

*Protestantism
in Poland*

By the
Rev. Charles E. Edwards



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A Brief Study of its History
as an Encouragement to

Mission Work Among the Poles

BY THE

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REV. CHARLES E. EDWARDS



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Mission Work Among the Poles

THOUSANDS of Poles have emigrated to the United States. Some even reckon them by millions. They come from lands destitute of the Scriptures. Such a fair opportunity for giving them the gospel has not been granted to the Church for three centuries. "Can they be converted?" is the cold question of unbelief. A direct answer is afforded by the history of the Reformation in Poland; and this history may be used in America to encourage efforts in winning a new people for Christ. "The past, at least, is secure," said an American statesman. Poland still has the traces and ruins of her Reformation; and even the ruins of a church may plead for the gospel. Real estate agents point to the remains of cities built in the far West by an ancient American race, and argue that by proper expenditure these wastes may again be inhab-

ited and become like the garden of the Lord. Isaiah prophesies concerning our Christian workers: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers."

The significance of the Reformation in Poland can be better appreciated if we recall its former greatness. It once included the whole of ancient Scythia. It was once a European power, extending from the Baltic to the Carpathian Mountains and to the Black Sea, and from the Oder to the Dnieper. It once had two hundred and eighty thousand square miles and fifteen millions of people, when France had two hundred and eight thousand square miles and twenty millions, and the vast area of Russia, twenty-five millions of subjects. Its plains were a granary for Europe. It was larger than Spain, and not much less than the whole of Germany. John Calvin wrote to "the most mighty and most serene prince, Sigismund Augustus, by the grace of God, the King of Poland, Great Duke of Lithuania Russia, Prussia, and Lord and Heir of Mus-

covy," etc.; and these titles remind us of Polish victories and power. The Emperor Charles the Fifth obtained dominions more extensive than those of any other European sovereign for eight hundred years, or since the days of Charlemagne. It is a marvel of God's providence, that he and his son Philip the Second, whose possessions included the distant Philippines that bear his name, were unable to crush the Reformation, which was led by poor men, constantly in danger of exile, imprisonment, or death. Coligni, the French admiral and statesman, a noble Huguenot Presbyterian, planned a gigantic combination of the scattered Protestants, to offset the might of Spain and Austria. A majority of the Polish Parliament were Protestants. The armies which they could muster when their Reformation flourished were sufficient to check those of Polish Romanists. Count Valerian Krasinski, author of what Prof. W. R. Morfill terms "an interesting but now forgotten work"¹ on the Polish Reformation, de-

¹ *Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress and Decline of the Reformation in Poland and of the Influence which the Scriptural Doctrines have exercised on that Country in literary, moral, and political Respects.* By Count Valerian Krasinski. 2 Vols. London, 1838. "To the Protestants of the British Empire

clares that if Coligni's plans had succeeded, the Reformation would have triumphed over all Europe.

The Poles belong to the great Slavonic race, which includes a majority of the inhabitants in the Austrian and Russian empires, besides myriads of others in provinces subject to the Turk, and in kingdoms newly freed from his rule. The Polish people may be traced as far back as the sixth century. "At the time when all the lands forming the jagged margin of the Mediterranean were included in the vast empire of the Roman Cæsars, the Slavonians were decidedly the most numerous of the four stock-races which divided amongst them the rest of Europe—the Celts in the west, the Goths in the middle and north, the Slavonians in the east, and the Ugrians or Finns in the extreme circumpolar regions. Physically, they are a well-formed race, taller than the Celts, with complexions as fair or nearly as fair as the Goths, and with hair brown or reddish, but seldom black. Contrasted with the Goths, they are what physiologists call brachy-cephalic,—that is, their heads were proportionally broader across, and less deep from front to back, and of the United States of America, this Work is respectfully dedicated by a Polish Protestant."

their cheek-bones being in consequence somewhat more prominent and their eyes smaller.”¹

The Polish State was founded by Mieceslav the First, a prince of the Piast dynasty, about a thousand years ago. Poland then became nominally Christian. At that period Cyril and Methodius translated the Scriptures into the Slavonian tongue, and this version is still in use in all Greek Orthodox churches. The dialect in which they wrote, now called Church Slavonic, is of great importance to the scientific student of Slavonic tongues, which differ from each other less than Dutch does from German. Various Slavonic countries eventually were won over to the Church of Rome. Those who deride theology as of no practical importance, should consider the far-reaching consequences of religious training, which are stamped upon the Slavonic peoples, which reappear in their American immigrants, and which make a gulf between them and the Americans who have a pure gospel. Their alphabets, literature, schools, architecture, and historical affiliations, have been determined by their forms of religion. Croatians and Servians are the same people and speak the same language; but Croatians (who gave us the

¹ *Westminster Review*, 63 : 114, etc.

word *cravat*) are Romanists and use the Roman alphabet, while Servians use the Greek alphabet, and follow the Greek Church. "The Bohemian churches are of a German Gothic; those of their Russian kinsfolk followed models of Constantinople in architecture and art, as well as discipline and ritual."¹ As are their churches, so are their alphabets: Poles and Bohemians use Roman letters; Russians and Bulgarians, the Greek. These all are of the Slavonic race, and nearly all of them are represented by colonists, schools, and churches, in our American cities. An American who attempts to read his mother tongue when transliterated in Greek letters, can see an illustration of these national and theological differences.

During stormy centuries of the Piast dynasty, Rome received gifts and concessions from princes who sought her favor; yet she seems to have had only a feeble hold upon Poland. Other countries trembled before the thunders of the Vatican; but Poland was indifferent to its censures. In conflicts between the secular and ecclesiastical powers, the latter were often defeated. There was a sturdy, national spirit in Poland; and their historians,

¹ *Littell's Living Age*, 1879.

some of them zealous Romish priests, confess that worship in the national language was extant until the sixteenth century.

With Casimir the Great, the Piast dynasty ended in the fourteenth century. The beautiful and beloved Queen Hedwig, his daughter, married Jagello, Duke of Lithuania, who was baptized, and introduced Christianity among his heathen subjects. For two centuries, the most prosperous period of Polish history, the crown was hereditary in Lithuania and elective in Poland; but a Jagellon was always elected. Under the Jagellon kings, "the mass of the peasantry are to be conceived of as living in their dirty villages, ignorant and boorish. The nobles, on the other hand, are spoken of as a singularly handsome, sprightly, intelligent and polite race, generally well accomplished and with an extreme facility in learning foreign languages and habits; the women animated, clever and more beautiful than the women of any other continental country. The bravery of the Poles, and their military excellence in every respect, were then as now, universally admitted; and whatever modern theorists of a certain class may say, there is no better test of a nation's stuff and substance than how it will fight. In the fif-

teenth and sixteenth centuries, the political suffrage was more extended there than in any other country in Europe. In 1500, Poland with fifteen millions had four hundred and eighty thousand voters. In France, in the last year of Louis Philippe there were only one hundred and eighty thousand in thirty-five millions. In no country of the world was the constitution so republican, and at the same time so efficacious in action; in none was the central authority so respectable, resting on a basis so broad and popular. Sigismund the Third at one Diet was reminded that he was ruling over a nation of free nobles, having no equals under heaven.”¹

There was a Slavic Reformation a hundred years before Luther's conversion. Andreas Galka Dobszyn, who received the degree of M. A. from the University of Cracow expounded the works of Wyclif and wrote a hymn in honor of the English reformer. “Ye Poles, Germans and all nations! Wyclif speaks the truth! Whoever wishes to know himself, let him approach Wyclif; whoever will enter the ways which he has pointed out will never leave them, and never will err. Truth is the heritage of Christ. The priests

¹ *Westminster Review*, 63 : 130.

have hidden the truth ; they are afraid of it, and they deceive the people with fables. O Christ ! For the sake of thy wounds, send us such priests as may guide us toward the truth and may bury the antichrist."

