will sacrifice yourself entirely to the universal good. . . . Not I, but our country, beseeches and conjures you to do this. Surely at her voice all reflections, all considerations, should perish."[1]

Impressing upon a young prince of the Sapieha family, at the outset of the Rising, that not even a minute of time must be lost ". . . although," Kościuszko says, "the forces be weak, a beginning must be made, and those forces

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*

will increase of themselves in the defence of the country. I began with one battalion, and in a few days I had collected an army nearly equal to the enemy's. Let the gentry go out on horseback, and the people with scythes and pikes." Let the officers who had been trained to a different service abroad put aside preconceived ideas, and fight in the methods demanded of a popular army.[1]

Or, far on towards the end of the Rising, Kościuszko, calling upon the citizens of Volhynia to rise for the Poland from which they had been torn away, speaks thus: "You have no army in your own land, but you have men, and those men will soon become an army." He tells them that the Poles who rose in Great Poland were not deterred by the differences of religious belief between them. "These hinder not at all the love of country and of freedom. Let each honour God according to his faith; and there is no faith that would forbid a man to be free." [2]

One of the earliest measures that Kościuszko inaugurated as the head of the provisional government of his nation was in relation to the object only less dear to him than the liberation of Poland: that of the serfs. With time the Polish peasant had sunk to the level of those in neighbouring countries, although the condition of the serf in Poland was never as deplorable as, for instance, that which obtained in Russia. France had only just effected the relief of her lower classes—and this by an orgy of revolt and ferocity. Kościuszko now came forward with his reforms. The forced labour of the peasant who could not bear arms was reduced to less than a half of his former obligation, and for those who would take part in the national war, abolished. The peasant was now to enjoy the full personal protection of the law, and the right of locomotion when he chose. Possession of his own land was assured to him, and heavy penalties were inflicted upon the landlords should they be guilty of any acts of oppression. The local authorities were bidden to see that the farms of those who joined Koś-

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.* April 14, May 12.
[2] K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.*

ciuszko's army should be tended during their military service, and that the soil, "the source of our riches," should not fall into neglect. The people were exhorted to show their gratitude for the new benefits bestowed upon them by loyal work for their squires, and by careful husbandry. The dictator then ordered the clergy of both the Latin and Greek rites to read these decrees from the pulpit for the course of four Sundays, and to urge upon the peasants the duty of defending their country. Thus Kościuszko took up the work that the Constitution of the 3rd of May had more vaguely initiated, and that had been terminated by Russian and Prussian interference. He could not at this juncture push his reforms further. Had he brought in a total reversal of hitherto existing conditions while a national insurrection of which the issues were uncertain was proceeding, the confusion engendered would have gone far to defeat the very object it was his desire to bring about.

Kościuszko promulgated these acts from camp on May 7, 1794. Fresh coinage was stamped, with on the one side the device of the old Polish Republic, on the other that new and sacred formula: "The Liberty, Integrity and Independence of the Republic, 1794." The term "Republic" as applied to Poland was, of course, no subversive title, such being the time-honoured name by which the Polish state had been known through its history.

To Kościuszko the war was a holy one. Its object was, together with the restoration of national independence, that of conferring happiness and freedom on every class, religion, and individual in the country. Take, for example, Kościuszko's manifesto to the citizens of the district of Brześć, directing that the religion of the Ruthenes of the Greek-Oriental rite should be respected: words that in the light of the subsequent history of a people who have been the victims first of Russian, and then of German, intrigue, read with a startling significance.

"In this way you will attach a people, deceived by the fanaticism of Russia, to our country. They will be more devoted to their fellow-countrymen when they see that the

latter treat with them like brothers . . . and that they open to them the entrance, as to common fellow-citizens, to the highest offices. Assure all the Oriental Greeks in my name that they shall have in common with us every liberty which freedom gives men to enjoy, and that their consistory with all its authority according to the laws of the Constitutional Diet is restored to them. Let them use all the influence they may have on the people of their religion to convince them that we, who are fighting for liberty, desire to make all the inhabitants of our land happy."[1]

He wrote to the clergy of the Ruthenian Greek Orthodox rite, laying emphasis on the persecution that their faith had suffered from Russia and on the liberty that Poland promised them.

Following all these enactments of Kościuszko's there ensued a curious interchange of communications between him and the King of Poland. Stanislas Augustus, under the apprehension that he was to follow Louis XVI to the scaffold, wrote to Kościuszko, placing the continuance of such shreds of Royal power as he possessed at the dictator's arbitration. Once again Kościuszko was called to measure swords with his King and sometime patron. This time it was Kościuszko who was in the commanding position. His sovereign was more or less at his mercy. What his opinion of the man was is clear from the scathing indictment which his sense of outrage at the betrayal of his country tore from his lips as he wrote the history of the Ukraine campaign that Stanislas Augustus had brought to ruin. Yet this was how he answered, at the moment when his power was supreme, in a latter dated May 20, 1794:

"My Lord King,

"Just when I was engrossed in the midst of so many other labours with the drawing up of the organization of the Supreme Council, I received a communication from Your Royal Majesty under the date of the 5th instant. Having read therein that Your Royal Majesty only desires authority and importance when and to the extent that I

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

ciuszko's army should be tended during their military service, and that the soil, "the source of our riches," should not fall into neglect. The people were exhorted to show their gratitude for the new benefits bestowed upon them by loyal work for their squires, and by careful husbandry. The dictator then ordered the clergy of both the Latin and Greek rites to read these decrees from the pulpit for the course of four Sundays, and to urge upon the peasants the duty of defending their country. Thus Kościuszko took up the work that the Constitution of the 3rd of May had more vaguely initiated, and that had been terminated by Russian and Prussian interference. He could not at this juncture push his reforms further. Had he brought in a total reversal of hitherto existing conditions while a national insurrection of which the issues were uncertain was proceeding, the confusion engendered would have gone far to defeat the very object it was his desire to bring about.

Kościuszko promulgated these acts from camp on May 7, 1794. Fresh coinage was stamped, with on the one side the device of the old Polish Republic, on the other that new and sacred formula: "The Liberty, Integrity and Independence of the Republic, 1794." The term "Republic" as applied to Poland was, of course, no subversive title, such being the time-honoured name by which the Polish state had been known through its history.

To Kościuszko the war was a holy one. Its object was, together with the restoration of national independence, that of conferring happiness and freedom on every class, religion, and individual in the country. Take, for example, Kościuszko's manifesto to the citizens of the district of Brześć, directing that the religion of the Ruthenes of the Greek-Oriental rite should be respected: words that in the light of the subsequent history of a people who have been the victims first of Russian, and then of German, intrigue, read with a startling significance.

"In this way you will attach a people, deceived by the fanaticism of Russia, to our country. They will be more devoted to their fellow-countrymen when they see that the

latter treat with them like brothers . . . and that they open to them the entrance, as to common fellow-citizens, to the highest offices. Assure all the Oriental Greeks in my name that they shall have in common with us every liberty which freedom gives men to enjoy, and that their consistory with all its authority according to the laws of the Constitutional Diet is restored to them. Let them use all the influence they may have on the people of their religion to convince them that we, who are fighting for liberty, desire to make all the inhabitants of our land happy." [1]

He wrote to the clergy of the Ruthenian Greek Orthodox rite, laying emphasis on the persecution that their faith had suffered from Russia and on the liberty that Poland promised them.

Following all these enactments of Kościuszko's there ensued a curious interchange of communications between him and the King of Poland. Stanislas Augustus, under the apprehension that he was to follow Louis XVI to the scaffold, wrote to Kościuszko, placing the continuance of such shreds of Royal power as he possessed at the dictator's arbitration. Once again Kościuszko was called to measure swords with his King and sometime patron. This time it was Kościuszko who was in the commanding position. His sovereign was more or less at his mercy. What his opinion of the man was is clear from the scathing indictment which his sense of outrage at the betrayal of his country tore from his lips as he wrote the history of the Ukraine campaign that Stanislas Augustus had brought to ruin. Yet this was how he answered, at the moment when his power was supreme, in a letter dated May 20, 1794:

"My Lord King,

"Just when I was engrossed in the midst of so many other labours with the drawing up of the organization of the Supreme Council, I received a communication from Your Royal Majesty under the date of the 5th instant. Having read therein that Your Royal Majesty only desires authority and importance when and to the extent that I

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

decide this with the nation, as regards my opinion, I frankly confess that, entertaining a loyal respect for the throne, I hold the person of Your Royal Majesty excepted from the power conferred upon me of nominating personages to the composition of the Supreme Council. As to the nation, the conduct of Your Royal Majesty in the course of the present Rising, the restored public confidence in Your Royal Majesty that was weakened by the Confederation of Targowica, the constancy with which Your Royal Majesty declares that, albeit at the cost of great personal misfortune, you will not forsake the country and nation, will contribute, I doubt not, to the securing for Your Royal Majesty of the authority in the Diet that will be most agreeable to the welfare of the country. I have written separately to the Supreme Council upon the duty of imparting to Your Royal Majesty an account of its chief actions, and this in the conviction that Your Royal Majesty will not only be a source of enlightenment to it, but of assistance inasmuch as circumstances permit. Likewise the needs of Your Royal Majesty which you mention at the end of your letter I have recommended to the attention and care of the Supreme Council. Thanking Your Royal Majesty for your good wishes concerning my person, I declare that the prosperity of Your Royal Majesty is not separated in my heart and mind from the prosperity of the country, and I assure Your Royal Majesty of my deep respect." [1]

Until the month of May Kościuszko had been governing single-handed. He had drawn up the decrees that were of such moment to his country in the primitive conditions of a soldier's tent, with the collaboration of only his council of three friends, Kołłontaj, Ignacy Potocki, and Wejssenhof. Throughout his sole dictatorship he had combined a scrupulous respect for existing laws with a firm declaration of those reforms which must be carried out without delay, if Poland were to win in her struggle for freedom. No trace of Jacobinism is to be met with in Kościuszko's govern-

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

ment. Defending himself with a hint of wounded feeling against some reproach apparently addressed to him by his old friend, Princess Czartoryska:

"How far you are as yet from knowing my heart!" he answers. "How you wrong my feelings and manner of thinking, and how little you credit me with foresight and attachment to our country, if I could avail myself of such impossible and such injurious measures! My decrees and actions up to now might convince you. Men may blacken me and our Rising, but God sees that we are not beginning a French revolution. My desire is to destroy the enemy. I am making some temporary dispositions, and I leave the framing of laws to the nation." [1]

The whole country was now rallying round Kościuszko. Polish magnates, whose ancestors had been heads of armies in the old chivalrous days of the Republic of Poland, who had themselves led soldiers in the field, came to him, begging to serve in the lowest ranks if so be they might serve under him. The King's nephew, Prince Józef Poniatowski, under whose command two years ago Kościuszko had fought as a subordinate officer, now placed himself unreservedly at Kościuszko's disposal. The King, the nation, were in Kościuszko's hands. Yet he remained always the simple Lithuanian soldier, who wore the garb of the peasants, who lived familiarly with the peasants in his army, treating them as his brothers. His letters to his officers are couched in the affectionate and intimate terms of an equal friendship, reading as though from comrade to comrade. "Dear comrade," is, in fact, the title by which he addresses them when giving them his instructions. Instead of orders and decorations, of which he had none at his disposal, he offered them snuff-boxes, watches, rings—"I have sent you a ring of cat's-eyes that at night it may light you on your journey," he writes to Mokronowski—or trifles made by the hands of Polish ladies, accompanied with a few graceful words spoken from the heart that gave the gift its value. He is ever eager to bring to public notice

[1] *Op. cit.*

the name of any Pole who had done well by the country; always silent on his own deeds, turning off the praises and thanks of his people to the whole nation or to individuals. The style of his commands bears an invariable hallmark of simplicity. "I conjure and entreat you for the love of our country," is their usual wording. One word, indeed, rings with unwearied reiteration through Kościuszko's public manifestos, in his private correspondence: the love of country. It is not he who cries to the sons of Poland to save her; it is Poland herself, and he voices her call, of which he considered himself but the mouthpiece, with a touch of personal warmth for those to whom he spoke, which they requited with a passionate love.

"Dear comrade," he writes in the first weeks of war to one of his deputies, "those who have begun the Rising are in this determination: either to die for our country or to deliver her from oppression and slavery. I am certain that to your soul, your courage, I need say no more." [1]

The same tone is conspicuous in Kościuszko's many proclamations to the nation. In these, too, he addresses the people of whose destinies he was the ruler, who were under his obedience, as his "dear comrades," his "fellow-citizens," his "brothers." He regarded himself in no other light than that of the servant of his country, equally ready to command or to resign his authority, according as her interests demanded. Lust of power and personal ambition were unknown to him. He was, if we may use the expression, out for one object: to save his country; and any interest of his own was in his scheme non-existent. "Let no man who prizes virtue," he wrote, "desire power. They have laid it in my hands at this critical moment. I know not if I have merited this confidence, but I do know that for me this power is only a weapon for the effectual defence of my country, and I confess that I long for its termination as sincerely as for the salvation of the nation." [2] He yearned not for the sword, but for peace and the "little garden" of his dreams, as he tells a friend. Given that

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.* [2] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

temper of his mind and the inherent nobility of his nature, and we have the explanation how it is that no unworthy deed, no moral stain, disfigure the seven months that Kościuszko stood at the head of the Polish state, beset though he was by internal and external problems under which a man of less purity of aim and single-heartedness than his might well have swerved.

But for all his native modesty Kościuszko was too conscious of his obligation to his country to brook any infringement of the power he held. Writing a sharp rebuke to "the whole principality of Lithuania and especially to the Provisional Council of Wilno," which he had reason to believe was arrogating to itself his functions, he declares that he would be unworthy of the trust that his nation had confided to him if he did not know how to use and maintain his authority.[1] A little later, desiring to mitigate this sternness with the suavity more congenial to him, he spoke to his native district in a different key.

"The last moment of Poland, her supreme cause, salvation or eternal ruin and shame, personal freedom and the independence of the nation, or a terrible slavery and the groaning of millions of people . . . the destruction of the Polish name, or her glorious place in the rank of nations: these are the considerations . . . that must take hold of the Polish nation, of you, citizens of Lithuania. . . . Poles, now is the moment for the amendment of eternal errors. Now is the time to be worthy of your ancestors, to forget yourselves in order to save the country, to stifle in yourselves the base voice of personal interest in order to serve the public. Now must you draw forth your last strength, your last means, to give freedom to your land. . . . Let us know how to die! . . . . What Pole can live, if he must live in the state in which till now, with his compatriots, he has been compelled to live? . . . . Oh, fellow-countrymen! If you spare your lives, it is that you should be wretched slaves; if you spare your possessions, it is that they should be the spoils of the invaders. . . . Who can be

[1] K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.*

so deprived of reason or so fearful, as to doubt that we shall surely conquer, if we all manfully desire to conquer?

