

# An Hour with the Editor

## ENGLISH SOVEREIGNS

"Foul as it is, hell itself is defiled by the foul presence of John." So wrote a contemporary after the death of the English King of that name. Yet he was industrious, agreeable, brilliant in conversation and possessed of much charm of manner. On the other hand, he was pusillanimous in the presence of his enemies, a wretched bungler, a faithless husband, an unfaithful son and ungrateful brother, unworthy of confidence, violence in temper, and there is only too much reason to believe, a murderer. His young nephew, Arthur, rightful heir to the Crown, was said to have been killed by John with his own hands. Yet in the providence of God these very qualities, which made him hateful to all who knew him, were instrumental in bringing English liberty a long way nearer its consummation.

When we think of John, we almost always associate the Great Charter with his name; but not so his contemporaries. They nicknamed him "Lackland," and with good reason, and it was because he was worthy of this term of contempt that the Charter became possible. We have seen that when Coeur de Leon died he was ruler of all the lands from the Tyne to the Pyrenees monarch of a godlier realm than any other sovereign of his time. Had he seen fit to proclaim himself Emperor, and, instead of risking his life in petty conflicts, had aimed at greater things, the history of Western Europe might have been different. But Richard was more of a fighter than a diplomat, even in those days when diplomacy worked chiefly with the sword. It is not to be understood that Richard ruled this extensive realm as King of England, or that John succeeded to it by virtue of that title. These lands were not the dominions of England, but only the personal appanages of the man, who was English sovereign. John was King of England and Normandy, duke of Aquitaine and over-lord of Anjou, Maine and Touraine, or rather he would have held all these titles, if he had been able to maintain them. Not being able, they all passed out of his control except England.

A few words of explanation are necessary. William the Conqueror, William Rufus, Henry I, Stephen, Henry II and Richard were sovereigns of England; but they were not English sovereigns. They ruled England chiefly from the Continent. They were men who were more concerned about the possessions of their family in what is now France than about their rights in the British Isles. So that when they asked for money to carry on their wars, it was forthcoming, they cared little for what was transpiring on the other side of the English Channel. We ought not to think, for example, of Richard as a King of England who was also Count of Anjou, but as a Count of Anjou, who was also King of England, if we would get his viewpoint in respect to English affairs. During these years of foreign rule the people of England were steadily developing the principles and practices of self-government. The first steps in that direction were taken in the towns where trades and merchants' guilds were formed for mutual assistance and protection. The members of these guilds soon learned the value of united action and discovered in the impoverished purses of kings and barons a means whereby they could secure the recognition of their rights and an extension of their principles. It is undoubtedly true that many of the liberties of the British people were bought with blood, but it is also true that for many of them the coin of the realm was paid and that not always with a liberal hand. This movement towards popular enfranchisement began very shortly after the conquest, and progressed by slow degrees until in the time of John the country contained many self-governing boroughs within which the rights of the common people were fairly well defined. The barons were not nearly as well situated in this respect as the artisan and trading classes for they were disliked by them and were distrusted by the King. They were as a rule too poor in money to contribute much to the carrying on of foreign wars and they were utterly out of sympathy with the people of the towns. They ruled their own tenants almost according to their own sweet wills for the ancient right of the people to a fair trial on their oaths in the established courts was systematically ignored. And yet as events proved, the barons found themselves forced in their own defence to take a position which did more than anything else to establish British institutions upon their present foundation.

It was to such an England as this that John came after losing all his continental possessions, and it was to deal with the problems presented by a country, in which the principles of individual liberty were being asserted by men who had learned how to maintain them, that this tyrannical and humiliated King was called upon, after he had been deprived of those realms, which his predecessors had valued above everything else, and to maintain which the wealth of the English people had been freely contributed.

