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[ARTICLE]

**Poland.**

[We give our readers the following original Essay on Poland, by C. R. Splivalo, which was admirably delivered at the Commencement Exercises of the Santa Clara College, on the 27th of June. We esteem it a very creditable production and it will be read with interest at the present time.]

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—The news of battles fought and victories lost or won, borne every day and every hour of the day across the continent, from the Atlantic sea board, on the obedient wings of the tamed thunderbolt, reminds us that a million of our brothers are standing in martial gear on the tented field, or sleeping the soldier's glorious sleep of death, for the maintainance of the integrity of that Republic, and the preservation of that liberty for which a Pulaski and Koscuisko imperiled their lives in the gloomy days of our revolution. When I think of the glorious sympathy with which America used to encourage all people struggling to be free, I feel that so great an office as speaking in behalf of oppressed Poland, should not be allowed to degenerate into hands like mine. I seem to hear the voice of that great man who, in the capitol of the United States, pleaded the cause of Greece, and welcomed her into the family of nations, with a dignity and splendor of eloquence that rivalled her own.

But the lips of Henry Clay are closed forever, and there is none to fill his place. Had he but lived, or could he now revisit the glimpses of the moon and speak [his thoughts as of old, think with what potent magic he would rouse from end to end of the land the sympathy of his countrymen—for the home of Sobieski and Kosciusko.

“ Had he but lived, though stripped of power,  
A watchman on the lonely tower,  
His thrilling trump would rouse the land,  
When fraud or danger were at hand.”

Would to God that in his passage to immortality, his mantle had fallen upon my shoulders, that I, too, might excite in your hearts feelings of indignation against the tyranny which has cloven Poland to the earth, and placed the armed heel upon her radiant forehead—of gratituda towards

a sister nation whose sons rendered us such eminent service in the midnight of our adversity; and caused you to cry out from the very bottom of your hearts. God speed the white eagle of Poland wherever it soars, may victory light on the banner of Sobieski, whenever it waves in the breeze. About eighty years have passed since Poland occupied one of the highest stations among the nations of Europe. Governed by sovereigns of her own election who had no aim but the welfare of their country, no will but hers, Poland was made the asylum of every lover of peace and happiness, of every one who longed for the so rare blessings of freedom. Even Jews, the unhappy wanderers of earth, found an undisturbed abode within her borders. Her forces were composed of men who would rush headlong into the thickest of the fray to save their country from dishonor, and of men who for the space of twenty years formed the principal bulwark of Europe against the progress of the sworn enemies of Christianity. Her lands, teeming with vegetation, and cultivated to an inch, by her industrious inhabitants, made the trade of Poland one of the largest in the world. In a word, the name of Poland resounded from one end of the earth to the other carrying nothing but glory with it, and became a spell and a watchword to every lover of freedom.

Such, Ladies and Gentlemen, was the state of Poland when, in 1683, the formidable army of the Turks, which had so long loitered at the frontiers of Christian Europe, broke through them, and marking their checkless career with fire and devastation halted at last before the gates of Vienna. Should Vienna fall, Christianity and civilization would fall with her. The Moslem was thundering at her gates; there was no hope left, but from Poland; what would Poland do? Help Austria? Help her bitterest foe? It would injure her ancient repute. But no! thus did not think John Sobieski, her magnanimous King. He saw Europe menaced; he saw civilization and Christianity threatened with destruction; he saw the tide of barbarism that had been again and again rolled back, about to sweep away all the land-marks of enlightened freedom in its resistless career; he saw all this, and forgetting Poland's grudge, bade his Poles gird on their armor and march bravely against the common foe. So they did—and John Sobieski, who justly deserves the name of the greatest of Poland's sons, routed the enemy, saved Europe, reestablished order in affrighted Vienna, and returned crowned with an immortal wreath of victory to meet the embraces and receive the heartfelt congratulations of his cherished subjects. Could Europe ever forget this? Could the warm and heartfelt gratitude of Austria ever grow cold? There are certain acts in the transactions of Europe, so vile, that it is impossible to believe they can have had their source in the bosom of Christians; acts so cruel, that even the unbridled ambition of an Al-Raschid, or the blood-thirsty man of Tamerlane, would have disdained to

perpetrate. After the death of John Sobieski, in 1690, the blood-hounds of civil war were let loose upon her soil, and the Poles, once so united, so attached to each other, lost that harmony which had so long rendered them the heroes of Europe, and began to quarrel among themselves about the selection of a new King. Russia, Austria, and Prussia, under the false pretext of vicinage interfered, each one favoring a different party. At last it pleased Catherine, the Empress of Russia, to settle the dispute by appointing a Sovereign of her own choice under the name of Agusta III, while the other two Powers left the field to Russia,