"Lithuania! My fellow-countrymen and compatriots! I was born on your soil, and in the midst of righteous zeal for my country more especial affection is called forth in me for those among whom I began life. . . . Look at the rest of the nation of which you are a part. . . . Look at those volunteers, already assembling in each province of all Poland, seeking out the enemy, leaving homes and families for a beloved country, inflamed with the watchword of those fighting for the nation: Death or Victory! . . . Once again, I say, we shall conquer! Earlier or later the powerful God humbles the pride of the invaders, and aids persecuted nations, faithful to Him and faithful to the virtue of patriotism." [1]

The moment had now arrived—in the May of 1794—to regularize the Rising and to establish the temporary government on a stable and more conventional basis. Kościuszko explained himself fully in his proclamation of May 21st to the "citizens of Poland and Lithuania":

"It has pleased you, citizens, to give me the highest proof of confidence, for you have not only laid your whole armed strength and the use thereof in my hands, but in addition, in the period of the Rising, not deeming yourselves to be in the condition to make a well-ordered choice of members for the Supreme National Council, you confided that choice to me. The greater the universal confidence in me that I behold, the more solicitous I am to respond to it agreeably to your wishes and to the necessities of the nation.

"I kept to that consideration in the nomination of members of the Council. I desired to make the same choice that you yourselves would have made. So I looked for citizens who were worthy of the public trust: I considered who in private and public life had maintained the obligations of unstained virtue, who were steadfastly attached to the Rights of the Nation and the Rights of the People, who

[1] *Akty Powstania Kościuszko.* ed. by S. Askenazy i W. T. Dzwonkowski. Cracow, 1918.

at the time of the nation's misfortunes, when foreign oppression and domestic crime drove at their will the fate of the country, had most suffered for their patriotism and their merits. It was such men whom for the most part I summoned to the National Council, joining to them persons honoured for their knowledge and virtue, and adding to them deputies capable of assisting them in their onerous obligations."

He then says that the reason he did not nominate the Council earlier was because he was awaiting the confirmation by the greater part of the nation of the Act of the Rising that had been proclaimed in Cracow, and thus "during the first and violent necessities" of the Rising he was driven to issue manifestos and orders on his own responsibility.

"With joy I see the time approaching when nothing shall be able to justify me for the smallest infringement of the limits you placed to my power. I respect them because they are just, because they emanate from your will, which is the most sacred law for me. I hope that not only now, but when—God grant it!—having delivered our country from her enemies, I cast my sword under the feet of the nation, no one shall accuse me of their transgression." [1]

Public morality did not satisfy Kościuszko in his choice of the men who were to rule the country. He would have none to shape her laws and destinies whose personal morals were lax. "What do you want, Prince?" were the dry words with which he greeted Józef Poniatowski, when the gay officer came into his camp to offer his sword to the Rising; and it is said that this ungracious reception, widely different from Kościuszko's usual address, was due to the fact that he was of too Puritan a temper to be able to overlook certain notorious aspects of Poniatowski's character.

Still in May Kościuszko sent Kołłontaj and Ignacy Potocki to Warsaw, and the National Council assumed there its legal functions. Among its members sat not only Kołłontaj, Potocki, and those who had taken part in the

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

so deprived of reason or so fearful, as to doubt that we shall surely conquer, if we all manfully desire to conquer?

"Lithuania! My fellow-countrymen and compatriots! I was born on your soil, and in the midst of righteous zeal for my country more especial affection is called forth in me for those among whom I began life. . . . Look at the rest of the nation of which you are a part. . . . Look at those volunteers, already assembling in each province of all Poland, seeking out the enemy, leaving homes and families for a beloved country, inflamed with the watchword of those fighting for the nation: Death or Victory! . . . Once again, I say, we shall conquer! Earlier or later the powerful God humbles the pride of the invaders, and aids persecuted nations, faithful to Him and faithful to the virtue of patriotism." [1]

The moment had now arrived—in the May of 1794—to regularize the Rising and to establish the temporary government on a stable and more conventional basis. Kościuszko explained himself fully in his proclamation of May 21st to the "citizens of Poland and Lithuania":

"It has pleased you, citizens, to give me the highest proof of confidence, for you have not only laid your whole armed strength and the use thereof in my hands, but in addition, in the period of the Rising, not deeming yourselves to be in the condition to make a well-ordered choice of members for the Supreme National Council, you confided that choice to me. The greater the universal confidence in me that I behold, the more solicitous I am to respond to it agreeably to your wishes and to the necessities of the nation.

"I kept to that consideration in the nomination of members of the Council. I desired to make the same choice that you yourselves would have made. So I looked for citizens who were worthy of the public trust: I considered who in private and public life had maintained the obligations of unstained virtue, who were steadfastly attached to the Rights of the Nation and the Rights of the People, who

[1] *Akty Powstania Kościuszko.* ed. by S. Askenazy i W. T. Dzwonkowski. Cracow, 1918.

at the time of the nation's misfortunes, when foreign oppression and domestic crime drove at their will the fate of the country, had most suffered for their patriotism and their merits. It was such men whom for the most part I summoned to the National Council, joining to them persons honoured for their knowledge and virtue, and adding to them deputies capable of assisting them in their onerous obligations."

He then says that the reason he did not nominate the Council earlier was because he was awaiting the confirmation by the greater part of the nation of the Act of the Rising that had been proclaimed in Cracow, and thus "during the first and violent necessities" of the Rising he was driven to issue manifestos and orders on his own responsibility.

"With joy I see the time approaching when nothing shall be able to justify me for the smallest infringement of the limits you placed to my power. I respect them because they are just, because they emanate from your will, which is the most sacred law for me. I hope that not only now, but when—God grant it!—having delivered our country from her enemies, I cast my sword under the feet of the nation, no one shall accuse me of their transgression." [1]

Public morality did not satisfy Kościuszko in his choice of the men who were to rule the country. He would have none to shape her laws and destinies whose personal morals were lax. "What do you want, Prince?" were the dry words with which he greeted Józef Poniatowski, when the gay officer came into his camp to offer his sword to the Rising; and it is said that this ungracious reception, widely different from Kościuszko's usual address, was due to the fact that he was of too Puritan a temper to be able to overlook certain notorious aspects of Poniatowski's character.

Still in May Kościuszko sent Kołłontaj and Ignacy Potocki to Warsaw, and the National Council assumed there its legal functions. Among its members sat not only Kołłontaj, Potocki, and those who had taken part in the

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

old Polish Diet, former ministers of state and high officers, representatives of the clergy of the Latin and Greek rites, but the banker Kapostas, and the shoemaker Kiliński. Thus for the first time in Polish history artisans and burghers were included in the national governing body. The assembly was animated by that new spirit of democracy in its noblest form in which Kościuszko himself was steeped. It carried forward the task that the Constitution of the 3rd of May had begun and had been forced by Poland's conquerors to abandon. Its presidency passed by rotation to each member, who called each other "citizen," and who were all, without distinction of rank and class, treated as equals. It organized the Ministry into the ordinary departments and to enter into relations with foreign powers.

Having thus lightened the burden of civil rule by securing effective colleagues, Kościuszko, although he did not cease to be the chief dictator of the nation, could now more freely devote himself to the immediate object of the Rising.

Chapter Seven

The Rising of Kościuszko

II

We have reached the month of May, 1794. Kościuszko and the Russian army under Denisov were now at close grips, Denisov repeatedly attacking, Kościuszko beating him off. Provisions were almost impossible to procure. Kościuszko's men went half starved. Burning villages, set on fire by Denisov's soldiers, a countryside laid waste, were the sight the Poles beheld each day, while the homeless peasants crowded into Kościuszko's camp to tell him their piteous stories. Then Denisov retreated so swiftly towards the Prussian frontier that Kościuszko, detained by the civil affairs of the government with which his hands were just then full, and by the no less arduous task of organizing the army and the war in the provinces, was not able to overtake him. By the end of May Kościuszko had succeeded in forming a not inconsiderable army.

We have seen that Kościuszko held the war as a sacred crusade. He enforced rigid discipline. Licence was unknown in his camp, where the atmosphere, so eyewitnesses have recorded, was that of gaiety and ardour tempered by a grave enthusiasm.

"There is here," writes the envoy whom Kościuszko was sending to Vienna and whom he had summoned to the camp to receive his instructions, "no bragging of valour nor excess. A deep silence reigns, great order, great subordination and discipline. The enthusiasm for Kościuszko's person in the camp and in the nation is beyond credence."

And this account is preceded by a description of Kościuszko himself. "He is a simple man, and most modest in conversation, manners, dress. . . . He unites with the greatest resolution and enthusiasm for the undertaken cause much sang-froid and judgment. It seems as though there is nothing temerarious in all that he is doing except the enterprise itself. In practical details he leaves nothing to chance: everything is thought out and combined. His may not be a transcendental mind, or one sufficiently elastic for politics. His native good sense is enough for him to estimate affairs correctly and to make the best choice at the first glance. Only love of his country animates him. No other passion has dominion over him."[1]

The name of Kościuszko is linked, not with victory but with a defeat more noble than material triumph. The watchword he had chosen for the Rising, "Death or Victory," was no empty rhetoric; it was stern reality. The spring of 1794 saw the insurrection opening in all its promise. From May the success of an enterprise that could have won through with foreign help, and not without it, declined. Kościuszko had now to reckon not only with Russia. Prussia was about to send in her regiments of iron against the little Polish army, which was thus hemmed in by the armed legions of two of the most powerful states in Europe.

On the 6th of June Kościuszko reached Szczekociny. It was among the marshes there that the Polish army, little more than half of which was composed of regular soldiers, met the fiercest shock of arms it had yet experienced in the course of the Rising. "The enemy," wrote Kościuszko in his report, "stood all night under arms. We awaited the dawn with the sweetest hope of victory." These hopes were founded on the precedent of Racławice and on the battles in which Kościuszko had fought in the United States, where where he had seen British regulars routed by the American farmers. But as hostilities were about to begin with the morning, Wodzicki, examining the proceedings through his

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

field-glasses, expressed his amazement at the masses moving against the Polish army. "Surely my eyes deceive me, for I recognize the Prussians," he said to a Polish officer at his side. It was too true. In the night the Prussian army had come up under Frederick William II. "We saw," says Kościuszko, "that it was not only with the Russians we had to deal, for the right wing of the enemy was composed of the Prussian army." The Poles fought with desperate valour. Kościuszko himself records the name of a Polish sergeant who, "when both of his legs were carried off by a cannon-ball, still cried out to his men, 'Brothers, defend your country! Defend her boldly. You will conquer.'"[1] The Polish reapers made a gallant charge; but the overwhelming numbers of Prussian soldiers, and of fire arms in a ratio of three to Kościuszko's one, carried the day against the Poles. Kościuszko's horse was shot under him, and himself slightly wounded. Only two of his generals emerged from the battle unscathed. The rest were either killed, including the gallant Wodzicki, who had been one of the earliest promoters of the Rising, and the others wounded, Poniński redeeming by his blood a father's infamy.

It was at the close of this disastrous defeat that Kościuszko for a moment gave way to despair. An officer of his—Sanguszko—met him wandering stupefied over the battle-field when the day was lost. "I wish to be killed," was all Sanguszko heard him say. Sanguszko only saved his general's life by gripping him by the arm and forcing him within the turnpike of a village hard by, where the shattered Polish ranks had taken refuge. This was, however, but a momentary faltering of Kościuszko's soul. On the morrow of the battle he was once more sending his country summonses to a renewed courage and calling up a fresh general levy.

The provisional government of Poland was the while negotiating with France and Austria. It was hoped that France would support the Rising financially, and persuade

[1] *Kościuszko.* Periodical Publication.

Turkey with French encouragement to declare war on Russia. France, preoccupied with internal revolution, had no thought to spare for Polish affairs, and her assistance was never gained. Nor had the Poles' overtures to Austria any happy result. The Austrian Government, which was planning the third partition, gave secret orders to arrest Kościuszko and Madaliński if they crossed the frontier, and the Austrian regiments received instructions to attack any Polish insurgents who should pass over into Galicia, providing that the Austrians were superior in number. The favourable answer obtained through a French intermediary from the Porte arrived after Kościuszko was in a Russian prison. By the irony of fate he never heard it, and it was only divulged thirty years after his death. Thus every diplomatic means failed the patriot, who was no match for the machinations of the European statecraft which has borne the lamentable fruits we have all witnessed. He was thrown on the resources with which he was more familiar: those of an ennobling idea and of the exactions of self-devotion in its cause. Immediately after his eyes had been opened at Szczekociny to the new peril that had burst upon his country he sent out another order, bidding his commanders to "go over the Prussian and Russian boundaries" into the provinces that were lawfully Poland's but which had been filched from her at the partitions, "and proclaiming there the freedom and the rising of the Poles, call upon the people oppressed and ground down by the yoke of slavery to join us and universally arm against the usurpers and their oppression": to summon the peasant population of Russia and Prussia to rise for freedom, "and to give the hand everywhere to those inhabitants desiring to return to the sweet liberties of their own country or desiring to obtain a free country."[1]

A peasant war could at the moment be only like a chimera, impossible of realization. Does this manifesto prove that Kościuszko, in a most perilous situation, abandoned by Europe, was pushed to a measure that he himself

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

knew was a desperate hope? Or was it the generous prompting of a great dream that beats down, that refuses to be disconcerted by the obstacles that stand before it—that in its failure we call visionary, but in its success the reform for which the world has waited? Be that as it may, the proclamation was not without its response. The Supreme Council modified its wording, and sent it into Great Poland —the so-called "Prussian" Poland—with the result that the Poles there took up arms.