John's failure to appreciate the sentiments, traditions and determination of the English people was complete; but his monumental error was his quarrel with the Church. It arose in 1205 over the choice of an Archbishop of Canterbury. The clergy wanted one man; the King another; the Pope would accept neither and named Stephen Langton for the position. John refused to recognize him, and thereupon the Pope laid England under an interdict and ordered the King of France to take the country. John, after delay, submitted and agreed to hold his Crown as tributary to the Pope. Scarcely had he made his peace with Rome than the barons refused to obey his commands and assist in equipping an army to

serve in France. A great council was held at St. Albans, where the barons and representatives of the boroughs met. Langton was the guiding spirit of the people. He produced at St. Albans the Charter of Henry I, and the council resolved that upon this they would take their stand. Shortly after John went to the Continent in the hope of forming a confederacy with Germany for the overthrow of France, but failed ignominiously, and returned to England only to be confronted with a union between the barons and the burghers resolved to put an end to his tyranny for all time. The result was Magna Charta. As over-lord of England, the Pope refused to recognize this as binding, but in the end the people of England had their way, and thus the kingdom became a limited monarchy. For the first time the people and the baronage were united, and together they laid the foundation of English liberty.

Magna Charta is a thing we often hear spoken of; but few of us have ever seen it or would understand it if we did. Many of its provisions relate to matters concerning which so little has been known for several centuries that so learned a writer as Blackstone, when he attempts to epitomize it, does not convey a clear meaning in many respects. It dealt very largely with questions arising out of the feudal tenure of land, and these did not long survive the granting of the Charter, for parliamentary government was established not long afterwards, and with its coming many of the features of feudalism took their departure. Some points covered in the Charter may be mentioned. It established the right of persons to leave a part of their personal property by will; it fixed the right of dower; it enjoined a uniformity of weights and measures; it forbade the granting of exclusive fishing privileges; it fixed the court of common pleas at Westminster and provided for regular circuit courts; it confirmed the liberties of the London and other boroughs. But its chief provision, so far as the rights of the people are concerned, is the following:

"No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned or disseized of his freehold or liberties or free customs, or be outlawed or exiled or otherwise damaged, nor will we pass upon him or send upon him, but by lawful judgment of his peers or the law of the land."

These few words are the corner-stone of British liberty, for by them the King acknowledged himself to be subject to the law. There was nothing in them that was wholly new, for it was claimed that the Charter in this respect only followed the laws of Edward the Confessor, and these were said to have only been a compilation of the laws of the ancestors of the English people from time immemorial; but however this may be, the great fact stands unchallenged that at Runnymede, when John gave unwilling assent to the paragraph above quoted, the people of England secured the recognition of rights such as were at that time enjoyed by no other people and out of which has grown that splendid fabric of freedom and equality before the law, which is the birth-right of the British people everywhere.

## BEGINNING OF HISTORY

So many discoveries are being made in Egypt that it is impossible to say when the historical period in that country may not be found by and by to begin. At present it dates from Menes, founder of the First Dynasty, who lived, it is variously estimated, from 3882 to 5004 before Christ. Up to the time of the second Persian conquest, which event took place about 340 B.C., there had been thirty dynasties. For upwards of three thousand years, Egypt had been an independent kingdom, but it fell under the dominion of Artaxerxes, since which time, which is more than two thousand years ago, no native prince has ever occupied the throne; thus strangely fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel uttered nearly two hundred years before, when he said: "Thus saith the Lord God: I will destroy the idols and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph, and there shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt, and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt." It has been estimated that at least four thousand years elapsed in the development of Egyptian civilization before the time of Menes, and excavations in the deposits of the Nile valley seem to justify the belief that even at a more remote period the inhabitants of that land were at least as far advanced in civilization as the Indians of the Northwest Coast were a century ago. The earliest Egyptian monuments point to a mythological age, which is not evidenced by any relics that have since been discovered. This has led some investigators to believe that the Egyptian race originally had its home elsewhere and migrated into the Nile valley presumably from the north. Many features of the Great Pyramid are said to justify this theory. It is impossible for anyone to say what further discoveries may bring to light, but we may at present assume that the dawn of history, using the term in its broadest sense, began with a people possessing some skill in the manufacture of stone implements and pottery, living on the banks of the Nile about 10,000 years ago. It is proper to say, however, that this conclusion is not reached from anything stated by the ancient Egyptians themselves, but from archaeological evidence, the nature of which was explained in one of the earlier articles of this series.