contenting themselves with the partition of about one-half the territory of Poland among themselves. From this fatal act dates the slavery of Poland—an act which will remain forever inscribed in indelible characters in Polish history, to bear witness against the base ingratitude of Austria and the rapacity of Russia, and which will remain stamped on the heart of every Pole to kindle his avenging wrath in the thickest of the fray. Up rose the astounded Poles, headed by the valiant Pulaski, fearlessly took up arms and marched against the destroyers of their liberty; but for what? to meet death at the mouth of the cannon; to be butchered like cattle beneath the blows of overwhelming numbers. Pulaski, after vainly attempting to rekindle, in the hearts of his countrymen, the almost extinguished flame of patriotism, resolved to die in a land free from the bonds of slavery, and so came to America to battle with her people for that independence, and for that renown which he in vain endeavored to acquire in his own country. He saw a new field opened for vindicating, with his sword, the same principles, the same rights of mankind, and the same unchangeable laws of justice, as for which he had wielded it with so much courage and singleness of purpose in his own country. He arrived at Philadelphia in 1777, during the darkest hours of our revolution. Would to God he had met in his own country that unbounded generosity, that heartfelt sympathy for his sufferings, which he met in the United States. Like a true Pole, like a true son of freedom, he fought the battles of our revolution, and at last found the death he always longed for, the death of a soldier, on the bloody banks of the Savannah. Kosciusko, after Pulaski's death, left the American army, in which he had acted a hero's part, to tender his talents and his sword to his own country. He soon, through his industry and his untiring zeal, collected a little band of patriots and marched towards Warsaw. Good fortune sped this undaunted phalanx, and after battling on the walls of Warsaw with a courage worthy of their ancient character, this heroic band succeeded in taking possession of that city, Kosciusko was unanimously proclaimed dictator. But soon the Russian army, headed by the famous Suwarrow, was seen approaching. Kosciusko again mustered a small army and prepared them for the coming onset, beneath the walls of Warsaw. The battle began on the 8th of June, 1796, and was maintained with equal valor on both sides. But alas! that into such a small band of heroes foul and sneaking treachery should have found its way. Yes, through the treason of one who deserves not the name of Pole, the little band was routed, and

well may the school-boy exclaim again and again that "Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell." With the fall of Kosciusko the American and Polish hero, the Star of Poland, which had for a while gleamed above the horizon, was sunk in the thick gloom of oppression. You have heard the history of Poland, you have compassionated with her in her sufferings, you have followed her to her grave, you have bedewed with your tears the sods beneath which her liberty lies buried, and will any one of you who claims the right of possessing a heart that feels, will any one of you now ask whether Poland should be free? If such a question were put to me by a free born American citizen, by one who possesses all the blessings that an untarnished liberty can shower upon him, by one who has been born and nurtured on a soil which also was once defiled by a tyrant's foot, I would answer. Should your own country be free? Should your own country which once, not unlike to Poland, oppressed by the tyranny of England, now be what she is, the free and independent Republic of the United States, respected and loved by all the other nations of the earth? But no! let us not dwell upon such supposition. I know, too well, the feelings of your heart while musing o'er the fate of unhappy Poland. But now she has risen again; she has broken the chains that had bound her limbs and she is now struggling manfully to reestablish her independence; to behold herself once again as she was, Poland the free, Poland the mighty and respected. But at least one thing she requires of you, and it is this, that since you yourselves are now overwhelmed by the cares and dangers brought on by an accursed civil dissension, since you cannot give her a hand in the mighty warfare she is waging, she entreats you to mingle at least your hopes and fears with hers, and if at last she does fall, if fall she must, she may fall and lie buried deeply within your bosoms, she may fall, but not unavenged, not unwept. But she must not fall, as long as there is a God who wields the sword of justice, and who watches over the fate of Nations, to support her cause. No, she shall not, must not, fall. Her Star of Hope, its cloudy casement having already been pierced through and through, with vigorous arms, is now shining in all its splendor before her; it is recalling to her mind the days of her past happiness, the days in which she held the reins of Europe in her mighty hand, and it invokes her to fight bravely, to fight manfully, to fight as long as there is a Pole remaining to uphold her, to fight till she conquers or falls. She is now obeying that invocation; the hounds of war are devastating her territory, and her streams have dyed their sparkling waters with the crimson hue of Russian and Polish blood. She is bleeding, but not in vain; she is struggling, but for as noble a cause as ever nerved a patriot soldier's arm, for her altars and her firesides. And the pleasant gales that swept her lands bearing the harsh injunction of the tyrant's voice, now breathe nothing but war. *Away with the oppressors—Liberty and Independence.*

But, turn my soul, from presages so dark,  
Great Poland's spirit is a deathless spark  
That's fanned by heaven to mock the tyrant's rage;  
She like the eagle will renew her age,  
And fresh historic plumes of fame put on—

Another Athens after Marathon—  
Where eloquence shall fulmine, arts refine,  
Bright as her arms that now in battle shine.  
Come—should the heavenly shock my life destroy  
And shut its flood-gates with excess of joy,—  
Come but the day when Poland's fight is won,  
And on my gravestone shine the morrow's sun.  
Should fate put far—far off that glorious scene  
And gulfs of havoc interpose between,  
Imagine not, ye men of every clime,  
Who act or by your sufferance, share the crime,  
Your brother Abel's blood shall vainly plead,  
Against the "deep damnation of the deed."

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