A lion striving in the toils:—such is the simile by which a Polish historian describes the position of Kościuszko. No sign of practical sympathy for his nation in her gallant struggle for life reached him from any quarter outside his country. Nor was he beset only by external obstacles. Difficulties inside the state added to his cares. In answer to the complaint of a deputation from Warsaw, dissatisfied with the composition of the Supreme Council, he wrote from his tent, begging the people of the city, his "brothers and fellow-citizens," to remember that he, whom their delegates "saw," as he expresses it, "serving you and the country in the sweat of my brow . . . took up arms to ensure the happiness of every dweller in Poland. I will not lay it down until I behold the actual result of my desire." May, says he, his "vow made before God and the world calm all the anxieties of each citizen and defend them from irregular steps against the established Council."[1]

Sincerity was the groundwork of Kościuszko's dealings with his people. The greater the reverses which the cause of Poland encountered, the greater must be the courage with which to conquer them. Defeat must be regarded merely as the incentive to victory. Thus, a few days after the battle of Szczekociny, giving the nation a full report of the battle, in which he mitigated none of his losses, he ended with these words:

"Nation! This is the first test of the stability of thy spirit, the first day of thy Rising in which you may be sad, but not dismayed. Those guilty of thy defeat will amend it at

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

the first opportunity, and they whose courage has never deceived thee thirst to avenge thy misfortune of a moment. Wouldest thou be worthy of liberty and self-government if thou knowest not how to endure the vicissitudes of fate? . . . Nation! Thy soil shall be free. Only let thy spirit be high above all else." [1]

He then marched in haste towards Warsaw, whose safety was threatened. On the way tidings of a great disaster were brought to him—that of the capitulation of Cracow to the Prussians by its Polish commander, the national honour only redeemed by the gallant attempt of the Cracow burghers led by a book-keeper to defend the castle, to whom the Prussian general gave the honours of war as they marched out. The knowledge that the Prussians were in possession of the ancient capital of Poland, the most beloved of Polish cities, which had rung with the first vows of the national uprising, must have been bitter beyond expression to Kościuszko and to all Poland; but again he would permit neither himself nor his nation to meet this blow with anything but unshaken fortitude.

"We have sustained a loss"—thus his manifesto: "but I ask of courageous and resolute souls, ought this to make us fear? Can the loss of one town bid us despair of the fate of the whole commonwealth? . . . The first virtue of a free man is not to despair of the fate of his country." He speaks of Athens and the Persians, Rome after Cannæ, France driving the English out of their country, and the heroes of his own nation who had repulsed Sweden, Turkey, Russia, and the Tartars. "Other men of courage and of virtue have not doubted. Instead of breaking into profitless lamentations they flew to arms, and delivered the country from the invasions of their enemies. . . . I have told you, citizens, what my duty bade me tell you in the conditions of to-day: beware of indirect and alarmist impressions, beware of those who spread them. Trust in the valour of our armies and the fidelity of their leaders. . . . Let not Europe say: 'The Pole is swift to enthusiasm,

[1] *Op. cit.* K. Bartoszewicz, *History of Kościuszko's Insurrection.*

swifter to discouragement.' Rather let the nations say: 'The Poles are valiant in resolution, unterrified in disaster, constant in fulfilment.'"[1]

As if to prove the truth of his words, good news poured in from Lithuania, Samogitia, Courland. Bands of peasants were fighting in Lithuania. The Rising was general in Samogitia. Courland remembered that in the past she had been a member of the Polish Commonwealth, and her citizens gave in their act of adhesion to the Polish Rising.

Taking advantage of Frederick William's incapacity of profiting by his victory at Szczekociny, Kościuszko pushed rapidly on to Warsaw. By a series of skilful manœuvres, in the last days of June he arrived outside the city, and prepared to defend it at all costs.

Events then occurred in Warsaw of a nature to arouse his strong condemnation. Hearing of the loss of Cracow at the hand of a traitor, the Warsaw populace, with the memory of Targowica, many of whose confederates were still in their midst, staring them in the face, dragged out from the prisons certain Poles who had either been guilty or who were suspected of treason, and executed them then and there. Kościuszko was in camp in the neighbourhood of Warsaw. Any form of terrorism was abhorrent both to his private and national conscience. So deeply did he take to heart this outbreak of popular fury that one of his Lithuanian commanders, Prince Michał Ogiński, heard him declare that he would have preferred the loss of two battles as being less prejudicial to the Polish cause. As the head of the national government, he at once addressed the following letter to the city of Warsaw:—

"While all my labours and efforts are strained to the expulsion of the enemy, the news has reached me that an enemy more terrible than a foreign army is threatening us and tearing our vitals asunder. What happened in Warsaw yesterday has filled my heart with bitterness and sadness. The wish to punish delinquents was good, but why were

[1] *Akty Powstania Kościuszki.*

they punished without the sentence of a tribunal? Why have you outraged the authority and sanctity of the laws? . . . Is that the act of a people which has raised its sword and conquered foreign invaders in order to restore a well-ordered liberty and the rule of law, and the tranquil happiness which can only flow therefrom?"

Warning them that such conduct was the surest means of playing into the hands of the enemy whose desire was to promote public confusion and thus impede the national work:

"As soon as the turn of war permits me to absent myself for a moment from the duties entrusted to me, I shall be among you. Perhaps the sight of a soldier who daily risks his life for you will be agreeable to you; but I would that no sadness imprinted on my countenance shall mar that moment. I would that our joy shall then be full, both yours and mine. I would that the sight of me shall remind you that the defence of freedom and of our country should only knit and unite us together, that only in unity can we be strong, that by justice, not by violence, shall we be safe at home and respected in the world. Citizens! I conjure you for the sake of the nation and of yourselves wipe out a moment of madness by unison, by courage against the common enemies and by a henceforth constant respect of the laws and of those who are appointed in the name of the law. Know this, that he who refuses to be submissive to the law is not worthy of freedom."

He blames the Council of State for not having brought the prisoners to trial before, and bids this be done immediately.

"And thus fulfilling what public justice exacts, I from henceforth most severely forbid the people, for their welfare and salvation, all lawless riots, violence against the prisoners, laying hands on individuals, and punishing them by death. Whoso does not betake himself to the government by the proper way is a rebel, a disturber of the public peace, and as such must be punished. You whose ardent courage is fain to take action for the country, . . . employ

it against the enemies, come to my camp; we will receive you here as brothers." [1]

Many responded to this call. Kiliński, the shoemaker, with the cap of liberty planted rakishly on his head, as we may see him in his portraits, went to Kościuszko with the proposal that he should "catch" what we should call the slackers in the town. Kościuszko gave his hearty consent, and Kiliński despatched a crowd to the Commander's camp. Kościuszko was always singularly happy in his dealings with men and with the extraordinarily involved and delicate situations in which the domestic affairs of his country at this difficult period of her history placed him. His tact and common sense saved the situation. The guilty were punished. Order was restored.

The Russian and Prussian armies were advancing to invest Warsaw. The fortifications of the city were extremely weak. Kościuszko summoned the citizens to the work of strengthening them. Crowds toiled side by side throwing up trenches, singing over their spades the song then sung throughout Poland, calling the Pole to the labour without which he would be torn from his brothers, "a prisoner on his own soil." The sons of noble families enrolled themselves in Kiliński's burgher regiment, eager to serve under his command. On the 13th of July the Russian and Prussian armies, the King of Prussia being present with the latter, were seen from the walls of Warsaw. The alarm was given and the cannon fired in the castle square. The citizens took up their places in the entrenchments with an order and a precision that won high praise from Kościuszko as he went his round of inspection. With undisturbed equanimity Kościuszko prepared with his body of 26,000 men, of whom 16,000 were regulars, the rest peasants armed mainly with scythes and pikes, to defend Warsaw against 41,000 Russians and Prussians and 235 cannon. Despite the labour of the townsfolk, the defences of the city were weak and incomplete when the enemy first appeared; but during the fortnight while the hostile armies lay encamped

[1] T. Kościuszko. *Listy.*

before Warsaw, waiting for their heavy cannon, Kościuszko, by dint of his great gift of organization, put the fortifications into strong working order.

"His creative power," said of him one of his adversaries, a Prussian officer, who took part in the siege, "is worthy of admiration, since he, in the midst of creating an army, fought alone with it against the two best armies of Europe, having neither their stores nor their discipline. What would he not have shown himself at the head of a good army, since he did so much with peasants who knew nothing? Equally great in character, in devotion, in love of his country, he lived exclusively for her freedom and independence." [1]

The Poles, peasants, burghers and soldiers alike, with the inheritance of the fighting blood that runs in the veins of every son of Poland, with the fire of patriotism and of measureless devotion to the chief who led them, fought day after day the besieging army till it was beaten. The diary of the siege is the daily record of deeds of gallantry, of steadfastness, of a few carrying off the honours against many. Nor is there wanting a touch of that wild and romantic spirit of knightly adventure which runs all through the history of a country that for centuries defended Christendom against Turk and Tartar. Thus we find a Polish officer, Kamieński, who had already crowned himself with glory at Szczekociny, choosing to celebrate his name-day by inviting his friends to come with him and stir up the Russians, hitherto entirely passive in the operations of the siege. This, so to speak, birthday party was swelled by a band of eager Polish youths and by General Madaliński, who hastened to offer himself as a volunteer. They attacked a Russian battery, spiked the cannon and cut the gunners to pieces. Again and again Dombrowski, who was later to lead the Polish Napoleonic legions, and whose name stands at the head of the famous patriotic song so beloved of Poland, would at Kościuszko's laconic order, "Harass the enemy," sally forth on some daring expedi-

[1] A. Chołoniewski, *Tadeusz Kościuszko.*

tion. Or we hear of a sixteen hours' battle, the Poles, under a terrific fire, successfully driving the Prussians from height to height, Kościuszko himself commanding Kiliński's burgher regiment. No shirkers were to be found in Warsaw. Under the fearful Prussian bombardment the citizens coolly put out the fires, and the children ran into the streets to pick up the spent balls and take them to the arsenal, receiving a few pence for each one that they brought in. Once as Kościuszko and Niemcewicz stood on the ramparts with cannon-balls pattering about them, Niemcewicz heard a voice shouting into his ear through the din: "You are coming to supper with me, aren't you?"[1] The host who had the presence of mind to arrange a party under these circumstances was the President of Warsaw.

Even those who will not allow that Kościuszko was a military commander of the first capacity acknowledge that the defence of Warsaw was a magnificent feat. He was its life and soul. Organizing, encouraging, seeing into the closest details, the somewhat small but strongly built figure of the commander, clad in the peasant *sukmana* worn, after his example, by all his staff, including "Citizen General Poniatowski," was to be met with at every turn, his face lit up by that fire of enthusiasm and consecration to a great cause that confers upon its rough lineaments their strange nobility. From the 13th of July till the 6th of September, when the enemy abandoned the siege, Kościuszko never once took off his clothes, merely flinging himself on a little heap of straw in his tent on his return from his rounds to catch what sleep he could. His very presence inspired soldiers and civilians alike to redoubled ardour. The sweetness of his smile, the gentle and kindly word of the leader who yet knew how to be obeyed and who was famed for his courage in the field, left a memory for life with all who saw him. Passionate admiration, the undying love of men's hearts, were his. "Death or Victory is Kościuszko's watchword, therefore it is ours," said a Polish officer who served under him. "Father Tadeusz"

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *Recollections of My Times.*

was the name by which his soldiers called him. Invariably he spent some part of his day among his beloved peasants, and daily he recited with them public prayers. Often at night he and they together went up to the teeth of the Russian batteries on expeditions to spike the cannon. His inseparable companion, Niemcewicz, who slept with him in his tent till the end came, describes how the silence of these nights was broken hideously by the wild, shrill cry of the reapers, by the sudden roar of the cannon and crack of gunfire, by the groans of the wounded.

The defence of Warsaw was but half of the task that fell to Kościuszko. The minutest particulars were dealt with by him personally. He wrote letter after letter, commandeering everything in the country for the national cause: requisitioning linen from the churches to clothe his soldiers, who in the beginning of the siege were half naked, sending out his directions to the leaders of the Rising in the provinces, issuing proclamations, maintaining an enormous correspondence on affairs — it is said that the number of letters from his pen or signed by him at this time is almost incredible — giving audiences, and conducting the civil government of Poland.

Early in August the Prussian general, in a letter to Orłowski, Kościuszko's old friend, whom he had made commandant of Warsaw, summoned the city to surrender, while the King of Prussia addressed himself in similar language to Stanislas Augustus, whose part in the historical drama of the siege was that of an inert spectator. Kościuszko drily replied, "Warsaw is not in the necessity to be compelled to surrender." The Polish King replied, not drily, to the same effect. The position of the King was a curious one. Kościuszko treated him with all the respect due to his office. It was noticed on one public occasion how courteously the actual ruler of the state kissed the hand of the sovereign who was a cypher and virtually a prisoner in his palace. But, while guaranteeing the safety of his person, Kościuszko regarded with suspicion the man who had contributed to bring Poland to her present pass, and would allow him no share in the councils of the nation.

The fortunes of the Rising in the rest of the country were fluctuating, and in Lithuania, where Wilno fell, hopeless. In the beginning of September exultation ran through Warsaw at the news that every province of Great Poland had risen against their Prussian conquerors, and had carried off a signal success. Kościuszko characteristically took up the general joy as the text of a manifesto to the citizens of Warsaw, warning them that Prussia would, in the strength of desperation, redouble her efforts against them, and urging them to a dogged resistance. On the 4th of September, when Warsaw was preparing for a fresh and violent bombardment, Kościuszko wrote in haste to the President: "Beloved Zakrzewski, to-day, before daybreak, we shall certainly be attacked, and therefore I beg and conjure you for the love of our country that half of the citizens shall go to-day into the line, and that when they [the Prussians] attack all shall go out." [1]

The attack did not take place; and on the 6th of September the Prussians retired from Warsaw. The Russians retreated with the Prussians. They had remained almost immovable during the siege. Neither of these two collaborators in the destruction of Poland were on the best terms with each other, and Catherine II had no mind to share with Prussia the distinction, and still less the profits, of bringing Warsaw to its knees. Austria, although she was by way of being at war with Kościuszko, had held aloof from the siege, unwilling to commit herself, but determined on coming in for the spoils when the Rising should be crushed out.

Kościuszko then tasted one of the greatest triumphs of his life: the armies of the enemy were no more seen round the city he had saved.

"By your assiduity, your valour," the Supreme National Council wrote to him, "you have curbed the pride and power of that foe who, after pressing upon us so threateningly, has been forced to retreat with shame upon his covetous intentions. The Council knows only too well the

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

magnitude of the labours which you brought to the defence of this city, and therefore cannot but make known to you that most lively gratitude and esteem with which all this city is penetrated." [1]

Further, it expressed the wish that Kościuszko should show himself to a grateful people in some solemn function.