John Huss of Bohemia read with delight the writings of Wyclif, the "morning star of the Reformation." When the quarrel arose between the Germans and Bohemians in the University of Prague, Huss became the leader of his countrymen. The Germans, who embraced in their party all the foreigners at the University, had three votes, while the native Bohemians had only one, at all their elections. Thus Germans disposed of University honors. Huss pleaded for home rule, and has endeared his name even among Bohemians who do not accept his religious views. He urged that the custom be reversed, and that three votes be given to the national party, and one to the Germans, according to the practice of the Universities of Bologna and Paris, which were called the mothers of Prague. The monarch granted this demand October 5th, 1409 ; whereupon the Germans seceded and founded the University of Leipsic, which thus indirectly perpetuates the memory of the Bohemian reformer. After the departure of the Germans,

Huss was elected rector of the University. Krasinski writes that "the national party eagerly embraced the religious doctrines of its leader, the anti-Romanist feeling being blended with the anti-German. Poland was intimately connected with Bohemia; the languages of both countries were then almost the same. The youths of Poland generally resorted for their education to the University of Prague, where a college for them was founded by Queen Hedwig. One of the first martyrs of Huss's Reformation was a Pole." At Prague in 1411, two Bohemians and a Pole, Stanislaw Paszek, a shoemaker by trade, denounced as false the doctrine of indulgences. Their lives were sacrificed for their zeal, and Huss preached a sermon at their burial. Huss was greatly esteemed in Poland, and all the Poles at the Council of Constance united with their Bohemian brethren in the effort to save him from a martyr's death.

Poles assisted Hussites in their wars, but the Reformation of Huss did not triumph in Poland. Had it done so, it might have spread among all the Slavonic nations. Krasinski accounts for the failure partly by the unfavorable effects of dissensions among the Hussites, and partly because the patriotic motives which

stimulated Bohemians in contending against Germans, were lacking in Poland, where no such conflict took place. Froude remarks:¹ "The Bohemians had avenged the murders of John Huss and Jerome of Prague on eleven bloody fields; but they had been crushed, and there remained only Jean Ziska's skin which he bequeathed to his country to be stretched on a drum, and so keep alive the echoes of the eternal battle music." Nevertheless, Rome was fast losing her hold upon the minds of the people in the fifteenth century.

The conflicts between Slav and Teuton in the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the closing years of the nineteenth century have threatened the balance of power in Europe. The gospel which unites Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Scythian, in Christ, cures such national feuds. The Slavic Reformation prepared the way for that of the German Luther; and Luther's doctrines in turn were preached in Bohemia and Poland. "John Huss," said Luther, "has weeded the vineyard of Christ from many thorns. He has condemned the scandal of the apostolical see. I have found a fertile and well-tilled ground." Huss, he said, was the seed which must die and be

¹ *Council of Trent.*

buried in order that it might germinate and grow. The doctrines of Luther were disseminated by Polish students who frequented Wittenberg. In Dantzic, the chief town of Polish Prussia, some suffered for their profession of the reformed faith. Sigismund the First (who reigned 1508–1548), was opposed to political innovations, but was praised by Calvin for his tolerance of religious reform. Protestant Bohemians emigrated to Poland and introduced their doctrines into various parts of the kingdom. Although checked by the authorities at first, the Reformation soon became too strong to be suppressed. One of the most singular events in the history of the kingdom occurred during the reign of this sovereign, and shows the growing power of the new doctrines. For generations the celebrated order of the Teutonic Knights had been a thorn in the side of Poland, and various battles had tested the prowess of Pole or Teuton. King Sigismund the First waged war with them and was victorious. In settling the terms of peace in 1525, the Grand Master of the order, Albert of Brandenburg, a descendant of the Hohenzollern family who in 1411 possessed themselves of the marquisate of Brandenburg, proposed that their order

should be secularized. He and other knights married wives and professed Lutheranism. The king himself took part in the stately ceremonies which so happily terminated this long conflict. This is said to have been the first instance of secularization in history, and the first diplomatic recognition of Lutheranism as an established religion.

The most rapid progress of the Reformation in this realm was during the reign of this king's son and successor, Sigismund Augustus (1548-1572), when the Protestant churches were established, not as tolerated, but as legally acknowledged communities. The Vistula is the great river of Poland, and it seemed about to become a Protestant stream. Its towns, like Cracow, Sandomir, Thorn, and Dantzic, saw Protestant assemblies. "In the sixteenth century Poland was the most tolerant country in Europe. The only protest made by any nation against the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the massacre of St. Bartholomew came from Poland."¹ The celebrated Jesuit Skarga complained that two thousand Romanist churches were converted into Protestant ones. Calvin's disciples multiplied among the people, the nobility, and in

¹ *Westminster Review*, 80: 180.

the University of Cracow; and his eagle eye saw the importance of gaining that kingdom for the gospel.

The dedication of a book was a more serious matter in those times than now. Luther dedicated an edition of his German Bible to Sigismund Augustus. In 1549 this king accepted from Calvin the dedication of his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which he says:—

“Your kingdom is extensive and renowned, and abounds in many excellences; but its happiness will then only be solid when it adopts Christ as its chief ruler and governor, so that it may be defended by his safeguard and protection; for to submit your scepter to him is not inconsistent with that elevation in which you are placed, but it would be far more glorious than all the triumphs of the world. Undertake then, I pray, O magnanimous King, under the auspicious banner of Christ, a work so worthy of your royal elevation, as well as of your heroic virtue, so that the eternal truth of God, by which his own glory and the salvation of men are promoted, may, wherever thy kingdom spreads, recover its own authority, which has been taken away by the fraudulent dealings of antichrist. It is truly an arduous

work, and of such magnitude as is sufficient to fill even the wisest with solicitude and fear. As it is, the peculiar work of God, we ought not in this case to regard the extent of human powers as the glory due to his power; so that relying on that not only to help us but also to guide us, we may venture on things far beyond our own strength. For the work of restoring and establishing the Church is not without reason everywhere assigned in Scripture to God. The Lord who has himself as it were by his own hand laid the foundations of the Church will not suffer it to remain in a decayed state, for he is represented as solicitous to restore it and to repair its ruins; for by speaking thus, he in effect promises that he will never fail us when engaged in this work. As he would not have us sit down as idle spectators of his power, so the presence of his aid in sustaining the hands which labor, clearly proves that he himself is the chief architect. This one thing is abundantly sufficient, that we have such an invincible Leader, that the more he is assailed, the greater will be the victories and the triumphs gained by his power. Farewell, invincible King. May the Lord Jesus rule you by the spirit of wisdom, sustain you by the spirit of valor, bestow on you all kinds

of blessings, long preserve your Majesty in health and prosperity, and protect your kingdom. Amen.”

