

If we may judge by the volume of letters addressed to the Editor of THE TIMES'S SATURDAY REVIEW, Henryk Sienkiewicz, the great Polish novelist, is the person of paramount interest in the literary world about whom the greatest curiosity is felt, and of whom little is yet known. Some of the following incidents in the life of the author of "The Trilogy" and "Quo Vadis" have been gathered by the writer in interviews with Count Bozenta Chlapowski during the present engagement of his gifted wife, Mme. Modjeska.

Of the utmost interest to those who have read "With Fire and Sword" and "The Deluge" will be the discovery that California furnished the Polish author the living originals of his two greatest characters, Pan Longin Podbipienta, the Don Quixote of Lithuania, and "Zagloba," a curious and fascinating combination of Falstaff and Ulysses, of whom Charles Dudley Warner in Harper's Magazine affirms that Sienkiewicz "has in Zagloba given a new character to literature."

Henryk Sienkiewicz is at the present writing fifty-three years old, he having been born in 1845 at Wola Okrejska, in Lithuania. He comes of a distinguished but not of a titled family, which is of itself somewhat exclusive, in a country where countless nobles follow the plow and where rank does not always imply wealth or culture. Another distinguished representative of the same family is Charles Sienkiewicz, the Polish historian and late Consul in Egypt.

Henryk Sienkiewicz first came into prominence in his own country through the publication in the Polish Gazette of Warsaw of his "charcoal sketches," such as "The Old Servant," "The Will of the Peasant," "The Angel," and, I think, "Hania," he having been for some years feuilleton writer on that journal. He came to America in 1876 before he was thirty years old in the company with one Jules Sypurewski, who had been both a Turkish and German officer, and not with the Chlapowskis (Mount Bozenta and his wife, Helen Modjeska,) as has been so often stated, although the latter joined Sienkiewicz and his friend a few months later at a settlement which they called Anno Luni, near Los Angeles, in California. Sienkiewicz returned to Europe early in 1878, having spent less than two years in America, and that so exclusively among exiles of his own nationality that, with the exception of a few names of familiar objects, he gained no knowledge of the English language. Notwithstanding the failure of the colony of Anno Luni, his impressions of America and the Americans are said to have been agreeable, although his knowledge of the one was confined to the Pacific Coast between San Francisco and Aspinwall, and his intercourse with the other was necessarily of the slightest.

On his return to Warsaw he became editor of the daily newspaper *Slowo*, (The Word,) at which post he remained for ten or twelve years, during which time he published his great work, the Polish "Trilogy," consisting of three historical novels, "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," and "Pan Michael." These works appeared in somewhat irregular daily installments, as they fell from the author's hand or failed to fall, and were published simultaneously in Sienkiewicz's own Warsaw paper, *Slowo*, in the *Kraj* at St. Petersburg, in the *Cras* at Cracow, in the *Gareta* at Lemberg, and in the *Dziennik* at Posen, not to mention the translations which followed in Berlin and other European cities. The installments were brief—a few sheets, a part of a chapter, and sometimes for two or three days nothing whatever, if it happened that the author was not in a humor to write. He is said to write with the greatest facility and with a certainty of touch that leaves few corrections to be made, but that he is in no sense a systematic or a plodding worker.

Brief as was his stay in America, it is a singular and interesting fact that he found in California among his exiled countrymen the prototypes of his two greatest characters, Zagloba and Pan Longin Podbipienta, respectively, the Falstaff and the Don Quixote among the Polish Knights of the Trilogy. Captain Corvin, (Zagloba,) commonly called "Old Cap," and Captain Francis Podbipienta were two old forty-niners who had become exiles in the Polish troubles of 1831 and had emigrated to America in 1840. "Old Cap" was of noble birth and entitled to the Polish name Piotrowski, and Captain Francis might have been called Wojciechowski, if such language had ever been permitted by the Vigilance Committee. Old Cap when Sienkiewicz knew him was a Commissioner of Immigration at the Port of San Francisco vaporing hostility against the invasion of Chinese as Zagloba blusters before the seventeenth century enemies of Poland. Old Cap held this position through favor of his political friend, Senator Booth, where he continued to consume brandy in unlimited quantities, even as Zagloba drank tippie mead, until there came a time when the doctors were obliged to cut off his grog and subject him to the humiliation of the milk cure.