To this Kościuszko politely replied, declining to take any share in a public honour which it was against every dictate of his nature to accept.

"I have read with the greatest gratitude and emotion the flattering expressions of the Supreme National Council. I rejoice equally with every good citizen at the liberation of the city from the enemy armies. I ascribe this to nothing else but to Providence, to the valour of the Polish soldiers, to the zeal and courage of the citizens of Warsaw, to the efforts of the government. I place myself entirely at the disposition of the Supreme National Council: in what manner and when do you wish the celebration to take place? My occupations will not permit me the pleasure of being with you. I venture to trust that the God who has delivered the capital will deliver our country likewise. Then, as a citizen, not as a bearer of office, will I offer my thanks to God and share with every one the universal joy." [2]

He stayed in his camp and, in order to avoid an ovation, did not enter Warsaw. No public triumph was celebrated, but Masses of thanksgiving were sung in every church of the city.

Although he was the ruler of the state, Kościuszko lived in the utmost simplicity. He had refused the palace that was offered to him, and took up his quarters in a tent. When receiving guests his modest meal was spread under a tree. Asked by Ogiński why he drank no Burgundy, his reply was that Ogiński, being a great magnate, might permit himself such luxuries, "but not the commander who is now living at the expense of an oppressed commonwealth." When taken unawares by a royal chamberlain he was dis-

[1] *Op. cit.* [2] *Op. cit.*

covered blowing up his own fire, preparing some frugal dish.

In the first flush of joy at the liberation of Warsaw, he wrote to Mokronowski:

"Warsaw is delivered. The enemy, after several skirmishes, in which he lost many men, departed to-night. There are no longer either Muscovites or Prussians here: we will go and seek them out. Go, my friend, and seek them out, and deliver Lithuania from the invaders." [1]

But Kościuszko's steadiness of outlook was not for an instant relaxed by the signal success he had won. Untiring vigilance and redoubled activity were his order of the day, both for himself and his fellow-Poles. The short breathing-space that followed the retirement of the enemy was devoted by him to the pressing internal concerns of the nation, taxation and so forth. He was determined on perfect freedom for all classes and all religions in Poland. He ordered the erection of new Orthodox places of worship for the members of the Eastern Church. At the request of the Jews he gave orders for a Jewish legion to be enrolled, and commanded that this regiment should be equipped and treated on equal terms with the Polish soldiers of the Republic. The defeat of the Rising did not give time for the project to be realized.

He was a generous enemy. His Russian captives he treated with a courtesy and kindness that were ill repaid during his own march into Russia as a prisoner in Russian hands. He directed that services in their own language and faith should be held for the Prussian prisoners. A letter of his remains that he wrote to the Lutheran minister of the evangelical church in Warsaw, expressing his gratitude that this clergyman's pulpit had been a centre of patriotism, at a time "when nations who love freedom must win the right to their existence by streams of blood," and telling the pastor that he has issued orders for the Prussian prisoners to be taken to church in the "conviction that you will not refuse them your fatherly teaching." [2] This letter

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*
[2] *Tygodnik Illustrowany.* Warsaw, 1881.

and the snuff-box that accompanied it were preserved as relics in the pastor's family. The Bohemian and Hungarian prisoners were by Kościuszko's command released, "in memory of the bond that united the Hungarians and Czechs, when free countries, with the Polish nation."

The triumph over the Prussians was but a temporary respite. The Prussian army marched again upon Warsaw. The ambassador of the King of Prussia was treating in Petersburg with Catherine II for the third partition of Poland. She on her side sent Suvorov with a new and powerful army against the Poles. The Austrians were already in the country. Kościuszko, fighting for life against Russia and Prussia, had no army to send against the third of his foes. His generals were engaging the enemy in different parts of Poland, with great success on the part of Dombrowski in Great Poland, where events continued to be the only gleam of hope in these last days of the Rising, but with a terrible defeat in Lithuania inflicted on Sierakowski by the army of Suvorov, near Kościuszko's old home. Kościuszko deceived himself with no illusions; but neither fear nor despair found an entry into his soul. "He did not lose heart," writes one who never left him. "He turned and defended himself on all sides."[1] Wherever his presence was most urgently needed, thither he repaired. Accompanied only by Niemcewicz, he twice rode at full speed into Lithuania to rally the spirits of the soldiers there, depressed by defeat. He returned at the same breakneck pace, miraculously, says his companion, escaping capture by the Cossacks who were swarming over the country. On one of these occasions, Princess Ogińska, at whose house the travellers took a hasty dinner, pushing on immediately afterwards, gave Kościuszko a beautiful turquoise, set with diamonds. It was to be among the Russian spoils at Maciejowice.

The proclamation that Kościuszko addressed to the Lithuanian soldiers, found later in his handwriting among his letters, bears its own testimony to the soul of the leader

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *Recollections of My Times.*

who, in the face of strong armies marching upon his doomed nation, would give no entrance to despair or discouragement. Expressing the joy he experienced at being among the soldiers of Lithuania, on whose soil he was born:

"My brothers and comrades! If till now the results of your toil and struggles have not entirely corresponded to the courage and intrepidity of a free people, I ascribe this, not to the superior valour of our enemies (for what could there be more valiant than a Polish army?); but I ascribe it to a want of confidence in our own strength and courage, to those false and unfortunate ideas of the enemy's power which some fatality has sown among your troops. Soldiers valiant and free! Beware of those erroneous conceptions that wrong you; thrust them from your hearts; they are unworthy of Poles. . . . A few thousand of your ancestors were able to subdue the whole Muscovite state, to carry into bondage her Tsars and dictate to her rulers; and you, the descendants of those same Poles, can, wrestling for freedom and country, fighting for your homes, families and friends, doubt . . . if you will conquer. . . . Remember, I repeat, that on our united courage and steadfastness the country must depend for her safety, you for your freedom and happiness."

He threatens with the utmost rigour of martial law any who shall attempt to undermine the spirit of the army by representing the difficulty of opposing the enemy, or similar offences.

"It were a disgrace to any man to run away, but for the free man it were a disgrace even to think of flight."

"I have spoken to the cowards who, God grant, will never be found among you. Now do I speak to you, valiant soldiers, who have fulfilled the duties of courageous soldiers and virtuous citizens, who have driven the enemies even to the shores of the sea. . . . I speak to those who have in so many different battles spread wide the glory of the Polish name. Accept through me the most ardent gratitude of the nation."[1]

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*

In the same month, towards the end of September, he sent his country what proved to be his last message, still from his tent outside Warsaw.

"Freedom, that gift beyond estimate for man on earth, is given by God only to those nations which by their perseverance, courage, and constancy in all untoward events, are worthy of its possession. This truth is taught us by free nations which after long struggle full of labours, after protracted sufferings manfully borne, now enjoy the happy fruits of their courage and perseverance.

"Poles! You who love your country and liberty equally with the valiant nations of the south, you who have been compelled to suffer far more than others oppression and disdain; Poles, who, penetrated with the love of honour and of virtue, can endure no longer the contempt and destruction of the Polish name, who have so courageously risen against despotism and oppression, I conjure you not to grow cold, not to slacken in your ardour and in your constancy."

He tells them he knows only too well that in a war with the invaders their possessions are exposed to the danger of loss; "but in such a perilous moment for the nation as this we must sacrifice all for her and, desiring to enjoy lasting happiness, we must not shrink from measures, however bitter, to ensure it to ourselves. Never forget that these sufferings (if we may call such sacrifices for our country by that name!) are only passing, and that contrariwise the freedom and independence of our land prepare for you uninterrupted days of happiness." [1]

These were the numbered days of Kościuszko's Rising. To prevent Suvorov's juncture with the forces of the Russian general, Fersen, Kościuszko prepared to leave Warsaw and give Fersen battle. Beset from every quarter, he had been compelled to divide his army in order to grapple with the powerful armies against him. Sierakowski had, as we have seen, been defeated. There was not a moment to be lost. On the 5th of October Kościuszko confided to Niemcewicz that by daybreak on the following morning he

[1] K. Falkenstein, *Tadeusz Kościuszko.*

intended to set out to take command of Sierakowski's detachment. He spent the evening in the house of Zakrzewski, for the last time among his dearest and most faithful collaborators. The next morning by dawn he was off with Niemcewicz. They galloped over the bridge at Praga. A month later that bridge was to run red with the blood of Polish women and children; its broken pillars were to ring with the agonizing cries of helpless fugitives as they fled from Suvorov's soldiers only to find death in the river below. The life of Poland depending on his speed, for Fersen at the head of twenty thousand men was nearing both Warsaw and Suvorov, Kościuszko, with his companion, rode at hot haste. They only paused to change horses, remounting the miserable steeds of the peasants, sorry beasts with string for bridle and bit, and saddles without girths; but none others were to be found in a land laid waste by the Cossacks and by the marches of armed men. At four in the afternoon Kościuszko rode into Sierakowski's camp, where he at once held a council of war. The army under his command moved on October 7th. The day was fair, glowing with the lights of the Polish autumn. The soldiers were gay of heart, and sang as they marched through villages ruined by the Cossacks—to defeat. They halted at one of these villages where the Russians had been before them. The staff spent the night in the house of the squire. The furniture and the books had been hacked to pieces by the Cossacks. That evening a courier rode in to convey to Kościuszko the intelligence that Dombrowski had won a victory over the Prussians at Bydgoszcz—rechristened by Prussia, Bromberg—and had taken the town. It was Kościuszko's last hour of joy. He published the news through the camp, amidst the soldiers' acclamations, bidding them equal Dombrowski's prowess with their own. With an old friend of his Niemcewicz walked in the courtyard of the house where the staff was quartered. A flock of ravens wheeled above them. "Do you remember your Livy?" asked Niemcewicz's companion. "Those ravens are on our right. It is a bad sign." "It might be so for the

Romans," replied the poet, "but not for us. You will see that though it seems difficult we shall smash the Muscovites." "I think so too," answered the other.[1] In this spirit the Polish soldiers advanced to the fatal field of Maciejowice.

On the 8th of October rain poured, and the wearied soldiers rested. On the 9th the army went forward. Again over that last march the beauty of a Polish autumn shed a parting melancholy glory. The way led through forests flaming with the red, gold, and amber with which the fall of the year paints the woods of Poland. At four o'clock the forest was left behind, and the army emerged near the village of Maciejowice. Kościuszko, taking Niemcewicz and a few lancers, pushed on to reconnoitre the position. A scene of terrible splendour met the gaze of the doomed leader. The Vistula stretched before him, reddening in the sunset, and as far as the eye could reach the Russian army lay on its shores, their weapons flashing to the sinking sun. The hum of multitudes of men, the neighing of horses, the discordant clamours of a camp, filled the air. Advancing, Kościuszko with his little troop had a skirmish with the Cossacks. The general and Niemcewicz were twice surrounded, and narrowly escaped with their lives. Then with the evening the Polish army came up, and hostilities ceased.

The village of Maciejowice stood in a hollow outside a wood among marshes. The night quarters of the staff were in the manor-house belonging to the Zamoyski family. It, too, had been ravaged by Russian soldiers, the family portraits in a great hall on the first floor slashed by Cossack sabres, the contents of the library wantonly destroyed. No foreboding seemed to have hung over the Polish officers as they sat at supper. They were in high spirits, and peals of laughter greeted the quaint scraps that Niemcewicz read out from a handful of old Polish newspapers he had hit upon intact in a chest. Shortly after supper Kościuszko lay down for a few hours' sleep; at midnight he rose and dictated to

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *Notes sur ma Captivité à Saint-Pétersbourg.*

Niemcewicz his instructions for the day. Before sunrise the Russians were moving to the attack, and Kościuszko was on his horse. Impelled by necessity, he gave orders to fire a village that lay in the line of the Russian advance. The lamentations of the women and children as they fled into the woods from the flames that were destroying their all, the wild cries of frightened birds and beasts, the volumes of smoke rising over ruined homes, combined to make up a scene of horror, unforgettable by those who witnessed it, and that must have wrung a heart such as Kościuszko's. Under a steady Polish fire the Russian soldiers and cannon, advancing through mud and marsh, sank at every step. For three hours the Poles kept the enemy at bay, standing against his terrific fire with artillery that was no match for his. The Polish staff were covered with branches that the Russian balls sent crashing from the trees. Kościuszko himself fired the cannon with an accuracy of aim under which the Russians wavered. It appeared as though they were about to retreat. But the enemy's superiority of numbers, the strength of his artillery, began to tell, and his heavy fire sowed death among the Polish ranks. A shell burst between Kościuszko, his aide-de-camp, Fiszer, and Niemcewicz, but left them unharmed. What Niemcewicz, who lived through it, describes as a hailstorm of bullets, grapeshot and shells, poured down upon the Polish lines. How any came out alive to tell the tale was to him a marvel. The dead lay in heaps. Not a Pole stirred from his post under this rain of fire. Each fell where he stood. Every artillery horse was by now killed or mutilated. Then at that moment —it was past midday—the Polish cannon were silent: the ammunition had run out. Riding madly through the Polish ranks, Kościuszko shouted to his soldiers to fight on, to keep up heart, Poniński with fresh supplies was coming up. He did not come, and the rumour of treachery, never, however, proved, gathered about a name that was already of ill repute to a Polish ear. Galled by standing motionless without ammunition, a Polish battalion rashly charged, and the Russian cavalry broke through the

Polish line. Niemcewicz, rushing up to repulse them at the head of a Lithuanian squadron, was wounded, and his men dispersed. Another faithful friend of Kościuszko, Kopeć, struggling to cut a way through for his general, and thrice wounded, was taken prisoner. Without hope of victory, the Polish riflemen fired till their last cartridge was spent. The battalion of Działyński—he who had been among the most ardent propagators of the Rising in its beginning—died to the last man. One who passed over the battlefield before the close of day shuddered at the sight of those serried rows of the dead, testifying by the order in which they lay to the unbroken discipline in which they had died. Of that battlefield, such is the phrase, "the enemy only remained master by treading over the ranks of the corpses of our soldiers, still occupying after death the same place they had occupied in the battle." [1] A final desperate effort was made by Kościuszko to form up a front with a small band of his soldiers. His third horse was killed beneath him. He mounted another, when a wave of Russian cavalry swept in behind the broken remains of the Polish army, and all was over. Fighting in a hand-to-hand struggle in a marsh, Kościuszko fell, covered with wounds, unconscious, and was taken prisoner by three young Russian ensigns. The story that he fell crying *Finis Poloniæ*—the last sentiment ever to be heard on Polish lips or harboured in a Polish heart—is a Prussian fiction. Only two thousand of the Poles who had fought at Maciejowice returned to Warsaw from that tragic and heroic field. Conducted to the manor where a few hours before he had slept by the side of Kościuszko, Niemcewicz found there Kościuszko's devoted officers, Sierakowski, Kniaziewicz, who had commanded the left wing at the battle, Kopeć and Fiszer—all prisoners of war. The last drop was added to their cup of bitterness when they heard that nothing was known of the fate of their beloved leader, save the report that he was slain.