Later, in 1554 he wrote: “When Christ wishes even his humblest disciples to be like lamps suspended in a lofty place, that send out their light to a distance, what does he require of a king, whom he has placed at the summit of human dignity, that he might shine before all others? Remember then, most excellent King, that a light has been divinely kindled up for the whole of Poland, which cannot be kept hidden any longer without your incurring serious blame. When the battle that is to be fought here is for the glory of God in the kingdom of Christ, for the purity of religious worship, for the salvation of the human race, such is the excellence of the cause that it should absorb all vexations in its glory, and easily surmount all obstacles. When God asserts that it is his own work to restore his ruined Church, of which he is the only founder, we may conclude with certainty that he will by no means desert us in the moment of need. Because the enemies of sound doctrine will strive with all their might to shut the door against pious and sincere teachers, it would be necessary that a helping hand should be held

out to them by your Majesty, in order that without any restraint they may turn the people away from the errors of superstition to the straight path of piety.”

Nicholas Radziwill, one of the most distinguished nobles of Poland, the friend and confidant of King Sigismund Augustus, in 1553 publicly adopted the Reformed doctrines, and caused to be translated and printed at his own expense the first Protestant Bible in Poland. In 1555 Calvin wrote to him: “It is my wish that the kingdom of Christ should flourish everywhere, yet at the present moment Poland deservedly occupies my thoughts with a very special anxiety. For from the time that the light of a purer doctrine began to shine upon it, this happy beginning has at the same time inflamed my desire with the hopes of a better progress. Unquestionably you see that it is a work of immense difficulty to establish the heavenly reign of God upon earth. You see with what indifference that cause is treated, which ought not only to occupy the chief place among our cares, but even absorb all our thoughts.”

Again he writes to the King: “Since in Poland true religion has already begun to dawn, since many pious and wise men volun-

tarily aspire after the pure worship of God, I, whom the King of kings has appointed a preacher of his gospel and a minister of his Church, call upon your Majesty in his name to make this work above all others your especial care. Your Majesty has far less difficulty to struggle with than Hezekiah and Josiah, who had an arduous and severe contest with the contumacy of their people; whereas in our days the greater part of the Polish nobility shows a prompt and cheerful disposition to embrace the faith of Christ."

Polish nobles desired Calvin to establish their Reformation in person; but he recommended the Polish noble and reformer John a Lasco or Laski in his stead. During that century there were many eminent representatives of this family in the Church, the council, and the camp. John Laski, or a Lasco, was born in 1499, and was educated for the priesthood. His travels in Germany, Italy, France, and Belgium, introduced him to many famous scholars of the day. In 1524 Zwingli sowed the first doubt in his mind as to the orthodoxy of the Roman Church. The year 1525 he spent with Erasmus, who had a regard for him bordering on enthusiasm. D'Aubigné, speaking of Erasmus as the greatest critic of

the age, quotes his praises: "A glorious ancestry, high rank, prospects the most brilliant, a mind of wonderful richness, uncommon extent of knowledge, and with all this there is about him not the faintest taint of pride. The sweetness of his disposition puts him in harmony with everyone. His morals are pure as the snow. He has all the brilliancy of gems and gold. He has manners so easy, so open and so cordial that his company day by day makes me young again." This friendship Laski repaid with the liberality of a Polish grandee. He purchased the library of Erasmus, but left to him its use during his lifetime. He returned to his native land in 1526, and might have obtained the first dignities of the Polish Church, for his uncle was the primate of the kingdom and he seemed destined to be his successor. By his marriage, after his profession of the Reformed faith, he sacrificed these splendid prospects of preferment. Protestant princes sought his aid in advancing the Reformation. He may be considered as the real founder of the Protestant Church in Friesland, as in 1543 he was nominated superintendent of all the churches, and labored there with zeal for six years. By invitation of Archbishop Cranmer he went to

England in 1548 to assist in the reformation of the English Church, and spent six months with him at Lambeth. Latimer highly praised him in a sermon before King Edward the Sixth; and King Edward in a letter to Sigismund Augustus described Laski as a man gifted with eminent qualities and possessing extensive information. After another visit to Germany we find him in England in 1550. If an Anglo-Saxon asks whether a Pole can be converted, it may suffice to point to this Polish noble who was chosen as one of eight divines who formed in 1551 a commission for the reformation of English ecclesiastical law. He was nominated the superintendent of the foreign Protestant congregation established in London, composed of French, Germans and Italians, who found both asylum and liberal support from the English Government. Upon the accession of Queen Mary to the throne, John Laski left England, and after sojourning in Friesland and Frankfort-on-the-Main, where he established a church for the Belgian Protestant refugees, he returned in 1556 to his native land. He had previously published an account of the foreign churches that he had superintended, and explained his views about the

necessity for a reformation in Poland. He became superintendent of all the Reformed churches in Little Poland, soon after his return. He labored to promote a union of the Protestant denominations; and organized a hundred and twenty-two churches in Little Poland. To Calvin he reports: "I am now, my Calvin, so overwhelmed with cares and business that I cannot write. On the one hand enemies, on the other false friends, assail us, so that there is no rest. Farewell. Send greetings most cordially to all brethren in the Lord." He died in 1560, was buried with honors, and his death was a great loss to the Reformation. At Basel he had studied divinity with Ecolampadius and Hebrew with Pellican. He visited Bucer at Cambridge. His influence was great in the court of Edward the Sixth, and can be traced in the second prayer book, and in the views of Cranmer and Hooper. His catechism at Embden in Friesland was partly the basis for the Heidelberg Catechism. He wrote what was virtually the first confession of the Netherlands Reformed Church. Rev. Dr. A. Kuyper of Holland has done good service to the Church in publishing the works of this reformer. D'Aubigné thus estimates him: "A Lasco

does not stand in the first rank of the men of the Reformation. But in one respect he surpassed them all, and this by reason of the state of life in which it pleased God that he should be born. He knew better than anyone what it was to sacrifice for Jesus Christ the world with its dignities and its favors, and he did this with a noble courage. No sooner was the bandage, placed over his eyes, removed, than he felt abhorrence of bondage. He became one of the most beautiful examples of moral freedom in the sixteenth century."

John Laski did not labor in vain for the union of Protestants in Poland. The Bohemian Brethren, sometimes called Waldenses, driven from their country in 1548 emigrated to Poland, where they formed forty congregations. At the first general Protestant synod, held at Kosminek, 1555, a union was effected between them and the Reformed or Calvinistic churches. Calvin wrote to a Polish nobleman, Stanislaus Krasinski: "From a union with the Waldenses [or Brethren] I hope the best, not only because God blesses every act of a holy union of the members of Christ, but also because at the present crisis the experience of the Waldenses, who are so well drilled in the service of the Lord, will be of no small benefit to you."

