

POLISH LITERATURE.

Neglected Works in the Slavonian Language.

ANNIVERSARY OF AN AUTHOR.

Kraszewski, the Walter Scott of Poland,
an Exile from the Land of his
Birth—Poets—Etc.

Few educated men among the English-speaking races have any idea of the extent and scarcely of the existence of the literature of the Slavonian races. Though constituting by far the most numerous race in Europe, their languages and the literary treasures they contain are almost a sealed book to the Western nations. In that, indeed, there is a striking resemblance between the present condition of Slavonian literature and the position occupied in Europe by the German little more than a century ago. The names of the great German writers, which have since become familiar to the whole European world, were all but unknown outside the limits of Germany down to the latter part of the last century, and even the great Frederick himself disdained to use the language of Leibnitz and Lessing, which he regarded as a mere barbarous dialect. So it is now with the Slavonian languages; and yet they are as little deserving of neglect, and may ere long assume as important a place in the culture of the world as any of their Western sisters. Among the Slavonian languages, the Polish unquestionably possesses the most extensive and

IMPORTANT LITERATURE.

The number of publications annually issued throughout Poland far surpasses those issued in Russian through the whole Empire at the present day. Moreover, this literary activity of the Poles is not a thing of yesterday. Written compositions in their language date as early as the tenth century, and although the Latin for a long period was used by the learned to a greater extent in Poland than in any other European country, the national language shared in the cultivation of the Renaissance and subsequent times. The University of Cracow, founded in the fourteenth century, ranked with those of Paris and Bologna in the learning of its professors and in the number of its students, who flocked there from all parts of Europe. The religious disputes of the sixteenth century gave an additional impulse to the cultivation of the national language and the frequent elections contributed to the same result. The widespread knowledge of Latin aided powerfully in forming the Polish language on the ancient models, and early made it for elegance and strength equal or perhaps superior to its contemporaries. The names of the great Polish writers are, it is true, like those of the Germans in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost unknown to western readers; but the name of the great astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus, alone would be enough to vindicate the intellectual claims of Poland. Among the other writers of the sixteenth and two following centuries the poets Rev. Kochanowski, Krasiński, the historian Górnicki, Strykowski, Bielski, Naruszewicz, the orators Scarga, Birkowski, and a host of others, hold a distinguished place.

THE PARTITION OF POLAND.

The great political crime of the eighteenth century, did not quench the intellectual life of the Poles. At the beginning of the present century appears Adam Mickiewicz, who in the estimation of his countrymen as well as the German, French, Italian and English scholars, is considered one of the greatest poets of the world. After him an illustrious band of poets like Krasinski, Slowacki, Zaleski, Pol. Syrokowia, Lenartowicz, the historians and philosophers Bartoszewicz, Szajnoch, Lelewel, Kromer, Libelt, Trenkowski and a host of others have since worthily maintained the claim of the Polish language to be the first of the Slavonian tongues in all that makes a language great. In modern Polish literature perhaps the most widely popular writer is I. I. Kraszewski, who may be styled the Walter Scott of Poland. His works have attained a hitherto unheard-of popularity among his countrymen and many of his charming novels have been translated into French, German, English and Italian. Though a poet and historian of high repute it is chiefly as a writer of fiction that Kraszewski is more universally known, and in that branch his works are at once distinguished by their excellence and their

MARVELOUS NUMBER.

The number of volumes which he has actually published amounts to 460, exclusive of contributions to magazines and periodical literature. When it is remembered that all this represents actual personal work (unlike the novels of Dumas and some others), it must be admitted that Kraszewski's fertility is a prodigy in literature, and only equaled by that of the Spanish Lope de Vega. Although rapidly approaching the allotted three score and ten years of life, the venerable poet still continues his labors, though he is forbidden by the Russian Government to reside in his native land. His countrymen throughout Russia, Austria, Germany and Switzerland celebrated worthily the fiftieth anniversary of his literary career. An edition of his selected works, arranged so as to pass the Russian press censorship, was prepared and 50,000 copies were sold to raise a fund for his benefit. The proceeds were presented to the veteran at Dresden, on the 19th of March last, the anniversary in question, by a special committee selected from the most prominent of his countrymen. On the same day deputations and addresses from representatives of the Polish race throughout the world testified to the place which is held in the hearts of his countrymen by the great Polish writer. The Polish societies of America, which are some hundreds in number, including that of San Francisco, all joined in the demonstration, which was alike honorable to its object and to the nation which offered it, and which showed that, even in her misfortunes, Poland can still appreciate the services and patriotism of her children.