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *Notes sur ma Captivité à Saint-Pétersbourg.*

Chapter Eight

The Russian Prison

LATE in the afternoon of that ill-fated day a stretcher, roughly and hastily put together, was carried by Russian soldiers into the courtyard of the manor. The prisoners saw that on it lay the scarcely breathing form of Kościuszko. His body and head were covered with blood. He was insensible and apparently at the point of death. The dead silence as he was carried in was only broken by the sobs of his Polish officers. The surgeon dressed his wounds, and he was then taken to a large hall and left to the companionship of Niemcewicz, with Russian grenadiers posted inside each door. In the evening the hall was required by Fersen for dinner and his council of war, and Kościuszko, still unconscious, was transferred, Niemcewicz following him, to a room over the cellar.

Towards the end of the battle the fiercest contest had raged around the Zamoyski manor. At the last a hundred Polish soldiers had in the desperation of extremity defended the house, and fought it out till no round of ammunition remained to them. The Russians then burst in, and despatched at the point of the bayonet every Pole in every room of the building, including the cellar, where the only survivors of the heroic band took up their final stand. The bloodshed stopped when each man of them was dead or dying, and not before. The moans of those lying in their last agony in this cellar of death were, when the laughter and merrymaking of the Russian officers died away with the course of the hours, the only sound that Niemcewicz heard, as by the couch of his passionately loved and apparently dying leader he lay through the bitter cold of the October

night, weeping not only for a dear friend, but for his country. At sunrise Kościuszko spoke, as if waking from a trance. Seeing Niemcewicz, with his arm bandaged, beside him, he asked why his friend was wounded, and where they were. "Alas! we are prisoners of Russia," said Niemcewicz. "I am with you, and will never leave you." [1] Tears rose to Kościuszko's eyes, as he made reply that such a friend was a consolation in misfortune. The entrance of Russian officers, deputed to keep guard over them, interrupted the conversation. They were watched each moment, and their words and actions reported. Later on Fersen came in and addressed Kościuszko courteously, speaking in German, which Niemcewicz—for Kościuszko knew neither German nor Russian—interpreted. At midday a deafening discharge of musketry and cannon smote painfully upon the prisoners' ears: it was the salvo of joy for the Russian victory.

On the 13th of October the Russian army marched, and Kościuszko and his fellow-Poles began their long, sad journey to a Russian prison. Kościuszko travelled in a small carriage with a surgeon, Niemcewicz and the Polish generals in a separate conveyance, while the rest of the prisoners went on foot. Detachments of Russian cavalry rode in front and behind. An immense train of wagons, filled with the loot carried off from Polish homes, Polish cannon captured on the field, a car bearing the Polish flags with their national device of eagles, embroidered heavily with silver, added the final drop of bitterness to the lot of the defeated sons of a proud and gallant race. On the halt held the following day messengers came up from Warsaw, bringing Kościuszko his personal effects and a letter from the Supreme National Council, conveying expressions of the highest eulogy and deep sympathy, with a present of four thousand ducats, of which Kościuszko gave half to his fellow-prisoners.

The scene in Warsaw when the news of Kościuszko's captivity reached it was, writes a Pole who was then in the

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *Notes sur ma Captivité à Saint-Pétersbourg.*

town, the saddest sight he ever saw.[1] In every public place, in every class of society, in every home, the one refrain, broken by sobs, was: "Kościuszko is no more." The leader was gone; but the men and women who were met wandering, weeping, in the streets, wringing their hands and mourning for the man they and the country had lost together, had no thought of giving up the struggle for their nation. "Neither the duty of a citizen nor thy example permits us to despair for our country," wrote the National Council to Kościuszko. The war was carried on, and the citizens of Warsaw worked in their thousands, as in Kościuszko's time, fortifying the town against Suvorov's siege.

Together with their dispatches to Kościuszko, the National Council sent a letter to Fersen, offering to give up all their Russian prisoners in exchange for Kościuszko alone. The Russian general refused. Fersen received orders to join Suvorov, and the prisoners with a large detachment of Russian troops under Krushtzov were sent on into Russia by an immensely roundabout route.

The first part of the march led through Polish territory. The Polish prisoners watched, powerless, the ravages committed on their unhappy country by the army with which they travelled. The contents of mansion, shop, hut, were alike stolen. Even children's toys swelled the booty. Although the wound on Kościuszko's head began to improve, he had lost the use of his left leg and could not move without being carried; yet a Russian guard watched him incessantly. The rumour had gone round the Polish countryside that he had escaped from Maciejowice, and that the Russians had some feigned captive in his place. In their halts Krushtzov therefore insisted on the Polish proprietor of the villages, or the chief inhabitants of the towns, where the procession passed the night, presenting themselves in Kościuszko's room to see with their own eyes that he was in truth the prisoner of Russia. In strong indignation at this insult to Kościuszko, Niemcewicz writes, with excusable bitterness, that hitherto men had been known to

[1] M. Ogiński, *Mémoires*. Paris, 1826.

make a show of wild beasts; now "a wild beast showed off the man."[1] At these interviews no free speech was possible between the fellow-Poles, as the guards were always present. They could only exchange the sympathy of sorrowing looks and equally sad, but guarded, words.

So long as the Army marched through Poland, Kościuszko had the mournful satisfaction of receiving here and there on the road some last token of recognition and honour from his compatriots. At one spot where the Russian officers quartered themselves on the castle of the Sanguszkos, while Kościuszko and his companions were lodged in the wretched village inn, the Princess, unable to show her compassion in any other way, provided the Poles with all their meals, prepared by her *chef*. Another Polish princess, whose mansion was twenty miles distant, and who was no other than Ludwika Lubomirska, sent over her young son with clothes and books for the prisoners. They were still in this village when a courier arrived, bearing the news of the fall of Warsaw, and of the massacre of Praga which has gained for the name of Suvorov its eternal infamy in the history of Poland. Thirteen thousand of the civilian inhabitants of Warsaw, men, women, and children, were put to the sword, immolated in the flames, or drowned in the Vistula as they fled over a broken bridge before the fury of the Russian soldiers. Thus ended the Rising of Kościuszko. If under one aspect it closed in failure, on the other side it had proved to the admiration and belated sympathy of all Europe how Poles could fight for freedom. Moreover, it laid the foundation for those later Polish insurrections in the cause of liberty which, no less heroic than the Rising of Kościuszko, and with a sequel as tragic, are honoured among the world's great deeds of patriotism.

Following close on this blow came painful partings between Kościuszko and his devoted comrades, Sierakowski, Kniaziewicz, Kopeć, and the remaining Polish officers. Kościuszko, with Niemcewicz and Fiszer, were separated from the main army, and sent on under the escort of a small

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *op. cit.*

body of Russian officers and soldiers. With hearts torn by grief they said farewell to their friends, never expecting to see them again. Haunted by the thought of the unknown fate before them and by the terrible news from their country, they set out through a snowstorm that blotted out all discernible objects, the horses sinking into the snow which clogged the carriage wheels at every turn. Rigorously guarded, each word of their conversation noted and handed on to the commander, the prisoners were conveyed in as great secrecy as possible, and were not allowed to halt at any large town. At Czernihov two old Cossack officers brought them a tray of fine apples, telling them—they spoke in Polish—that Polish blood flowed in their veins and that they deeply deplored the lot of the captives. More they were about to add when the Russian guard drove them off. Traversing Eastern Lithuania, a country that had so lately been Poland's, the people watched them pass, not in curiosity, but rather with looks of interest and compassion. As they changed horses before a posting-house in Mohylev a tall, thin old peasant, in Polish costume, was observed by the prisoners among the groups that pressed around them to be gazing at them with eyes filled with pity, till at last, unable to contain himself longer, he broke his way through to them, weeping, only to be thrust aside by the Russian knout. At Witebsk, again, a band of recruits in the Russian army respectfully uncovered their heads as Kościuszko passed, and he knew that they were Poles. These little incidents cast their transitory gleam over the journey north, as the party pushed on to Petersburg, across the desolate snow-covered plains of Russia, through the piercing cold of the Russian winter. At night the fires of the aurora borealis threw a strange, blood-red light over the white, unending country. The gloomy silence that held all nature in its grip was only broken by an occasional crash of a bough under the weight of snow in the great forests through which the party passed, or by the wild, sad music of the Russian songs with which the postilions beguiled the night hours of their journey. Such was the accompaniment

to Kościuszko's forebodings for his future and that of his fellow-captives, and to his greater anguish over the fate of his nation.

Petersburg was reached on the 10th of December. The prisoners were hurried at night through side streets, and then put into boats and taken across the Neva into the heart of the Peter-Paul fortress. Here they were separated, Niemcewicz and Fiszer led to a large hall, and Kościuszko conducted to another room. That was the last they saw of each other for two years. On the morning after his first night of solitary confinement Niemcewicz was brought coffee in a cup that he recognized as Kościuszko's property. This alone told him that Kościuszko was not far off; and cheered by that thought he was able, says he, "to resign himself to everything." [1]

The narrative of Niemcewicz, to which we owe the story of each step of the journey into Russia, can now, beyond a vague report that the poet from time to time gleaned from his jailors, tell us next to nothing more of Kościuszko in a Russian prison. Detailed information from other sources is wanting, and we have only a few certain facts to go upon. For the first few months of his imprisonment, Kościuszko was kept in the fortress as a rebel, not as a vanquished enemy. "Rebel" was the term by which he was officially styled. Before December was out, he was subjected to the usual ordeal of the Russian prison: the inquisition. A paper was handed in to him, with a long string of questions, which he was ordered to answer in his own handwriting, on the relations of the Rising with foreign powers, its object, its promoters, and so on. It also contained a close catechetical scrutiny upon the relations he had held with specified persons, and on the ins and outs of different incidents during the insurrection, that was a severe tax on the memory of a wounded man. All that is positively known of the inquisition are the questions and Kościuszko's replies. What lay beneath it—what were the means of moral torture wielded by those who conducted the inquiry, the

[1] J. Niemcewicz, *op. cit.*

pitfalls spread for a prisoner who lay helpless, racked by pain from the wound in his head; what was the ingenuity employed to wrest his answers from him, whether he willed or no, are equally well known, says Kościuszko's historian, Korzon, who had himself more than sixty years later languished in a Russian dungeon, to those acquainted with the methods of the Russian political prison. That Kościuszko, being at the mercy of the enemy who interrogated him, spoke as openly as he did regarding the measures that he was prepared to take with France and Turkey against Russia, is eloquent, says the same historian, of the force of his character and of his conquest over physical infirmity.[1] His answers are short and pithily clear. He speaks the truth, says another Pole, or he does not speak at all.[2]

His high qualities began to gain upon his conquerors. At the outset Catherine II in her correspondence speaks contemptuously of him as "a fool in all the meaning of that word"; but presently her language changes to a more complimentary, if still patronizing, tone, and after some months she had him removed from the fortress and conveyed to a private house, later to the Orlov palace, as a place more suited to his physically shattered condition. He was allowed to be carried into the garden and to take drives in the town under guard. He was provided with a good table, from which he daily sent meals to the Polish prisoners in the fortress. Always deft with his fingers, he whiled away the hours by working at a turning-lathe. His handiwork is preserved in Polish museums. The wounds he had carried from Maciejowice, unskilfully tended by the Russian surgeons, remained unhealed: grief of mind for his country did the rest. An English doctor named Rogerson attended him. He wrote: "The physical and mental forces of that upright man are nearly exhausted, as the result of long sufferings. I am losing hopes of curing him. He has suffered so much in body and soul that his organism is entirely destroyed."[3]

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.* [2] *Op. cit.* [3] *Op. cit.*

Two years passed thus. The third partition of Poland was carried out by Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1795 while the man who had offered his life and liberty to avert it lay in a Russian prison. Not one foot of Poland's soil was left to her. In the November of 1796 there was an unusual stir in the fortress, which to the Poles immured there could mean only one thing: the death of their arch-enemy, Catherine II. After a few days the suspicion was confirmed. The Empress was scarcely in her coffin before the son she had hated, now Paul I, entered Kościuszko's prison, accompanied by his retinue and by the Tsarevitch, Alexander, on whom for a transitory moment the fondest hopes of Poland were to rest, and whose friendship with a son of the house of Czartoryski is one of the romances of history. The Tsarevitch embraced Kościuszko, and his father uttered the words: "I have come, General, to restore your liberty." The shock was so overwhelming that the prisoner could not answer. The Tsar seated himself by Kościuszko's side: and then ensued this remarkable colloquy between the Tsar of all the Russias and the hero of Polish freedom, which is known to us more or less textually from a Russian member of the court who was present, and also from the accounts of the Polish prisoners, who eagerly picked up its details which Niemcewicz collected and recorded.

"I always pitied your fate," said the Tsar, who, in the earlier days of his reign, through the wild eccentricity that was more correctly speaking madness, was not devoid of generous instincts; "but during my mother's rule I could do nothing to help you. But I have now taken it as the first duty of my sovereignty to confer freedom upon you. You are now free."

Kościuszko bowed and replied:

"Sire, I have never grieved for my own fate, but I shall never cease to grieve over the fate of my country."

"Forget your country," said Paul. "Her turn has come as to so many other states of which only the memory has

remained in history; and in that history you will always be gloriously remembered."

"Would rather that I should be forgotten," was Kościuszko's reply, "and my country remain free. Certainly many states have fallen, but there is no example like the fall of Poland. . . . It was in the very moment of her uprising, precisely when she desired to attain a free government, precisely when she showed the greatest energy and patriotism, that Poland fell."

"But confess," went on the Tsar, "that this freedom of yours did not agree with the interests of the neighbouring states, and that your countrymen themselves served as the instrument of the destruction of their country."

"Excuse me, Your Imperial Majesty, from further explanations on that point, for I can neither think nor speak without strong emotion about my country's fall."