In the year 1569 occurred a notable event,—the formal union of Poland and Lithuania at the Diet of Lublin. The principal noblemen of the three Protestant communions of Poland, assembled at that Diet, resolved to promote a union of their respective denominations, hoping that Sigismund Augustus, who had often wished for such a union, would at last be induced to embrace Protestantism. They were the more impelled to this by the death of their leaders, Laski and Prince Radziwill. Krasinski narrates that at this Diet the King gave a sort of recognition to Protestantism by attending the funeral of a Protestant, (with all his court, senate, and foreign ministers) the Grand General of the Crown, Sieniawski, who died at the advanced age of eighty-one. At Sendomir, in 1570, a synod adopted the *Consensus Sendomiriensis*, “the only important confessional document of the evangelical churches in Poland.”¹ It deserves remembrance: “An Act of religious union between the churches of Grand and Little Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Samogitia, which had hitherto appeared to differ from each other in respect to the confessions of Augsburg, Bohemia, and Switzerland, concluded at the Synod of

¹ Schaff.

Sendomir, April 14th, 1570. The Reformed orthodox churches of Poland have resolved from love of peace and concord to convoke a synod, and to bear witness to a complete unanimity among themselves. We have therefore held a friendly and Christian conference, and agreed with united hearts as to the following points:” here follow statements concerning the doctrines of God, the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, justification, and other fundamental articles; also more details concerning the Lord’s Supper, with a long extract from the Saxon Confession which Melancthon prepared in 1551 for the Council of Trent. They add their pledges: “We will at the same time abolish and bury in eternal oblivion all the contentions, troubles, and dissensions, which have hitherto impeded the progress of the gospel, not without great offense to many pious souls, and which have afforded to our enemies opportunities for calumniating us, and for attacking our true Christian religion; but on the contrary, we will oblige ourselves to maintain peace and tranquillity, to live in mutual love, and conjointly promote, in accordance with this our brotherly union, the edification of the Church,—maintaining, however, the order of discipline as

well as the rites of every church, as the present union leaves free to every church its rites and ceremonies; because it is of little importance what rites are observed, provided the doctrine itself, and the foundation of our faith and salvation, remain pure and unadulterated. After having mutually given each other our hands, we have made a sacred promise faithfully to maintain peace and faith, and to promote it every day more and more for the edification of the kingdom of God, and carefully to avoid all occasions of dissension. Finally, we do oblige ourselves not to seek our own interest, but, as it becomes the true servants of God, to seek only the glory of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and to spread the truth of his gospel by words and deeds. And that it may last forever prosperously, firm, and without infraction, we ardently pray to God the Father, who is the Author and abundant Source of all comfort and peace, who has snatched us and our churches from the dense darkness of popery, and gifted them with the light of his pure word and holy truth, that he should bless this our holy peace, concord, union and covenant, to the glory of his name and edification of his Church. Amen."

"A few weeks afterwards," says Schaff, "a

synodical meeting was held at Posen in the same spirit of union, and twenty brief articles were adopted for the purpose of confirming and preserving the Consensus. When the people who stood outside of the house where the meeting was held, heard the happy conclusion, they joined in the singing of the *Te Deum*, with tears of joy and gratitude to God. The Consensus was again confirmed by the general synods at Cracow, 1573; Petricow, 1578; Vladislav, 1583; and Thorn, 1595. This last was the largest synod ever held in Poland."

In Poland, as elsewhere, literature and education were fostered by the gospel. The first national poet, Rey, was a Protestant; and so was Bielski, the first historian who used the vernacular tongue. In half a century Poland was placed on a par with the most enlightened nations of Europe. Protestants gave the Bible to this nation, as they have done to all the modern world. Christopher Radziwill, a descendant of the nobleman who published the first Protestant Bible in Poland, dedicated another edition of it to his sovereign, Vladislav the Fourth, with these words:—

"Sire,—As this book of Holy Scripture which was published sixty-nine years ago (1563) adorned with the name of your royal

Majesty's predecessor, King Sigismund Augustus, of immortal memory, was printed a second time during the election of your royal Majesty, it seemed to be just that it should be also now presented in this new garment, to the world, under the royal name. For as our Protestant ancestors were inspired with such veneration for King Sigismund Augustus of sacred memory, that they presented in homage to his earthly throne that which they taught and believed concerning the majesty of Heaven, thus also we, having elected by our free votes your royal Majesty for our lord and master, thought it our duty to offer a similar expression of our affection toward your royal Majesty, as the successor not only of the crown, but also of the virtues, of Sigismund Augustus, and particularly of his attachment to our nation and its liberties. And, as our ancestors were not ashamed to stand up with this book before the monarchs and potentates of this world, it behooves us also to declare that not only are we not ashamed of this reprint of the Bible, but that we are ready to appear before the anointed of the Lord and render an account of our faith, not from any human doctrines and traditions, but from the Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Ghost. And as my ancestor Radzi-

will, in his dedication of the Bible to King Sigismund Augustus, took God for witness, that he could not give any stronger expression of respect to his master, and sincerely wished, on the same occasion, to the King every kind of eternal and temporal happiness, thus I, having received this Bible from our pious teachers, who have carefully superintended this edition, take God, the Searcher of hearts, for witness, that it is not for vain ceremony's sake, but as a sign of my true allegiance and devotion that I offer this present, which I consider the most precious thing in the world, and which I value above my fortune, yea, and my life!—doing it in my own name as well as in that of all the Protestant congregations of Poland and Lithuania, with whom we shall all ever pray for a long and happy reign to your Majesty.

“Although I do not admit that anyone having a true Polish heart would be so forgetful of the country's laws and the times in which we live, as to venture on calumniating to your royal Majesty this our sincere present, as well as our Protestant religion, because there are neither controversies nor allusions in it which can give offense to anyone, yet if some foreigner should act in such a manner,

let your royal Majesty remember that when the King of kings shall call before his throne all the monarchs of the world, they will have to render an account of their worship to God and of the people intrusted to them according to this statute and not according to any other ; and that nobody will be sheltered there by the advice of others, but will be obliged to answer for himself."

The press was a formidable weapon by which the Reformation assailed the errors of Rome ; and it gave Luther and Calvin a surpassing advantage over Wyclif and Huss. Protestants in all parts of Poland established printing presses, which published large numbers not only of religious but of literary and scientific works. Polish Protestants also established schools, one of which, Lezno or Lissa, in the seventeenth century gained a European reputation, through its eminent teacher, John Amos Comenius. His *Janua Linguarum Reserata*, or Door of Languages Unlocked, was translated into twelve European and three Asiatic tongues. The governments of Sweden and of England invited him to reform their schools. In Little Poland, the Calvinists had fourteen higher schools, and several in Lithuania, chiefly established by the Radziwills. In the sixteenth

century, the elementary schools, mostly Protestant, are said to have numbered fifteen hundred. "The effects of toleration stimulated commerce and industry. Many foreigners sought in Poland a refuge from religious persecution. Thus Italian congregations existed at Cracow, Vilna, and Posnania, as also did German, French and Scotch, by whose immigration, the towns of Poland rapidly increased in population and wealth."¹

There was great need for a reformation in Poland. Modrzewski, who became secretary to Sigismund Augustus, explained to him the necessity for reforming the Church. "What has created the dissensions in the Church? The corruption of manners and discipline; neglect of the laws; and perversion of doctrines and ceremonies. Those who have possessed themselves of the lucrative dignities of the Church have engaged in unworthy occupations. They have become fond of revels, of rich dress, precious stones, and large retinues. All their time is devoted to play and hunting. They have become enamored of comfort, ease, and luxury. What is now the intellectual authority of the clergy? The greatest part of them are ignorant of the

¹ Krasinski.