The absence of any definite chronology in ancient Egypt and the fact that in such records as are preserved on the monuments several years are mentioned, each year varying in length, makes it necessary to refer to contemporary records to determine with any approach to accuracy when certain events took

place. In this way we learn that considerable commerce was carried on between Egypt and Babylon as long ago as 3,000 B. C. According to some investigators it was about this time that Abraham went to Egypt, although the generally accepted Hebrew chronology assigns the date to about a thousand years later. The story of Abraham is really the beginning of Hebrew history and may be appropriately referred to in this place. The version which is here epitomized is taken from the Book of Genesis as given in the King James Bible. There are other accounts of this great leader, and they vary in details, but they agree substantially. We first hear of him as living in the Chaldean city known as Ur, whence he removed with his father to Haran, leaving that place after the death of his father to go to Canaan, where he arrived in due season; but he did not remain in any fixed abode, but continued his journey towards the south. A famine occurred and Abraham went down into Egypt, where apparently there was food in abundance. We have here the account of a series of events intrinsically probable and sufficiently corroborated by contemporary history as to make it wholly unnecessary to insist upon any inspired account having been given of it before accepting it as true. From it we learn that at this time Egyptian civilization was well advanced. Indeed there is reason to suppose it to have been quite as well advanced in many important particulars as ours is today. Later Egypt was invaded by what are known as the Hyskos, or Shepherd Kings, who subdued the country without striking a blow, and ruled it for more than two centuries. As far as can be ascertained the Shepherd Kings came out of Arabia, whence other hordes have come to conquer adjoining lands. One of these eruptions was directed against Babylon, which was unable to withstand it. The last was after the death of Mohamammed, when eastward and westward the fierce Arab warriors spread until they ruled the whole region from the Indus on the east to the Atlantic on the west.

While there is considerable uncertainty about the early history of Egypt, there is no doubt that the people of the country were exceeding prosperous six or seven thousand years ago, when they traded not only with lands around the Mediterranean, but even as far as Britain and the shores of the Baltic. There is a break in the record and with it a break in the progress of the people, who, although they afterwards attained great splendor, never again appear to have approached the eminence reached in those earlier days.

The beginnings of history have now been fairly covered in this series of articles. Nothing elaborate has been attempted, and little effort has been made to give details. The conclusion from the investigation which has necessarily been very superficial so far as what has been written is concerned, seems to be that before what we call history begins there was a long period of human progress; that the historical races are not living in their original homes, but were emigrants from the north; that there is a break in the continuity of human records, suggesting something very like a universal catastrophe, and that the memory of what occurred previous thereto is the basis of what we ordinarily refer to as heathen mythology.

## MANY MEN, MANY MINDS

In the latest lists of religious sects upwards of two hundred and fifty, and of these more than two hundred, are, or claim to be, of the Christian faith. Many people on looking through the list will note the absence of some names. These will be those of minor and purely local religious organizations, chiefly of a temporary character. Those given in the list are only the principal ones and a considerable number of them are extinct. Fundamentally all these Christian sects are identical, that is, they are based upon the idea of human accountability to an Omnipotent God, and, indeed, the same observation might be made in regard to the non-Christian sects, although in some instances they place the Divine Being upon so exalted a plane as to remove Him beyond the scope of human thought. The Christian sects vary in many ways: some of them hold one view of the nature of the Deity and others another. For example, there have always been sects which, while accepting the teachings of Christ, do not look upon Him as co-equal with God. There is much divergence of view as to what is to be understood by the expression Holy Ghost. Questions of church government afford a wide ground for diversity of thought, the extremes being represented by the Church of Rome, which in spiritual matters regards the Pope as the infallible head, and by the Congregationalists, who acknowledge no authority outside of their own local religious organizations. There are ceremonial differences. There are differences of belief as to the methods by which the Holy Spirit affects individuals, and as to so many other matters, that it would be impossible for any one to state them fully. Some of the tenets of some of the sects appear grotesque to any person who does not accept them, and it almost always happens that these particular tenets are those that are maintained with the greatest tenacity. It is to be observed that within the Roman Catholic Church there are no sects, although there are many orders. Substantially Roman Catholicism is the same wherever it is found, although there may be local traditions and superstitions which influence its adherents in some places. In the Greek Church there is considerable diversity of opinion; but the greatest differences are found in the Protestant branch of the Church and chiefly among English-speaking people. America has been a very prolific soil for the production of religious sects, and notwithstanding the tendency of the great denominations towards union, there seems to be

no cessation in the formation of new sects, although none of them appears likely to assume any particular importance in determining the religious life of the people.