"This does not offend me," graciously replied Paul; "but on the contrary I esteem you the more for it, because this is the first time that I have spoken to a citizen whom I recognize as really loving his country. If at least the greater part of the Poles thought as you do, Poland might still exist."

"Sire," said Kościuszko, with deep feeling, "that greater part certainly existed. If only Your Imperial Majesty could have been the eyewitness of that virtue, that patriotism, of which they gave no common proofs in the last Rising! I know how men tried to give Your Imperial Majesty the falsest and worst ideas about our nation, representing them in the eyes of the whole world as a horde of noisy ruffians, intolerant of rule and law, and therefore unworthy of existence. Virtuous and universal zeal only for the bettering of the country's lot, for freedom from oppression and disorder, was called rebellion; the best desires of good citizens were accounted as a crime, and as the result of a brawling Jacobinism: finally, not only against all justice, but against the true interests of Russia, the destruction of the unhappy country by the complete dismemberment of her territory was given out as the most salutary counsel. How many out-

rages, perilous for the lot of every state, have resulted from it!" said he, in words of which we all too clearly have seen the truth to-day. "How many fearful consequences, what universal misery for its victims!"

"See what fire!" said the Tsar, turning to his officers.

"Pardon me, Sire," said Kościuszko. "Perhaps I was carried too far—perhaps——"; he hesitated.

The Tsar hastened to reassure him that he had given the monarch food for thought, he had spoken to his heart. Kościuszko must ask for every comfort he required till he left Petersburg, and must trust Paul "as a friend."[1]

This was the first of more than one interview either in the Orlov palace or the Winter Palace between Kościuszko and the Tsar. At the second Kościuszko begged for the release of all the Polish prisoners of the Rising scattered in Russia and Siberia. He and his comrades were now permitted to visit each other. Niemcewicz has recorded his painful impression as he saw his friend for the first time since they had entered the prison together, lying with bandaged head and crippled limb, with ravaged nerves, speaking faintly and making signs to warn Niemcewicz when the latter raised his voice that spies were listening at the door.

But Paul's pardon was not unconditional. Before granting a general amnesty he required of Kościuszko and the leading Polish prisoners an oath of allegiance to himself and his successors. Thus Kościuszko was called upon to face the bitterest sacrifice that even he had yet had to confront. On him depended whether the prison gates should be opened to twelve thousand fellow-Poles. At the cost of the most sacred feelings of his heart, after private consultations with Ignacy Potocki, who was among the prisoners in the fortress, and with whom he agreed that there was no alternative but to submit, Kościuszko accepted the intolerable conditions laid upon him, and took the oath. Upon the agony of that internal conflict he, with his accustomed reticence, remained silent. That there was some external pressure of a most harassing description on the part of the Russian

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

ministers which tore the oath from his lips is proved by his own words in his letter to the Tsar two years later. He was also compelled to accept the galling gift of a sum of money from the Tsar: of which we shall hear more.

His intention was now to go to America, by Sweden and England. Rogerson, whose strong esteem he had gained, wrote to his friend, the Russian ambassador in London, begging him for the sake of their friendship to do all that he could for Kościuszko, and entering into minute recommendations to ensure the latter's well-being in England: which was faithfully carried out. Kościuszko had aroused a like admiration in the imperial family. At the farewell audience in the Winter Palace he was received with a pomp detestable to his every instinct, and carried in Catherine's wheel chair into the Tsar's private room. The Tsar and the Tsarina loaded him with gifts, while he, on his part, offered the empress a snuff-box of his own making, which she held in her hand during her coronation, showing it with pride to Rogerson.[1] These presents from the Russian court were intensely galling to Kościuszko's feelings. He refused as many as he could. The rest that he accepted under compulsion he got rid of as soon as possible. His return present to the Tsaritsa was an act of courtesy, characteristic of Kościuszko's chivalry to women; but he received with a marked coldness the advances of the Tsar, showered upon him in the moment's caprice, as was the manner of Paul I.[2] On the 19th of December, 1796, he turned his back upon Russia for ever and, accompanied by Niemcewicz, departed for Sweden.

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.* [2] *Ibid.*

Chapter Nine

Exile

THE great and romantic chapter of Kościuszko's history is now closed. Twenty more years of life remained to him. Those years were passed in exile. He never again saw his country.

It was in deep depression that Kościuszko set out for Sweden. Besides Niemcewicz, he had with him a young Polish officer who had eagerly offered himself to serve Kościuszko in any capacity till he reached the United States. He carried Kościuszko to carriage or couch, and distracted his sadness by his admirable playing on the horn and by his sweet singing. He died—still young—of fever in Cuba.

In the short northern day of four hours the party made a long and tedious journey, impeded by the bitter weather, through the pine forests of Finland. The country was buried in snow, and so rough was the travelling that the three Poles had to pass a night in the common hall of the inn, with pigs as their sleeping companions. Kościuszko's fame had spread all over Europe. Sweden held yourself proud that he was her guest, greeting him as "one of the greatest men of our country." At Stockholm the notables of the city crowded to pay their respects—on foot, in order not to disturb the invalid with the sound of carriages and horses. By temperament Kościuszko shrank from either publicity or fame; and in his state of physical and mental suffering he had no heart for the honours showered upon him. He systematically discouraged the forerunners of the modern interviewers who were eager for "copy," and as far as he could be kept to himself, his relaxations being his

own drawing, and the music of which he was always passionately fond, and with which his Swedish admirers were careful to provide him. A Swedish writer, who was staying in the same hotel, desired to visit him, but dared not do so, partly for fear of intruding upon him, and partly because he owned that he could not keep from tears at the sight of the Polish patriot, so deeply had Kościuszko's history affected the public of those days. Finally, he made the plunge, and asked Kościuszko's permission for a young Swedish painter to take his portrait. Kościuszko courteously refused; but an engraver surreptitiously took notes of his features, and reproduced them in a likeness that travelled all over Sweden, depicting him, as our own Cosway did afterwards, reclining, "his face," says the Swedish description, "expressing the sufferings of his soul over his country's fate."[1]

After three weeks' passage in a small merchant vessel, the Poles landed at Gravesend, and thence reached London. "Kościuszko, the hero of freedom, is here," announced the *Gentleman's Magazine;* and indeed the English papers were full of him. He stayed in Leicester Square. The whole of London made haste to visit him. The celebrities of the day, including Fox and Sheridan, the reigning beauties and the rulers of fashion, all alike thronged to his rooms. The sight of Kościuszko awoke in Walter Savage Landor, then a mere youth, the sympathy for Poland that he never lost, to which English literature owes one of his *Imaginary Conversations*. The Whig Club presented Kościuszko with a sword of honour. The beautiful Duchess of Devonshire pressed upon him a costly ring, which went the way of most of the gifts that Kościuszko received: he gave them away to friends. All such tokens of admiration had never counted for anything in Kościuszko's life, and now they were the merest baubles to a man who had seen his country fall. In the portrait that, against his wish and without his knowledge, Cosway painted, said by Niemcewicz to resemble him as none other, we see him, lying with bandaged head in an

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

attitude of deep and sorrowful musing. The face, the whole attitude, are those of one absorbed by an overmastering grief that filled his soul to the exclusion of all else. The fine portrait has found its way to Kościuszko's native land, and is now in Cracow. Both in Stockholm and London the official representative of Russia, by order of the Tsar, kept Kościuszko under daily watch. The Ambassador in London was, however, so genuinely kind as to draw a letter of thanks from Kościuszko before he left England.

Bristol was at that time the English port of sailings for America. It was there that after a fortnight's stay in London Kościuszko betook himself, passing a night in Bath on the way. He found in Bristol old friends of his American days. He was the guest of one of them, the United States consul, as long as he stayed in the town.[1] A guard of honour received him, long processions of the townsfolk flocked to catch a glimpse of him, a military band played every evening before the consulate, and the city gave him a handsome silver service. An Englishman who visited him in Bristol records the impression that Kościuszko made on all who saw him, of one whose whole being breathed devotion to his country. The course down the Avon to the point where Kościuszko's ship lay at anchor was in the nature of a triumphal progress.

For nearly two months Kościuszko and his Polish companions tossed on the Atlantic, running on one occasion a near chance of shipwreck. Philadelphia was their destination. Once in America, Kościuszko trod soil familiar and dear to him. "I look upon America," he said, replying in French to the deputation of Philadelphia's citizens who came on board to welcome him, "as my second country." The cannon from the fort and a storm of cheering greeted him as he landed, and amidst cries of "Long live Kościuszko!" the citizens drew his carriage to his lodging.

Washington had just ceased to be President. His successor, Adams, wrote congratulating Kościuszko on his

[1] The house is now marked by a commemorative tablet, erected by the members of the Spiridion-Kliszczewski family.

arrival, "after the glorious efforts you have made on a greater theatre."[1] Washington wrote also: "Having just been informed of your safe arrival in America, I was on the point of writing to you a congratulatory letter on the occasion, welcoming you to the land whose liberties you have been so instrumental in establishing, when I received your favour of the 23rd. [A letter of Kościuszko's with a packet he had been requested to convey to Washington.] . . . I beg you to be assured that no one has a higher respect and veneration for your character than I have; and no one more sincerely wished, during your arduous struggle in the cause of liberty and your country, that it might be crowned with success. But the ways of Providence are inscrutable, and mortals must submit. I pray you to believe that at all times and under any circumstances it would make me happy to see you at my last retreat, from which I never expect to be more than twenty miles again."[2]

This letter is the last indication of any intercourse between the two. Washington at this period was regarded with no favour by the democracy. Kościuszko's sympathies were with the latter and with Jefferson, and he never accepted the invitation to Washington's home in Mount Vernon.

Yellow fever breaking out in Philadelphia, Kościuszko went for a time elsewhere: first to New York, to the beautiful house of his old friend and commander, Gates, later to New Brunswick, where he stayed with another friend of the past, General White, in a family circle that attracted his warm regard.

His memory went down through the family, and Mrs. White's grandson often heard his grandmother tell of her Polish guest, and how she held no other man his equal—with the patriotic exception of Washington! White was a valuable auxiliary to Kościuszko in a somewhat intricate piece of business. To live on the gift of money which Paul I had given him was an odious position that Kościuszko would not tolerate. It was his intention to return

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*
[2] *Writings of George Washington,* ed. Jared Sparks.

it, and to claim from Congress the arrears of the stipend owing to him from 1788, and that through some mischance had never reached him. With White's assistance a portion of the American sum was handed over to him; but the return of the Tsar's present was not so easy. Niemcewicz pointed out that such a proceeding would infallibly rouse the revenge of the Tsar upon the Poles in his dominions. This decision was against Kościuszko's personal feeling on the matter. He bided his time, and, as we shall see, at a more propitious moment took his own counsel.

A bevy of visitors and admirers again surrounded Kościuszko in Philadelphia. Among them were the future Louis Philippe, with the Princes de Montpensier and Beaujolais. They called themselves citizens of France, and sported the tricolour. They often spent the evening with Kościuszko, and on their farewell visit Kościuszko gave the younger prince a pair of fur boots. But the man with whom Kościuszko was on the closest and warmest terms of intimacy was Thomas Jefferson. The pastel portrait that Kościuszko painted of this dear friend is preserved among Poland's national relics. "He," wrote Jefferson to Gates, "is the purest son of liberty among you all that I have ever known, the kind of liberty which extends to all, not only to the rich."[1] To Jefferson Kościuszko confided the testament of his American property, which he had been granted from Congress on the close of the War of Independence, and which lay in Ohio on the site of the present city of Columbus.

Some time in the March of that year a packet of letters from Europe was handed to Kościuszko. His emotion on reading the contents was so strong that, despite his crippled condition, he sprang from his couch and staggered without a helping hand to the middle of the room. "I must return at once to Europe," he said to General White, with no further explanation. Jefferson procured him a passport to France under a false name, and then with only Jefferson's knowledge, with no word either to Niemcewicz or to his

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

servant, for both of whom he left a roll of money in a drawer in his cupboard, he sailed for France. Before he embarked he wrote out the will that he sent to Jefferson in which, more than half a century before the war of North and South, the Polish patriot pleaded for the emancipation of the negro slaves.

"I, Thaddeus Kosciuszko"—the text is the original English—"being just in my departure from America, do hereby declare and direct that should I make no other testamentary disposition of my property in the United States thereby authorize my friend Thomas Jefferson to employ the whole thereof in purchasing negroes from among his own as any others and giving them liberty in my name, in giving them an education in trades or otherwise, and in having them instructed for their new condition in the duties of morality which may make them good neighbours, good fathers or mothers, husbands or wives, and in their duties as citizens, teaching them to be defenders of their liberty and country and of the good order of society and in whatsoever may make them happy and useful, and I make the said Thomas Jefferson my executor of this.

"T. Kosciuszko.

"5th day of May, 1798."

There seems to have been some difficulty in the way of putting the bequest into effect, perhaps, suggests Korzon, on account of Jefferson's advanced years by the time that the testator was dead. It was never carried out; but in 1826 the legacy went to found the coloured school at Newark, the first educational institute for negroes to be opened in the United States, and which bore Kościuszko's name.

The secret of his movements is easily deciphered in a man of Kościuszko's stamp. It was the call of his country that drew him back to Europe.

For we have reached that period of Polish history which belongs to the Polish legions: the moment of brilliance and of glory when, led by the Polish flags, Polish soldiers in

the armies of Napoleon shed their blood on every battlefield of Europe. In the hope of regaining from Napoleon the freedom of their country, the former soldiers of the Republic, no less than the rising young Polish manhood, panting with passionate patriotism and with the warlike instinct of their race, enrolled themselves in the French army. "Poland has not perished while we live," was the song, the *March of Dombrowski,* with which they went to battle, and which is now the Polish national anthem. The leader of the legions was the gallant Dombrowski. "Fellow-citizens! Poles!" cried he in his manifesto to his nation in language strangely applicable to the present hour. "Hope is rising! . . . The legions are forming. . . . Let us fight for the common cause of all the nations, for freedom."[1]

In these early days Napoleon's betrayal of Poland was a tale still untold; but to the end the Poles fought by his side with a hope in him that only died with his fall, with a love and loyalty to his person that survived it.

Such was the news that travelled across the Atlantic to Kościuszko with dispatches that informed him that his two nephews, sons of his sister Anna, who had borne arms in the Rising, had been sent in the name of Kościuszko by their mother to Bonaparte with the prayer that they might serve in his ranks. By the end of June, 1798, Kościuszko was in France, in Bayonne.