Scriptures; some are given up to atheism; they deride everything that is holy. They have ceased to believe in religion; they have rejected doctrines and neglected actions prescribed by God. They have appropriated to themselves villages, towns, castles, tithes, enormous incomes, and richly endowed states. They have founded their supremacy upon money, upon worldly connections and assistance, and upon a luxurious life. They wish to rule only by force; and in order to maintain their authority they have elevated their Church contrary to the precepts of Christ. But no religious community can be durable and maintain its unity if its doctrines and actions are not founded upon the pure word of God."

The Roman Catholic Synod of Lowicz made some remarkable confessions: "The beginning of the troubles has been caused by the carelessness of the parochial, as well as of the higher, clergy; but the apostolical see has also committed many errors; it has neglected the dangers and remained indifferent to them. The inactivity and supineness of the bishops have increased the troubles of the Church and produced the greatest injury to the clergy. One of them has publicly said in the assembly

of the nobles, 'Let the people believe what they like, provided I receive my income.' We must not conceal our faults. The regular and secular clergy are infected with the utmost profligacy of manners. They are addicted to luxury, avarice, debauchery, idleness, carelessness; and, what is worse, the priests have no knowledge of the law of God."

Pope Paul the Fourth sent his nuncio, Lippomani to Poland, in 1556. The King had sent a letter for the Pope to the Council of Trent, demanding that mass should be performed in the national language the communion in two kinds, the marriage of priests, the abolition of the Annates, and the convocation of a national council for the reform of abuses. The famous convert, Peter Paul Vergerio, who had himself been a papal nuncio to Germany, whose pen was an aid to the Reformation, wrote to the King, of Lippomani: "A man is now entering your realm who will destroy your wise and salutary designs; he will prevent a peaceful reformation of the Church and will disturb the kingdom." The Pope wrote to the King: "If I am to credit the reports that reach me, I must feel the most profound grief and even doubt of your and your realm's salvation. You favor heretics, you listen to

their conversations, you admit them to your company and board, you receive their letters and write to them. You suffer their works, sanctioned with your name, to be read and circulated. The Palatine of Vilna,¹ a heretic, is chancellor of Lithuania, the most intimate friend of the King, in private and in public, and may be considered in some measure as the coregent of the kingdom and the second monarch. John Laski and Vergerius have arrived by your orders in this country. As our letters, embassies, admonitions, have been without effect we shall have recourse to the utmost severity." Lippomani entreated the King to "seize arbitrarily the leaders of the Reformed party, and to execute them in a summary manner, because the Protestants being deprived of their heads would then have been easily exterminated."² This conversation became public, and raised violent hatred throughout the country against the legate. The Synod of Lowicz, which was convoked by Lippomani, attempted to try Lutomirski, rector of Konin, for heresy. He boldly appeared with influential friends, each armed with a Bible; and the synod did not dare to prosecute him. It did succeed, however, in a

¹ Nicholas Radziwill.

² Krasinski.

case of sacrilege. Dorothy Lazecka, a poor girl, was absurdly accused of obtaining the host at communion, and afterwards selling it to Jews who pierced it with needles, and obtained some blood from it. The Jews and this woman were condemned to be burned alive, the King's exequatur was forged, and this sentence was executed before his messenger could prevent it. All Poland was filled with horror; and Lippomani left the country followed by national execrations.

The triumph of the Reformation seemed certain; but though it advanced rapidly for fifty years, it declined as rapidly in the next half century. Religion has its book of lamentations. The tolerant and accomplished Sigismund Augustus showed a fatal irresolution when he vacillated between the counsels of Calvin and the threats of the Pope. For two hundred years the Jagellon dynasty had guided the affairs of the kingdom. This monarch was the seventh and last of his line. In two centuries more, under Swedish and Saxon dynasties, "after a career of degeneracy almost unexampled in the history of the world,"¹ Poland disappeared from the map of Europe. The free election of its kings meant

¹ *Westminster Review*, 63.

the offer of its crown in the markets of Europe; and it was generally obtained by a foreigner.

How are the mighty fallen! And why Poland? The invasions of Turks, Tartars, and Swedes, the growth and greed of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and the resentment of the two last-named powers for the persecution of Lutherans or Greek Orthodox, have been mentioned as external causes; and for internal ones, the lack of a middle class and of sympathy between nobles and peasantry, the lack of a national spirit and of centralized power like that which developed itself in other European nations. Yet Isaiah suggests the real reason for the decline of this kingdom, whose history illustrates his prophecy: "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." It is aptly remarked, that "Prussia was as flat and incomparably more sterile than Poland, and equally exposed to the ambition of its neighbors; but it steadily increased in territory and population."¹ The gospel, the strongest bond between noble and peasant, the power which enlightens and uplifts any peasantry, was stolen from this kingdom by the Jesuits. Calvin's words to the King seem

¹ *Blackwood*, 30: 231.

prophetic: "If the opportunity offered by God is neglected, you may afterwards have to stand before a door that is closed."

Poland may well rue the day when Cardinal Hosius, despairing of other means for hindering the gospel, in 1564 sought the aid of the Jesuits. They are the most learned order in the Church of Rome, and have been a curse to mankind wherever they have gone. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The questions at stake between Jesuits and Reformers may seem too complicated for solution by ordinary readers. Yet a wayfaring man though a fool can apply the wise maxim of Christ, "By their fruits shall ye know them." The Rev. Dr. Dalton of St. Petersburg said, in 1884, to the Presbyterian Council at Belfast: "It is my deepest conviction, as the result of long years of study, that Poland has been strangled by the Romish Church. Had that noble people remained true to the leading of John a Lasco, then to the present day had those melancholy words '*Finis Poloniæ*' remained unspoken. If anyone wishes to understand what the audacious man of Rome, with his bodyguard of Jesuits, can make out of a noble country, let

him study the history of Poland to the present day—the history of a people that, as few others, offered in its worldly circumstances so many favorable points to a Presbyterian development.”