These differences of opinion are regarded by many people as a sign of weakness in the religious world; but this is by no means certain. Wherever there is much mental activity and complete liberty of speech, this tendency to the multiplication of sects is found. The majority of these denominations may be dismissed as unimportant. They have their origin in causes, which do not touch the welfare of humanity in any special degree. They are the outcome in many cases of an ignorance which magnifies trifles and attempts to understand the unknowable. They come into existence in response to a demand for something which the great denominations do not appear able to supply, and which are in point of fact the outcome of a diseased imagination. Not infrequently they are organized by men, who are actuated by motives the reverse of righteous. More frequently they are due to an honest effort on the part of people to seek for light and to gain spiritual strength. The existence of sects of the latter kind is well worth a very great deal of consideration, for their multiplication shows the existence of an unsatisfied longing in the minds of those who unite with them. The grotesque performances of some sects, the emotional paroxysms of others, arise out of a demand for something that is not supplied by the greater church organizations, and it may well be that the latter, instead of condemning the former as evil, might with advantage study them, and see wherein they fail to meet what may be the perfectly natural and legitimate needs of the human soul, when it has begun to reach out into the Unknown to satisfy its longings. These minor, and, as many of us think, ill-balanced sects prove that there is in humanity a longing for something that creeds and ceremonies do not satisfy. The most of us look upon the revivalist and his methods with more or less disfavor, and greatly discount the results attributed to his labors; but surely there is an aspect of man's spiritual life that the regular church organizations touch only very lightly, if they touch it at all.

It is claimed that the existence of sects is a sign of religious life, and if we may deduce any legitimate conclusion from arguments from analogy, we are bound to admit such to be the case. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the sufficiency of authority is relied upon in a very great degree in all religious organizations, whether it is vested in a Pope, a Patriarch, a Synod, a Conference, or in the leader of the latest sect to be formed. The greatest degree of infallibility ever claimed for any Pope is not greater than that claimed for the late John Alexander Dowie by those who accepted him as their leader. Thus we see in the exercise of the utmost religious liberty not only for spiritual evidence within themselves of the reality of their faith, but for some infallible guide other than their own reason and conscience. Herein we are all alike, and thus we see running through all the religious sects what might become a bond of sympathy, drawing them together and making them more powerful for good. There will probably always be a divergence of view on religious topics. Even among those branches of the Church which discourage individual research into things pertaining to the religious life there are wide differences, which do not find expression in any overt way. And when you stop to think of it, you will realize that this must be so, for when we come to the spiritual and moral world, it is impossible that we should all apply to it the language of the material world in quite the same sense. The inadequacy of language to express thoughts relative to the deity is nowhere better exemplified than in the Church of England Prayer Book. The impossibility of accurately defining things in themselves indefinable, which has led to schisms innumerable and proved a stumbling block to many individuals, lends force to the claim that the Church itself should be entrusted with the formulation of doctrines and that the mass of mankind should accept its statements of these as sufficient, and concern themselves simply with the fruits of religion, which ought to be right living and spiritual exaltation. But be this as it may, and readers of this page know that opinions are not expressed here on controversial subjects, the existence of so many sects proves to a demonstration that the soul of humanity looks for guidance to something beyond itself and beyond the visible universe. From this universal longing for such guidance, we may infer the existence of a Guide just as scientifically as we may infer the existence of air from the nature of a feather and the existence of water from the nature of a fin. When Science sets out to seek for God, it will find Him a necessary inference, not merely, as Herbert Spencer said, a working hypothesis.

## A Century of Fiction

XVII.