The accustomed acclamations greeted him there. Some *fête-champêtre* was arranged at which Kościuszko, the guest of honour, watched peasants laying their ploughs at the feet of soldiers, in exchange for the weapons of war. "It would have been thus in Poland," he was heard to murmur to himself, "if fate had not betrayed us."

In Paris public toasts to the defender of the nation who was pouring her blood like water in the cause of France were the order of the hour. Kościuszko was moved to tears as he listened to the utterance of these good wishes for his country's liberation. His early task was to confer with the various foreign ambassadors and with Dombrowski's adju-

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

tant, Dombrowski being in Italy. But before this he definitely broke the bond between himself and Paul I. He returned the money received from the Tsar with the following letter:—

"I am profiting by the first moments of liberty which I am enjoying under the protecting laws of the greatest and noblest of nations to send you back the gift which the semblance of your benevolence and the atrocious conduct of your ministers forced me to accept. If I agreed to this, Sire, ascribe it only to the irresistible strength of the attachment which I bear to my compatriots, the companions of my misfortunes, and to my hopes of still serving my country. Yes, I repeat it, Sire, and desire to proclaim it to you. It seemed to me that my disastrous condition moved your heart; but your ministers and their satellites did not proceed in my regard according to your wishes. Therefore, if they have dared to ascribe to my free will an act to which they forced me, I will disclose their violence and perfidy before you and before all men who know the worth of honour, and may they only be answerable before you, Sire, for the publication of their iniquity." [1]

At the same time that Kościuszko forwarded this letter to the Tsar he published it in two French papers. The Tsar's reply was to return the sum through the Russian ambassador in Vienna, with the remark that he would "accept nothing from traitors." It lay untouched in an English bank till Kościuszko's death.

Even before the repudiation of Kościuszko's oath reached Petersburg the fact of his arrival in France had roused the wrath of Paul's envoy in Berlin, who deliberated with the Prussian ministers how to impede "the criminal intentions of the chief perpetrator and instigator of the revolution in Poland." Kościuszko's instant arrest was decreed, should he ever be seen within the boundaries of Russia's domination, and any one who entered into relations with him there or did not report his arrival was branded as a traitor and a rebel. Austria and Prussia followed suit. Kościuszko's return to his own country was thus barred before him.

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

Closely watched by Russian and Prussian spies, who communicated, often erroneously, to their respective governments, the movements of "that adventurer," as one of them styles him, Kościuszko had his headquarters in Paris. He was there when Kniaziewicz, fresh from the triumphs of the legions in Italy, brought him, in the name of Poland, Sobieski's sword. It had been preserved at Loreto, whither the deliverer of Vienna had sent it. The newly founded Republic of Rome presented it to the officers of the Polish legions in 1798, who destined it for Kościuszko. "God grant," said Kościuszko, in his letter of acknowledgment to his fellow-Poles, "that we may lay down our swords together with the sword of Sobieski in the temple of peace, having won freedom and universal happiness for our compatriots." [1]

For a while Kościuszko, continuously corresponding with the French government, acted more or less as the head of the legions. In a letter—October, 1798—of instructions to Dombrowski whom, true to his democratic ideals, he addresses as "Citizen General," he says: "Try to sustain ardour for the independence of our country, our common mother, among your subalterns; and as you know that the courage of the Polish soldiers will lead them to this end the more surely in measure as it is sustained by science and experience, encourage them all to the most detailed study of the art of defenders of their native land, so that each of them, when circumstances permit, may bring to his nation not only the example of courage and discipline proper to Polish knights, but also knowledge which should be diligently disseminated in our country. . . . Exhort the officers in the name of their country to devote their free time to the soldiers: Let them teach them to read, write, let them explain the elements of arithmetic, and inculcate in their good and honest hearts the duties of civic and military virtue. . . . See that this honourable assembly of free Poles avoid scandalous divisions, profitable only to the enemies of our country. I consider the Legions only as a military assembly

[1] *Letters of Kościuszko.*

composed of citizen officers and citizen soldiers. . . . The *mot d'ordre* of our conflicts has been the independence of our country and the true liberty of our people; it is still that and will so remain till the end of our days. The earth watered by the blood of her virtuous sons recalls this sacred *mot d'ordre* to us. It is in the name of this idea that I hope to conquer or die."[1] But when in October, 1799, the Directory officially offered him the leadership of the legions, he refused, for the reason that he saw no sign that France was prepared to recognize their distinct entity as a Polish national army, and because he suspected Bonaparte would use them merely as French regiments—a "corps of mercenaries," as the Polish patriot bitterly exclaims—for his own ends. He had written — September, 1799 — to the Directory, eloquently reminding France that the Polish legions were founded to fight for the independence of Poland, and that in the hope of freedom the Poles had gladly fought "enemies who were, besides their own, the enemies of freedom," but that their dearest hopes had already been deceived. "These considerations impel me to beg you to show us some ray of hope regarding the restoration of independence to our country."[2] He inquired guarantees from Bonaparte, and these he never received.

Young Bonaparte and the Pole met for the first time on the former's return from his brilliant Egyptian campaign, when he called on Kościuszko, Kniaziewicz being also in the room. The interview was brief and courteous. "I greatly wished," said Napoleon, "to make the acquaintance of the hero of the North." "And I," replied Kościuszko, "am happy to see the conqueror of Europe and the hero of the East." At a subsequent official banquet at which Kościuszko was present, some instinct warned him of the course Napoleon's ambition was to take. "Be on your guard against that young man," he said on that occasion to certain members of the French government; and a few days later

[1] W. T. Kozłowski, *Kościuszko et les Légions Polonaises en France*, Revue Historique, Paris, 1915.
[2] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko*.

Napoleon proclaimed himself First Consul. From that time Kościuszko began to withdraw from relations with French officialdom, and to concern himself only with the private matters of the Polish legions, not with their public affairs. Lebrun reproached him for showing his face no more among the high officers of state. "You are now all so grand," replied the son of the simple, far-distant Lithuanian home, "that I in my modest garb am not worthy to go among you." In 1801 came the Treaty of Lunéville with Napoleon's bitter deception of Poland's hopes. Rage and despair filled the Polish legions. Numbers of their soldiers tendered their resignations. Others remained in the French army, and were sent by Napoleon, to rid himself of them, said his enemies, on the disastrous expedition to San Domingo. Done to death by yellow fever, by the arms of the natives and the horrible onslaughts of the negroes' savage dogs, four hundred alone survived to return.

Henceforth Kościuszko always distrusted Bonaparte. Before a large audience at a gathering in the house of Lebrun the latter called out to Kościuszko: "Do you know, General, that the First Consul has been speaking about you?" "I never speak about him," Kościuszko answered curtly, and he visited Lebrun no more. The anguish of this fresh wrong to his nation went far to break him. Old age seemed suddenly to come upon him. Many of the Polish soldiers who had left the legions were homeless and penniless. These Kościuszko took pains to recommend to his old friend Jefferson, now President of the United States. "God bless you"—so Jefferson ends his reply—"and preserve you still for a season of usefulness to your country."[1]

About this time Kościuszko came across a Swiss family whose name will ever sound gratefully to the Polish ear as the friends under whose roof he found the domestic hearth that gladdened his declining years. The Republican sympathies of the Zeltner brothers, one of whom was the diplomatic representative of Switzerland in France, first

[1] *Memoirs, Correspondence and Miscellanies of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Thomas Jefferson Randolph. Charlottesville, 1829.

attracted Kościuszko to them. Their relations soon grew intimate; and Kościuszko's first visit in their house, his sojourn with them in the country at Berville, near Fontainebleau, that reminded him of the Poland he had lost for ever, were the beginning of a common household that only death severed.

Napoleon became emperor. After crushing Prussia at Jena, it was his intention to summon the Poles in "Prussian" Poland to rise. He sent his minister, Fouché, to Kościuszko, as the leader whose name every Pole would follow, to engage him to place himself at their head and to join him in Berlin. Kościuszko received those proposals with the caution of a long and bitter experience. Would Napoleon, he asked, openly state what he intended to do for Poland? Fouché put him off with vague promises of the nature that the Poles had already heard, and of which the Treaty of Lunéville had taught them the worth, coupled with threats of Napoleon's personal vengeance on Kościuszko if he opposed the Emperor's desire. "The Emperor," answered Kościuszko, "can dispose of me according to his will, but I doubt if in that case my nation would render him any service. But in the event of mutual, reciprocal services my nation, as well as I, will be ready to serve him. May Providence forbid," he added solemnly, "that your powerful and august monarch shall have cause to regret that he despised our goodwill." [1]

But the tide of Napoleonic worship ran too high not to carry all before it. Kościuszko's was the one dissentient voice. Before the interview with Fouché had taken place, Wybicki and Dombrowski, unable to conceive that Kościuszko would take a different line, had given their swords to the Emperor. Józef Poniatowski did likewise. In November, 1808, Napoleon entered Poznań. In the same month the French armies were in Warsaw, and the Poles, in raptures of rejoicing, were hailing Napoleon as the liberator of their nation. Fouché issued a bogus manifesto, purporting to be from Kościuszko, summoning his country-

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.*

men to Napoleon's flag. But Kościuszko himself only consented to repair to Warsaw, and throw his weight into the balance for Napoleon, if the Emperor would sign in writing and publicly proclaim his promise to restore Poland under the following three conditions:—

(1) That the form of Poland's government should be that of the English constitution;

(2) That the peasants should be liberated and possess their own land; and

(3) That the old boundaries of Poland should be reinstated.

He wrote to this effect to Fouché, and privately told a Polish friend that if the Emperor consented to these conditions he would fall at his feet and swear to the gratitude of the whole nation.[1] The reply given by Napoleon to Fouché was that he attached "no importance to Kościuszko. His conduct proves that he is only a fool."[2]

Active service for Poland was thus closed to Kościuszko. Anxious to leave a Napoleon-ridden France, he requested permission to retire to Switzerland. It was refused, and he had nothing for it but to remain in his French country retreat, under police supervision. He stayed there for the five years that Napoleon's conquests shook the world, condemning with his whole soul the spread of an empire on ruin and bloodshed, occupying himself with his favourite hobbies of gardening and handicrafts, working at his turning and making wooden clogs. The family with whom he lived was as his own. His name was given to the three children who were born since his residence under its roof: the only one of them who survived infancy—Taddea Emilia—became the beloved child of Kościuszko's old age. The eldest son learnt from him love for Poland and fought in the Polish Rising of 1830.

The story of the Russian campaign of 1812, with the passion of hope that it evoked in the Polish nation and its extinction in the steppes of Russia, need not be repeated

[1] General Paszkowski, *History of Tadeusz Kościuszko.* Cracow, 1872.
[2] Napoleon I, *Correspondance.* Paris, 1863.

here. In March, 1814, the allied armies and the monarchs of France, Russia and Prussia entered Paris.

Alexander I, the youth who had visited Kościuszko in prison, was now Tsar of Russia. In the days when Alexander was a neglected heir at the court of Catherine II young Adam Czartoryski was a hostage at the same court, concealing his yearning for his country and loathing for his surroundings under the icy reserve that was his only defence. One day Alexander drew the young prince aside in the palace gardens, told him that he had long observed him with sympathy and esteem, and that it was his intention when he succeeded to the throne to restore Poland. This was the beginning of that strange friendship which led to a Pole directing the foreign policy of Russia in the years preceding the Congress of Vienna, and ended in Alexander's betrayal of Czartoryski's nation.

But in the spring of 1814 Alexander was still of liberal and generous tendencies. That Kościuszko must have left a strong impression on his memory is evident; for on entering Paris he performed the graceful act of charging the Polish officers about him with courteous messages for the patriot of Poland. Kościuszko never lost an opportunity of furthering the cause to which his life was devoted. He at once wrote to the Tsar, venturing, so he said, from his "remote corner" of the world to lay three requests before him. The first was that Alexander should proclaim a general amnesty for the Poles in his dominions and that the Polish peasants, dispersed in foreign countries, should be considered not serfs, but free men, on their return to Poland; the second, that Alexander should proclaim himself king of a free Poland, to be ruled by a constitution on the pattern of England's, and that schools for the peasantry should be opened at the cost of the state as the certain means of ensuring to them their liberty. "If," he added, "my requests are granted, I will come in person, although sick, to cast myself at the feet of Your Imperial Majesty to thank you and to render you homage as to my sovereign. If my feeble talents can still be good for anything, I will imme-

diately set out to rejoin my fellow-citzens so as to serve my country and my sovereign honourably and faithfully." [1]

He adds his third request: that Zeltner, whom Kościuszko was too poor to help, might be given some post in the new French government, or in Poland.

He received no answer; and so came into Paris and obtained an audience. Alexander greeted him as an honoured friend, and bade him be assured of his good intentions towards Poland. A stream of visits and receptions then set in, at which Kościuszko was the recipient of public marks of esteem, not only from the Tsar, but from his brother, the Grand Duke Constantine, whose ill-omened name was later to win for itself the execration of the Polish nation. But Kościuszko was too far-sighted to content himself with promises. He asked for a written statement of what his country might expect from the Tsar. Alexander answered, on the 3rd of May, 1814:

"Your dearest wishes will be accomplished. With the aid of the Almighty I hope to bring about the resurrection of the valiant and admirable nation to which you belong. I have taken upon myself this solemn obligation. . . . Only political circumstances have placed the obstacle to the execution of my intentions. Those obstacles no longer exist.... Yet a little more time and prudence, and the Poles shall regain their country, their name, and I shall have the pleasure of convincing them that, forgetting the past, the man whom they held for their enemy is the man who shall fulfil their desires." [2]

Further personal interviews followed between Kościuszko and the Tsar. Later, Kościuszko called upon these as his witness when, at the Congress of Vienna, Alexander went back upon his given word. The question of Poland was now to come up in the international Congress, as one of the most pressing problems of the stability of Europe. Alexander I's intention was to found a kingdom of Poland of which he should be crowned king. Adam Czartoryski,

[1] d'Angeberg, *Recueil des Traité, Conventions et Actes Diplomatiques concernant la Pologne*, 1762-1862. Paris, 1862. [2] *Op. cit.*

Alexander's Minister for Foreign Affairs, requested Kościuszko to repair to Vienna and deliberate with himself and the Tsar upon the matter. Napoleon was back from Elba and marching on Paris, and to ensure the possibility of prosecuting a journey under the complications of the hour Kościuszko was advised to have his passport made out under some name not his own. He chose that of "Pole."