It is true, indeed, that some of the professed Protestants of Poland must bear their burden of censure. Professed Protestants in the United States have sometimes thought more of their personal ambitions than of their religion. Those who love religious liberty may learn from Polish annals not to trust in such leaders. Some Polish churches were composed almost entirely of nobles who neglected the evangelization of their peasantry. Lack of missionary zeal is always a sin, and in this case was a disastrous mistake; according to Krasinski, it was the principal cause for the decline of Protestantism in his country. In 1718 Little Poland had only eight Reformed churches, whereas in the sixteenth century it had a hundred and twenty. The Princes Radziwill were instrumental in the conversion of thousands of their peasantry in Samogitia, whose descendants preserved their religion for generations, and contrasted favorably in their morals and prosperity with their Catholic neighbors. Had all Polish nobles imitated

this example, the nation might have been transformed and saved. The organization of the Protestants was not complete. A permanent committee should have been maintained in the capital to watch over their interests which were exposed to persistent Romish persecution. The three political divisions of the country, Grand and Little Poland and Lithuania, were independent in their ecclesiastical establishments—meeting in general synods, it is true, in times of emergency. The harmony sought by the Synod of Sendomir did not continue; and instances of Lutheran ill will toward the Bohemian and Reformed churches mar the pages of Polish history. The compact phalanx of the Jesuits was always ready to profit by such dissensions.

The Protestant ranks were weakened by the lapse of some into Socinianism. Faustus Socinus, an Italian who was connected by marriage with the first families of Poland, developed the Unitarian opinions of his day into a system. The number of his adherents increased until they could hold synods where eminent men were present. Calvin's sagacity detected the insincerity of Blandrata, an Italian Unitarian, and his warnings were read at

the Synod of Cracow. Rakow was the Rome of Socinianism, its fountain head for Europe, the "Sarmatian Athens," whose school once had a thousand pupils, and whose printing press published not only Socinian but literary and scientific works as well. There could be no union between Protestants and Socinians, then or since. Through Jesuit influence, Socinians were persecuted and in 1658 expelled from Poland. Though zealous, their converts were never numerous and were chiefly from the upper classes of society. They created dissensions in some Reformed churches, and kept many in the Church of Rome who inclined toward Protestantism. Many such became indifferent to the Scriptures, and adopted the easy, deceitful Romish tenet, that the study of the Bible should not be permitted to all. Unitarianism paralyzed some Presbyterian churches of Ireland at a more recent period, but in that land of Protestant liberty, the breach was repaired. It was a misfortune of Polish Protestants that every error of doctrine, organization, or policy, was sadly avenged by the Jesuits.

Catharine de' Medici had a son who was Charles the Ninth of France. Coligni suggested to her the advantage of securing the

throne of Poland for his brother, Henry of Valois, Duke of Anjou, and Catharine eagerly accepted the suggestion. Such a combination of kingdoms might have changed the face of Europe. Polish Protestants coöperated with Coligni and their brethren in France; Polish Catholics had no objection to Henry, as a Catholic prince who fought Protestants at the battle of Jarnac. The French ambassador to Poland, Montluc, was a Roman Catholic bishop in name only, as he had adopted the Reformed opinions.

While Montluc was on his way to Poland, he learned of the massacre of St. Bartholomew and martyrdom of Coligni. This was not only a crime but a blunder. Catharine saw the necessity of pursuing Coligni's policy; and Montluc received orders to continue his journey. Moreover, his instructions, written by Coligni, remained unaltered; a striking tribute to his statesmanship. The Polish Protestants first exacted from the French ambassadors a promise of amnesty and religious liberty for their brethren in France, after which they agreed to the election of Henry. An embassy of noblemen was sent to France to announce the election of Henry and to take his oath to uphold religious liberty; and they

made a great impression in Paris by their learning and accomplishments. In his royal progress to Poland, Henry was feasted at Heidelberg, where he was seated opposite a large picture which delineated the horrors of St. Bartholomew; and his attendants were Huguenot refugees. In the ceremony of coronation, Firley, the Protestant Prime Minister of Poland, observed that the oath taken by Henry at Paris was omitted. He boldly seized the crown and told him that he could not be king unless he took this oath. "*Si non jurabis, non regnabis.*" Dembinski, Grand Chancellor of Poland, also a Protestant, stood by him, and presented the scroll containing the oath; and through their firmness the King was compelled to repeat it. In four months, when he heard that his brother Charles the Ninth had died, he fled secretly to France—a ludicrous procedure as some describe it, and a good riddance for the nation that he had scandalized by his dissipation.

Cardinal Hosius sent congratulations to Cardinal Guise for the murder of Coligni, which news "had filled him with incredible joy and comfort." He "thanked the Almighty for the great boon conferred on France by the slaughter of St. Bartholomew, imploring that

he might show equal mercy to Poland." The Protestant leaders had been alarmed by the treacherous counsels of Hosius, who advised Henry to break his oath to protect Protestants; and they now endeavored to elect a Protestant king. Stephen Báthori, the able Duke of Transylvania, seemed to be such a man; but after his election, to their dismay, they saw him kneeling at the mass. He had yielded to Romish arguments,—that none but a Romanist could be sustained on the throne of Poland, and that the Princess Anna, to whom he was betrothed, a sister of Sigismund Augustus, was a bigoted Romanist who would not accept a Protestant husband. Although he promised liberty to the Protestants, his election was the turning point of their cause. His reign of ten years gave glory to Poland; and also began its ruin through the sway of the Jesuits.

By the favor of Stephen Báthori, the schools and colleges of the Jesuits spread over the country. At Polotzk, and even in the Lutheran province of Livonia, at Dorpat and Riga, he founded their colleges; and in Riga he ordered a church to be taken from the Lutherans and given to the Jesuits. In Vilna, he established the chief Jesuit university, though

this was the center of a large Protestant population and of the Greek Orthodox. Prince Radziwill, Palatine of Vilna, refused to affix the seal of the State to the charter of this university, and the Diet of 1585 attacked the King's arbitrary act as unconstitutional; but in the end the monarch prevailed. Jesuit influence arrested Báthori's victorious career. The Czar Ivan Vassilowich deluded the Jesuit Possevinus, who believed that he could induce the Church of Moscow to submit to Rome; and he accordingly persuaded Báthori to change his foreign policy and conclude peace with Muscovy.

After the death of Stephen Báthori there was another interregnum, followed by the election of Sigismund Vaza, the son of King John of Sweden, and Catharine Jagellon, sister of Sigismund Augustus. Although his father was a Lutheran, he had him taught the Polish language and trained in the Roman Catholic faith, with reference to such a career; while his mother was entirely under Jesuit influence. The long reign of this fanatical king, known as Sigismund the Third, for forty-five years (1587-1632) led to the ruin of Protestantism and of Poland. The kings of Poland, though their authority was limited, had

the power to distribute domains called starosties among the nobles, who held them for life; and these were bestowed by this king upon converts to Rome. This proselyting policy had its effect upon ambitious men. At the beginning of his reign, the senate had only a minority of Catholics; at its close, it had but two Protestants. He gloried in the nickname of King of the Jesuits, and was a tool in their hands. Their riches increased so rapidly that in 1627 their annual income was four hundred thousand dollars, a large sum at that period. They had fifty schools, in which the majority of the children of the nobles were taught, and thus they practically superintended national education. Protestant schools, though superior in their methods, could not compete with the great endowments of the Jesuits. They were changed into Romish schools, were abandoned entirely, or had a lingering existence, as many of their noble patrons apostatized to Rome. Broscius, a zealous Romanist, described the system of teaching in Jesuit schools: "The Jesuits teach children the grammar of Alvar,¹ which is very difficult to understand, and much time is spent at it. This they do, that by keeping children a long time in school they may be-