It was while "Old Cap" Corvin was supposed to be enduring this treatment with equanimity that Count Bozenta chanced to pay him a visit. "Look, my friend," exclaimed the old man, holding up a brimming glass of the despised beverage, "the doctors compel me to drink that—that!" And then casting his eyes upward, "and thou Lord God dost not send thy thunder. Drink it, my friend, and save an old man from humiliation."

His visitor was nearly strangled with the first swallow of the innocent-looking fluid, which contained more brandy than milk. The original Zagloba afterward

died in Paris, where he had gone to visit a married daughter, and if Captain Francis has succeeded in cutting off his three heads at a blow as Pan Longin did before the walls of Zabara, no doubt he, too, has paid the last debt of nature with resignation. Pan Longin Podbipienta, the Puritan Knight of Lithuania, who fell pierced with the arrows of the Tartars while attempting to escape through their lines to bring succor to the besieged city, is Count Bozenta's favorite character.

Sienkiewicz was first married in 1880, two years after his return from America, at about the time "With Fire and Sword" was appearing in the daily papers, and it was while he was engaged on the last of the series, "Pan Michael," that his beloved wife was removed by death, leaving him a widower with two children, Henryk, now a boy of sixteen, and a daughter, Yadviga, two years younger, who is represented beside her father in the frontispiece of some of the more recent editions of his works. In this picture it will be seen that the author's hair is turning gray on the temples, hair which was originally of a warm chestnut color, and never black, as would appear from the frontispiece, with which we are most familiar—a misleading effect, doubtless produced by overprinting of the photograph submitted for reproduction.

His favorite Summer home is at Zakopane, a very old and picturesque watering place in the Carpathian Mountains. Sienkiewicz is a very rich man for an author, most of his fortune having been accumulated by the sale of his books. While the Polish historical novels are the favorites in his own country, "Quo Vadis" has enjoyed a large measure of popularity, for the Poles are distinctly a religious people, of whom the Lithuanians, being the most austere, are in character not unlike our Puritans. Sienkiewicz is nominally a Catholic in faith, but is described as extremely liberal in his opinions—not an agnostic or a skeptic in the French sense, but a man of catholic temperament, to whom religion appeals as a poetic sentiment rather than a rule of conduct.

Count Bozenta, who is an enthusiastic admirer of the works of Sienkiewicz, names "The Deluge" as his favorite among the historical novels. He feels strongly the inadequacy of the English translations to render the fine literary style of the Polish author, whom he describes as always selecting the right word with a genius that never fails him. He complains of the popular translation of the novels as made by one who, however accomplished as a writer of English, does not speak Polish any more than Sienkiewicz speaks English, and characterizes it as a "dictionary translation."

The Count called my attention to a very amusing blunder of the translator, writing the Polish words very carefully as I give them below. In "With Fire and Sword" occurred the word "paliwoda," meaning a scapegrace; but as the first syllable "pali" means he burns, and "woda" is water, it came about that "paliwoda" was rendered "waterburner." The peculiar expression constantly appearing in the translations of Sienkiewicz's works, "a number of tens," "a few tens," comes from the literal translation of the Polish substantive "driesiatka," meaning "a ten," as a score in English means twenty.

It was through the influence of the mother of his children, although some time after her death, that Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote "Quo Vadis," in preparation for which he spent three months in Rome. Like its predecessors, this work was first given to the Polish public through the columns of the daily press and afterward issued in book form by the Warsaw publishers Gebetner & Wolff.

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