With considerable difficulty, constantly turned back by police authorities, forbidden entrance by the Bavarian frontier, sent about from pillar to post, the white-haired, frail old soldier at last reached the Tsar's headquarters at Braunau. The Tsar and he conferred for a quarter of an hour. Kościuszko derived small satisfaction from the interview, and immediately proceeded to visit Czartoryski in Vienna. Czartoryski had nothing good to tell. The wrangling over the Polish question at the Congress, the mutual suspicions and jealousies of every power represented, nearly brought about another war. In May, 1815, Russia, Austria, and Prussia signed an agreement for a renewed division of Poland between them. An autonomous Kingdom of Poland was, it is true, to be formed, with the Tsar as king, but only out of a small part of Poland. As regards the remaining Polish provinces that remained under Russia's rule, they were severed from the Kingdom and incorporated with Russia.

Kościuszko heard these things. Under the shock of his apprehensions he wrote to the Tsar, pleading in the strongest language at his command, that penetrates through the diplomatic wording he was compelled to use, against the separation of lands that were Polish from the mother country, the mutilated Kingdom of Poland.

After expressing his gratitude for what the Tsar was prepared to do in the foundations of the new Kingdom of Poland, he proceeds:

"One only anxiety troubles my soul and my joy. Sire, I was born a Lithuanian, and I have only a few years to live. Nevertheless, the veil of the future still covers the destiny of my native land and of so many other provinces of my

country. I do not forget the magnanimous promises that Your Majesty has deigned to make me by word of mouth in this matter, as well as to several of my compatriots . . but my soul, intimidated by such long misfortunes, needs to be reassured again." He is prepared faithfully to serve Alexander: let the writer descend to the tomb in "the consoling certainty that all your Polish subjects will be called to bless your benefits." [1]

In vain he waited for an answer. Then, openly, as to the Tsar he could not write, he wrote to Czartoryski:

"My Dear Prince,

"You are certainly convinced that to serve my country efficaciously is my chief object. The refusal of the Tsar to answer my last letter removes from me the possibility of being of service to her. I have consecrated my life to the greater part of the nation, when to the whole it was not possible, but not to that small part to which is given the pompous name of the Kingdom of Poland. We should give grateful thanks to the Tsar for the resuscitation of the lost Polish name, but a name alone does not constitute a nation. . . . I see no guarantee of the promise of the Tsar made to me and many others of the restoration of our country from the Dnieper to the Dzwina, the old boundaries of the Kingdom of Poland, except only in our desires." [That restoration alone, says Kościuszko, can establish sound and friendly relations between Poland and Russia. If a free and distinct constitution of such a kingdom be conferred upon Poland, the Poles might enjoy happiness.] "But as things go now, and from the very beginning, Russians hold together with ours the first places in the government. That certainly cannot inspire Poles with any great confidence. On the contrary, with dread each of us will form the conclusion that the Polish name will in time be held in contempt, and that the Russians will treat us as their conquered subjects, for such a scanty handful of a population will never be able to defend itself against the

[1] d'Angeberg, *Recueil des Traités, Conventions et Actes Diplomatiques concernant la Pologne.*

intrigues, the preponderance and the violence of the Russians. And can we keep silence on those brothers of ours remaining under the Russian government?" [Lithuania and Ruthenia.] "Our hearts shudder and suffer that they are not united to the others." [1]

Again Kościuszko's unerring single-mindedness and high patriotism had pierced through all illusions and foretold the truth. His words were literally verified. Fifteen years later Europe saw his nation driven into an armed conflict for the rights that had been promised to her by Alexander, that were trampled upon by him and his successor, and the man, to whom the above warning was addressed, outlawed by the Russian Government for the part he played in the insurrection.

Kościuszko also wrote to Lord Grey to the same effect. Grey replied:

"To that first violation of the sacred principles of general liberty which was effected in the partition of 1772, and those that followed in 1793 and 1795, we must refer all the dangers to which the whole of Europe has been subsequently exposed. . . . No real safeguard can exist against the return of these dangers, if Poland remains excluded from the benefits of a general deliverance, which, to be perfect, must be guaranteed by the solemn recognition of her rights and independence. If the powers who sought to profit by injustice and who, in the sequence, have suffered so much because of it, could learn the true lesson of experience, they would see that their mutual safety and tranquillity would be best preserved by reestablishing among them, as a genuinely independent state, the country that a false policy has so cruelly oppressed." (Portman Square, London, July 1, 1814.) [2]

This was written a hundred and odd years ago, and the Nemesis of history is still with us. The Congress of Vienna was a fresh partition of Poland.

[1] T. Korzon, *Kościuszko.* [2] d'Angeberg, *Recueil des Traités.*

If, so Kościuszko wrote to Alexander, he could have returned "as a Pole to his country," he would have done so. As it was, he refused to return to what he knew was treachery and deception. With the aspect of a man who had suffered shipwreck, he left Vienna, and retired for good and all from public life.

He was now sixty-nine, with his health, that he had never regained since he was wounded at Maciejowice, broken. He took up his abode with the devoted Zeltners in Soleure, and his last days passed in peace among them. He dined at the family table, and enjoyed his evening rubber of whist with the Zeltners, the family doctor, and a Swiss friend. Every hour was regularly employed. In the mornings he always wrote: what, we do not know, for he left orders to his executors to destroy his papers, and unfortunately was too well obeyed. In the afternoons he walked or rode out, generally on errands of mercy. The little girl of the house was his beloved and constant companion; and we have a pretty picture of the veteran hero of Poland teaching this child history, mathematics, and above all, drawing. His delight was to give children's parties for her amusement, at which he led the games and dances and told stories. He was the most popular of playmates. His appearance in the roads was the signal for an onslaught of his child friends with gifts of flowers, while he never failed to rifle his pockets of the sweets with which he had stuffed them for the purpose. He loved not only children, but all young people. The young men and girls of the neighbourhood looked upon him as a father, and went freely to him for sympathy and advice.

Kościuszko's means were slender, and his tastes remained always simple. An old blue suit of well-patched clothes sufficed for him; but he must needs have a rose or violet in his buttonhole, with which the ladies of Soleure took care to keep him supplied. The money he should have spent in furbishing up his own person went in charity and in providing Emilia with articles of dress, for the family, chiefly through the father's improvidence, was badly off. He was

known by the poor for many a mile around as their angel visitant. Outside his doors gathered daily an army of beggars, certain of their regular dole. Kościuszko's rides were slow, not only on account of his wounded leg, but because his horse stopped instinctively whenever a beggar was sighted, in the consciousness that his master never passed one by without giving alms. He was a familiar visitor in the peasants' cottages. Here he would sit among the homely folk, encouraging them to tell him the tale of their troubles, pinching himself if only he could succour their distress. He would explain to his domestic circle long and unaccountable absences in wild wintry weather by the excuse that he had been visiting friends. The friends were peasants, sick and burdened with family cares, to whom the old man day after day carried through the snow the money they required, as the stranger benefactor who would not allow his name to be told.

Into this quiet routine broke the advent of distinguished men and women of every nation, eager to pay their homage to a man whose life and character had so deeply impressed Europe. An uncertain tradition has it that Ludwika Lubomirska visited him, and that in his old age the two former lovers talked together once more. Correspondence from known and unknown friends poured in upon him. Among these was the Princess of Carignano, the mother of Carlo Alberto, herself the daughter of a Polish mother, Franciszka Krasińska, through whom the blood of Poland flows in the veins of the present Royal House of Italy. Nor was England left out. A book, now forgotten, but largely read in a past generation, in which Kościuszko's exploits figure, Jane Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw,* was sent to Kościuszko by its author. Jane Porter had heard her brother's description of the Polish hero, to whom he had spoken when Kościuszko was in London. She had seen the Cosway portrait. In his letter of thanks Kościuszko told her jestingly that he was glad that all her eulogies of him were " in a romance, because no one will believe them." Either from him or from a friend of his she received a gold

ring or, as some say, a medal, with a representation of himself engraved upon it.

Through these last years Kościuszko's heart ever clung fondly to his own land and language. On the French letters he received his hand, as he read, was wont to trace Polish proverbs, Polish turns of phrase. Tears were seen to rise to his eyes as, gazing at the beautiful panorama from a favourite spot of his in the Jura, a French friend recited Arnault's elegy on the homeless and wandering leaf, torn from the parent oak, in which the Pole read the story of his own exile. Education of the lower classes, for which he had already made so strong a stand, continued to be one of the matters in which he most keenly interested himself. During his stay in Vienna he had drawn up a memorandum on the subject for those responsible for the department in the Kingdom of Poland then forming. One of his last expeditions before his death was to a great Swiss educational establishment where Pestalozzi's system had been inaugurated, and where Kościuszko spent two days among the pupils, watching its working with the idea of its application to Polish requirements.

So his days went by till his quiet death. His death was as simple as had been his life. He put his worldly affairs in order, bequeathing the money of Paul I that he had never touched and that he would not affront Alexander I, with whom his relations were always friendly, by returning, to a Polish friend who had fought under him in the Rising and to Emilia Zeltner. The remainder of all that he had to give went to other members of the Zeltner family and to the poor. He directed that his body should be carried by the poor to the grave, that his own sword should be laid in his coffin and the sword of Sobieski given back to the Polish nation. Then, with a last look of love bent upon the child Emilia, who knelt at the foot of his bed, Tadeusz Kościuszko, the greatest and the most beloved of Poland's heroes, gently breathed his last on the evening of October 15, 1817.

His body now rests in the Wawel in Cracow, where lie Poland's kings and her most honoured dead; his heart in

the Polish Museum in Rapperswil, Switzerland, among the national treasures that have been placed in a foreign land to preserve them against spoliation by Poland's conquerors. To his memory three years after his death his nation raised a monument, perhaps unique of its kind. Outside Cracow towers the Kościuszko hill, fashioned by the hands of Polish men, women, and children, all bringing earth in shovel and barrow, to lay over dust, carried thither with no little difficulty, from the battlefields where Kościuszko had fought for Poland. That act is typical. To this day the name of Tadeusz Kościuszko lives in the hearts of the Polish people, not only as the object of their profound and passionate love, but as the symbol of their dearest national aspirations. He has given his name to the greatest poem in the Polish language that is read wherever the Polish tongue has been carried by the exiled sons of Poland. His pictures, his relics, are venerated as with the devotion paid to a patron saint. Legend, folk-song, national music have gathered about his name: and after Warsaw had risen for her freedom on the November night of 1830 it was to the strains of the *Polonaise of Kościuszko* that the Poles danced in a never-to-be-forgotten scene of patriotic exultation.

A Prussian fiction has attributed to Kościuszko as he fell on the field of Maciejowice the phrase *Finis Poloniæ*. In a letter to Count Ségur, Kościuszko indignantly denied that he had uttered a sentiment which is the last ever to be heard on Polish lips or harboured in the heart of a Pole; and with his words, to which the Poles themselves have borne the most convincing testimony by the preservation of their nationality unimpaired through tragedy almost inconceivable, through nearly a hundred and fifty years of unremitting persecution, I close this book on the noblest of Polish patriots.

"When," so Kościuszko writes to Ségur, "the Polish nation called me to defend the integrity, the independence, the dignity, the glory and the liberty of the country, she knew well that I was not the last Pole, and that with my death on the battlefield or elsewhere Poland could not, must

not end. All that the Poles have done since then in the glorious Polish legions and all that they will still do in the future to gain their country back, sufficiently proves that albeit we, the devoted soldiers of that country, are mortal, Poland is immortal." [1]

[1] d'Angeberg, *Recueil des Traités.*

Chief Works Consulted

d'Angeberg. *Recueil des Traités, Conventions et Actes Diplomatiques concernant la Pqlogne,* 1762-1862. Paris, 1862.

Askenazy, Szymon. *Książę Józef Poniatowski.* Cracow, 1905.

Bartoszewicz, K. *Dzieje Insurekcji Kościuszkowskiej.* Vienna, 1909.

Baudouin de Courtenay, R. *Nowe Materyały do Dziejów Kościuszki.* Cracow, 1889.

Cambridge Modern History, VIII. *The Extinction of Poland,* by Professor Richard Lodge.

Chodźko, L. *Żywoty Narodowe. Usque ad Finem.* Paris, 1859.

Chołoniewski, A. *Tadeusz Kościuszko.* Lwów, 1902.

Dyboski, Roman. *Powstanie Kościuszki w Powieści Angielskiej.* Cracow, 1908.

Eversley, Lord. *The Partitions of Poland.* 1915.

Falkenstein, K. *Tadeusz Kościuszko.* Wrocław, 1831.

Greene, George Washington. *Life of Nathaniel Greene.* New York, 1871.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Memoirs, Correspondence and Miscellanies.* Ed. by Thomas Jefferson Randolph, Charlottesville, 1829.

Johnson, William. *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathaniel Greene.* Charleston, 1822.

Kołłątaj, Hugo. *Listy.* Poznań, 1872.

Korzon, T. *Kościuszko.* Cracow, 1906.

Kościuszko. Periodical Publication. Cracow, 1893-96.

Kościuszko, T. *Listy.* Ed. by L. Siemieński. Lwów, 1876.

Kozłowski, W. T. *Kościuszko's Mission to Paris in* 1793.

Kozłowski, W. T. *Kościuszko et les Légions Polonaises en France.* Revue Historique, Paris, 1915.

Kunasiewicz, S. *T. Kościuszko w Ameryce.* Lwów, 1876.

Napoleon I. *Correspondance.* Paris, 1863.

Niemcewicz, J. *Notes sur ma Captivité à Pétersbourg.* Paris, 1843.

Niemcewicz, J. *Pamiętniki Czasów Moich.* Paris, 1848.

Ogiński, M. *Mémoires.* Paris, 1826.

Paszkowski, F. *Dzieje Tadeusza Kościuszki.* Cracow, 1872.

Powstanie T. Kościuszki z Pism Autentycznych Sekretnych. Poznań, 1846.

Raczyński, E. *Obraz Polaków i Polski w XVIII wieku.* Poznań, 1841.

Szujski, Józef. *Dzieje Polski.* Lwów, 1866.

Tygodnik Illustrowany. Warsaw, 1881. *Pamiętnik J. Soroki;* and for Kościuszko's letter to Karl Schmid.

Washington, George. *Writings.* Ed. by Jared Sparks. New York, 1847.

Index

10,-