¹ A Spanish Jesuit who published a Latin grammar.

come well acquainted with their minds. They want to keep boys at school till the age of manhood, that they may engage for their order those who show much talent or expect large inheritances. But when an individual possesses no talents, nor has expectations, they will not retain him. And what can he do? Knowing nothing, and being unfit for any useful occupation, he must request the fathers to take care of him, who will provide him with an inferior office in the household of some benefactor of theirs, that they may make use of him afterwards as a tool for their purposes." Literature rapidly declined under this withering influence; and scarcely any work of merit was produced from that time until the latter part of the eighteenth century, when the Jesuits lost their power. The language was corrupted by a mixture of Latin and barbaric phrases called Macaronic—a badge of this shameful servitude. Contrary to the decree which proclaimed the liberty of the press, the Jesuits introduced their censorship. Many Protestant printing presses went the way of their schools, into oblivion, or into Romanist hands. The Jesuits systematically destroyed all records and memorials of Protestantism, so that the materials for a history of the Polish Reforma-

tion have become rare or difficult of access ; which accounts for the fact that it has been obscured and undervalued.

Krasinski regards the overthrow of Protestantism in Poland as unparalleled in the religious world. It was not suppressed by legal authority as in Italy or Spain, but "by an unprincipled faction, acting in opposition to the laws of the country, and is the more remarkable, as the free institutions of Poland which facilitated the progress of the Reformation were afterwards rendered subservient to the persecution of its disciples." "The most invariable and successful policy of the Jesuits in Poland was to agitate the lower classes, and to insure, by intrigues with the higher ranks of society, impunity to the excesses which an infuriated mob committed at their instigation."

The preaching of Cardinal Hosius, that no faith should be kept with heretics, brought its fruitage when the Reformed church of Cracow was pillaged by a mob, in 1574; and other outrages occurred there in later years. Such attempts were repeated at Vilna, but restrained by Stephen Báthori. Another riot occurred in 1591, when the Protestant church at Cracow was burned. The Jesuit Skarga,

claiming divine inspiration, highly praised the destruction of this church. The congregation dared not rebuild it, but transferred their place of worship to the neighboring village of Alexandrowice. Sigismund the Third left unpunished the rioters who in 1593 plundered the house of John Kolay, one of the principal citizens of Cracow, and a member of this congregation. In 1613 another mob attacked Protestants in Alexandrowice; and they again removed their place of worship to a more distant village. In 1626, materials for their new building in this village were destroyed by a mob. In 1605, and in subsequent years, the Protestant churches of Posnania were similarly destroyed through Jesuit instigations. A young Italian minister at Vilna suffered martyrdom for his faith; and like persecutions occurred at Lublin. Here the wife of William Tuck, a Scottish merchant, while he was absent on a journey, was fettered and imprisoned for her faith, which she would not recant, in spite of threats and visits of the Jesuits. When asked whether she were a Catholic, and attended the confession, she replied, "No; I am evangelical and confess my sins to God." She was the mother of five children, the youngest of whom was but an

infant, but intercessions in her behalf were in vain.

Through the growing power of the Jesuits, such excesses could not be prevented by Vladislav the Fourth, son and successor of Sigismund the Third. His tolerance was shown by his acceptance of Christopher Radziwill's dedication of the Bible, already mentioned. With conciliatory designs, he summoned a conference of Protestants and Romanists at Thorn in 1645, the *Colloquium Caritativum*, as it was called. This held thirty-six meetings, and led only to increased bitterness and controversial publications.

Vladislav was succeeded by his brother, John Casimir, who was a Jesuit and a cardinal. His reign continued the work of destruction begun by his father, Sigismund. Protestantism was crushed and ceased to be a power in the nation. Subsequent kings, including Sobieski and the Saxon dynasty that followed him, were unable or unwilling to punish religious persecutions. In 1724, Rösner the burgomaster of Thorn and several leading Protestants were executed, upon the false charge of having fomented a riot—atrocities which sent a thrill of horror throughout Europe. Protests came from the English Minister at the

Polish court, from Prussia, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, and even from the Czar of Russia, who threatened war; but all this only made matters worse for the Protestants.

But the misfortunes of Poland accompanied the persecution of evangelical believers. Civil war broke out during the reign of Sigismund the Third. The Muscovites sought an alliance with Poland and elected his son Vladislav their czar; but Sigismund sought this crown for himself. As the Muscovites saw his zeal for Rome they changed their policy and opposed a Polish alliance. Tolerance brought foreigners to Poland; intolerance made them emigrate elsewhere. The borders were devastated by Turks and Tartars. Stephen Báthori had given military organization to the Cossacks of the Ukraine, who fought loyally for Poland against Turks, Tartars, and even their brethren the Muscovites. When persecution attacked them, when the last Greek church of Lublin was taken from them, Litynski, one of their nobles, said, "God, who surely punishes every wickedness, will raise a nation which will take for one a hundred churches." The revolt of the Cossacks as John Casimir came to the throne shook the kingdom of Poland to its foundations. A

king of Sweden invaded Poland and occupied the greater part of its territory for a time. It was natural, though unfortunate, for the Protestants of Poland to look to Sweden for aid, to Gustavus Adolphus, and Charles the Twelfth. This exposed them to the charge of being unpatriotic, though they furnished some of Poland's bravest soldiers, for instance, Christopher Radziwill who defended Livonia against the Swedes. King Sigismund hated him because he was a Protestant, and allowed his royal flatterers to call that conflict the "Radziwillian War." He would not assist Radziwill. In the end, Livonia was lost to his kingdom. The fame of Poland's warriors resounded through Europe in the seventeenth century, but they could not prevent her fall.

The Elector of Saxony, under the name of Augustus the Second, succeeded John Sobieski as King of Poland in 1696. He was expelled from the country by Charles the Twelfth of Sweden; but after the battle of Pultava was restored by the aid of Peter the Great. Hitherto, the persecutions of Protestants were conducted in defiance of constitutional law, but under his reign the laws themselves were changed by a remarkable treaty which restricted religious liberty.

In order to maintain his authority against invaders and insurgents, Augustus kept a body of Saxon troops in Poland, who committed excesses as if they were in an enemy's country. The Poles were soon at war with these troops, until Peter the Great intervened and drew up the Treaty of Warsaw between the King and the nation in 1716. Szaniawski, afterwards Bishop of Cracow, who owed his elevation to the Czar Peter, inserted a paragraph which was a triumph for Rome: "As it is not allowed to the dissident in the Christian religion to have any churches with a free religious service in them, except such as were built before the enactment of the laws of 1632, 1648, 1668, 1674, and as it is permitted only to those dissidents who inhabit the towns and other places of the kingdom of Poland and the grand duchy of Lithuania to have in their dwellings private service, nevertheless without singing and sermons, therefore it is enacted by the authority of the present treaty, that all Protestant churches which may be found to have been built in contravention to the above-mentioned laws, may be destroyed; and those who entertain such different opinions about religion shall not have any meetings or assemblies, either in public or private, for the

sake of preaching or singing." But this same treaty was the death warrant of Polish independence; for Szaniawski put in another clause which reduced the army of Poland from eighty thousand to eighteen thousand, a number insufficient to guard the long line of exposed frontiers.