(N. de Bernard Lugin)

Henry Sienkiewicz

Poland, that country of tragic history, can claim one of the most remarkable and versatile of modern writers, in the person of Henryk Sienkiewicz. To most Canadians, in fact to most of the English-speaking world, his name is familiar principally through his being the author of "Quo Vadis," which very graphic

novel, the scene of which is laid in Nero's time, nearly all fiction lovers have read. But the Polish author is more deservedly famous as being responsible for three of the most thrilling and vividly told historical romances that have ever been written in any language. This is as it should be, and according to the best in nature, for the heart of a patriot beats in the breast of Sienkiewicz, and he rises to heights of inspired genius when he writes of those things which are his by heritage, the memories of some of the bravest battles ever fought, wherein have figured many of the greatest and noblest men whose names have emblazoned the pages of history. His trilogy of tales, "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," and "Pan Michael," deal with those wonderful days when John Sobieski was setting all Europe ablaze with admiration through his marvelous martial successes. Poland was then the impregnable stronghold of Christian civilization in the East, and John Sobieski, the commander-in-chief of her armies, was one of the most gallant warriors that the world has ever seen. Later he was made king, and the scene in which he was named and chosen as Poland's ruler is familiar to all history lovers. In accounts such as these there is abundant material and inspiration for novelists, and it is doubtful if even the most far-fetched fictitious adventures could surpass in wonderful realism, martial pageantry, deeds of daring and acts of heroism, the vivid reality of things as they then were. Sienkiewicz has the inspiration of the true patriot, a beautiful command of language, a magnetic power of description, and a scholarly mastery of rhetoric; hence the perfection of his historical works. Eminent critics have compared his favorably in the matter of style and delineation with Homer and Shakespeare.

Besides this historical trilogy, and his longer novels, Sienkiewicz is the author of such powerful shorter stories that he easily takes first place among those who make this class of writing their specialty, doing his best work when he deals with his own country and his own people.

Facts pertaining to the life of this gifted writer are difficult to obtain. He has always been very reticent in regard to himself. He was born sixty-four years ago at Wola Okryska, in Lithuania. His talent for writing was early in evidence, and he determined to follow his literary bent. He entered the journalistic field as editor of a paper called the Nieva, and in 1872 produced his first work of fiction, entitled "No Man Is a Prophet in His Own Country." Four years later he came to America and lived for some time in California, where he became one of a literary coterie which numbered among its members the then famous actress, Madame Modjeska. While here he contributed to various papers and magazines, and in 1880 published his work on Tartar slavery. Next came his three historical romances, which immediately brought him into the light of fame, and set him in his own country upon the highest literary pedestal. A very remarkable psychological novel followed, entitled "Beg Dogmatu" (Without Dogma), which gives evidence of the author's wonderful versatility.

From time to time Sienkiewicz has contributed to newspapers and magazines. He has travelled extensively, but could never live long away from his native land. He married happily early in life, but his wife did not live many years, and it was his grief at her premature loss that no doubt inspired the noblest passages in "Pan Michael," descriptive of the lovers' parting, for this last one of the trilogy was completed shortly after her death.

## Without Dogma

The hero of this book, who is supposed to relate the story himself, is Leon Plwowski, a young Pole of high birth and great wealth. He has an ardent, emotional temperament, but is addicted to such severe self-analysis that every mental feeling depresses him. "Here is a nature so sensitive that it photographs every impression, an artistic temperament, a highly endowed organism; yet it produces nothing. The secret of this unproductiveness lies in a certain tendency to philosophize away every strong emotion that should lead to action." Leon has a beautiful and pure-minded young cousin, who is devotedly in love with him, and whom it is the wish of his family that he should marry. He is willing to do so, but seems uncertain of his own feelings in regard to her, and wishes to delay the marriage until he can satisfactorily ascertain just what his sentiments are toward her. He goes to Rome, where he meets an unscrupulous but brilliant married woman, who causes his downfall, and it is while he is absent that his cousin is prevailed upon to marry a wealthy but wholly unworthy Austrian Kromitski. When the marriage has taken place, Leon, hearing of it, has the eyes of his mind opened to his own sinfulness, and realizes too late that he loves Aniela with the deepest and purest love of which is peculiar nature is capable. He returns from Rome to Poland, and seeking Aniela tempts her with all the subtlety of his passion to leave her husband and come to him. But the girl cannot countenance the thought of being false to her marriage vows, though her poor heart is torn with conflicting emotions. By and by the agony of her sufferings proves too much for her delicate organism, and death comes to end her pain. At the last she tells Leon with pathetic simplicity that she "loves him very, very much." In the final chapter of his diary Leon writes of his intention to follow Aniela where death may perhaps unite those to whom life has been so cruel. The hero is supposed to be an example of over-civilization when hyper-civilization begins to produce deterioration or decay.