The historian Lelewel says: "From the beginning of the reign of John Casimir and the wars of the Cossacks to the end of the Swedish wars and the Dumb Diet, i. e., from 1648 to 1717, different kinds of disasters desolated the Polish soil and nation. These calamities caused the decline of Poland, the limits of which were narrowed by the loss of many provinces, whilst its population was diminished by the emigration of the Cossacks, the Socinians, and a great number of Protestants, as well as by the exclusion from the rights of citizens of the remaining dissidents. The nation was rendered weak by general impoverishment and distress; by the system of education which was either in the hands of the Jesuits or entirely neglected; finally by the exhaustion consequent on the convulsive struggles that had agitated the country during seventy years."

Under Augustus the Third the dissidents

suffered, as is shown by their petition to Stanislaus Poniatowski at the Diet of 1766, in which they say: "Our churches have been partly taken from us under different pretenses, and partly are falling into ruins, as the repairing of them is prohibited. Our youth is obliged to grow up in ignorance, and without the knowledge of God. The burying of our dead, even at night time, is exposed to great danger; and we are obliged in order to baptize children to convey them out of the country."

But the end was at hand. Reforms proposed by Polish patriots, which received the plaudits of English statesmen, came too late to save the unhappy kingdom. Three successive partitions in a little more than twenty years divided Poland between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and it vanished from the map of Europe. Bloody insurrections have failed to break the Russian yoke, which is the heavier for the presence and license of an army of three hundred thousand Russian soldiers.

Krasinski gives a description of the Lithuanian guards, almost exclusively officered by Protestant nobles of that province, and the fifth regiment of infantry which contained many of them. They fought the forces of

Suwaroff, Nov. 5th, 1794, "the most fatal day of Poland's annals. The commander of the last-named regiment, Count Paul Grabowski, belonging to a distinguished Protestant family, a young man of great merit, was then laid up with illness. He dragged himself, however, from his sick bed in order not to miss the post of honor on the night when the attack was expected. He found a glorious death at the head of his regiment, which, with the Lithuanian guards, was lost to a man; not a single man escaped, not a single man surrendered. This fatal day threw into mourning almost all the noble Protestant families of Lithuania." Our author frankly confesses mistakes of Polish Protestants; and he pathetically closes his book by showing the "expiatory sacrifice which they made of themselves on the funeral pile of their country."

Yet after centuries of persecution, Polish Protestants survive, as we learn from a letter dated Warsaw, May 9-21, 1884, sent to the Belfast Presbyterian council, by the Evangelical Reformed Consistory in the kingdom of Poland:—

"Perhaps it is not known to all the members of your venerable Assembly, that there exists in the Kingdom of Poland, an Evangel-

ical Reformed Church, with a Synodical Presbyterian form of government, which conducts its affairs according to Church order. Although the spirit of the Reformation has been partly trodden down and partly chilled, yet ten Evangelical Reformed Congregations form themselves into a union whose affairs are managed by an annual Synod, not ignoring a Presbytery in every congregation; a moderator of Synod (the Consistory) carries out the findings of the same, and is, besides, an authority mediating between the Church and the State, the free exercise of all the rights of the Church not being interfered with. The number of souls under pastoral care is six thousand, besides those who are living in the Dispersion. We have only four pastors at present in settled charges. In a material point of view, there is much to be wished for, except in the case of the congregation in Warsaw, which in the year 1880 celebrated joyfully the acquisition of a beautiful house of worship. The harvest is great; we request that you embrace us in your intercessory prayer, that the Lord of the harvest will send forth laborers into his harvest."

The report of the London Presbyterian Council, 1889, gives a description of the Re-

formed churches in Russia, which it classifies in three groups, those in "Poland, Lithuania, and the rest of the Empire. 1. The Reformed in what was formerly the Kingdom of Poland—partly the remains of the once flourishing Presbyterian Church of Little Poland, formed into a Synod by John à Lasco, number at present six thousand five hundred or seven thousand souls. There are nine congregations, with a Consistory in Warsaw. The oldest of these congregations, that of Sereje, was founded in 1584; that of Warsaw, 1776; that of Zelow, 1802, which, with nearly two thousand four hundred members, is a purely Bohemian congregation, descendants of the old Bohemian Presbyterians. 2. The Reformed congregations in Lithuania are firmly bound together in a true Presbyterian organization, which includes thirteen or fourteen congregations, embracing about eleven thousand one hundred and twenty-five souls. Some congregations are nearly extinct; some could not exist but for old foundations which are to be traced to the pious and powerful Prince Radziwill, the friend of Calvin, and which afford material, though at present wretched, means of support. 3. The Reformed in Russia Proper, form two widely separated bodies, which because of

the vast distance separating them have scarcely any mutual sympathy."

The doctrines of the Reformation must be preached from evangelical pulpits, or instead of a standing we shall have a falling church. The history of the Reformation illustrates these doctrines. Scripture teaches us a variety of uses for history. For instance: In intercession, "Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm." In entreaty: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath made the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" In expostulation: "O my people, wherein have I wearied thee? For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, . . . and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." In praise: "O give thanks . . . to him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth forever." In promise: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." In America, we may enter into the labors of the departed saints who toiled and suffered in Europe for

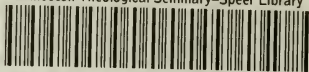
the gospel. Each thought of the judgment day grows more impressive as we see how our Master puts himself in the place of the foreigner, and blesses forever his true benefactors by the gracious acknowledgment, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." Poles are already joining our evangelical churches. Schisms in their Catholic churches sometimes show how restless they are under its despotism. Let us give them the colporteur and the Bible, the missionary and the gospel. They are worth saving. The Turks had long possessed the city of Constantine and the church of Chrysostom; and boasted that they would also capture Rome and make St. Peter's a mosque. Who rolled back that tide of Mohammedan invasion, never to return? John Sobieski, a hero of Poland. He had fought the Ottomans on the Dniester, and although their position seemed impregnable, and their forces four times his own, he won a glorious victory. Again, before terror-stricken Vienna, he attacked the Turks, outnumbering his army four to one. One hundred and twenty thousand Turkish tents were still standing after the battle. His decisive victory was the theme of pulpits in Germany, Italy, and even in the Protestant churches of England. Beside him

in the old cathedral of Cracow (the Polish Westminster Abbey) sleeps Thaddeus Kosciusko who was honored by Americans for his part in their war for liberty. Pulaski, another Pole, showed himself a hero at Brandywine and Germantown; and also at Savannah, where he fell and has his sepulcher, erected by the people of Georgia, its corner stone having been laid by Lafayette. And Poles will make good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Copernicus, of Poland, whose name is known wherever astronomy is taught, revolutionized that science and discovered the secret of the stars. Let us pray God that he may raise up from this people some who shall turn many to righteousness, and shine as the stars forever and ever!

GAYLORD BROS.
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