


LOUIS KOSSUTH

 LOUIS KOSSUTH, Hungarian patriot and orator, was born at Monok, Hungary, April 27, 1802, and died at Turin, Italy, March 20, 1894. He received a good education, and in 1832 entered the Hungarian Diet, where he served for four years. Imprisoned by the Austrian government in 1837, on account of his liberal opinions, he was released three years later, and soon afterward became editor of the "Pesth Journal." In 1847, he was once more chosen Deputy to the Diet, and it was largely owing to his efforts that Austria, in 1848, found herself constrained to concede a measure of autonomy to Hungary. In the following year, when the perfidy of the imperial government drove the Magyars to insurrection, Kossuth became President of the Hungarian Republic. After the overthrow of the Magyar commonwealth by the combined forces of Austria and Russia, Kossuth fled to Turkey, where he sojourned for a time, when he visited England and the United States, in the hope of securing the coöperation of those countries in his endeavor to restore Hungarian independence. The speeches delivered by him in the United States in 1852 excited some enthusiasm. After the battle of Sadowa, he lived to see his native land acquire almost complete autonomy, and even exercise ascendancy in the councils of the House of Hapsburg-Lorraine, but he refused to acquiesce in Austrian rule, even when it had become merely nominal. His memoirs and letters during his exile, together with selections from his speeches delivered in England during the Russian war, have been published in various languages.

SPEECH IN FANEUIL HALL

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Do me the justice to believe that I rise not with any pretension to eloquence, within the Cradle of American Liberty. If I were standing upon the ruins of Prytaneum and had to speak whence Demosthenes spoke, my tongue would refuse to obey, my words would die away upon my lips, and I would listen to the winds, fraught with the dreadful realization of his unheeded prophesies.

My tongue is fraught with a downtrodden nation's wrongs.

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The justice of my cause is my eloquence; but misfortune may approach the altar whence the flame arose which roused your fathers from degradation to independence. I claim my people's share in the benefit of the laws of nature and of nature's God. I will nothing add to the historical reputation of these walls; but I dare hope not to sully them by appealing to those maxims of truth, the promulgation of which made often tremble these walls, from the thundering cheers of freemen roused by the clarion sound of inspired oratory.

"Cradle of American Liberty!"—it is a great name; but there is something in it which saddens my heart. You should not say "American liberty." You should say "Liberty in America." Liberty should not be either American or European,—it should be just "Liberty." God is God. He is neither America's God nor Europe's God; he is God. So should liberty be. "American liberty" has much the sound as if you would say "American privilege." And there is the rub. Look to history, and when your heart saddens at the fact that liberty never yet was lasting in any corner of the world and in any age, you will find the key of it in the gloomy truth that all who yet were free regarded liberty as their privilege instead of regarding it as a principle. The nature of every privilege is exclusiveness; that of a principle is communicative. Liberty is a principle,—its community is its security,—exclusiveness is its doom.

What is aristocracy? It is exclusive liberty; it is privilege; and aristocracy is doomed because it is contrary to the destiny and welfare of man. Aristocracy should vanish, not in the nations but also from amongst the nations. So long as that is not done liberty will nowhere be lasting on earth. It is equally fatal to individuals as to nations to believe themselves beyond the reach of vicissitudes. To this proud reliance, and

the isolation resulting therefrom, more victims have fallen than to oppression by immediate adversities. You have prodigiously grown by your freedom of seventy-five years; but what is seventy-five years to take for a charter of immortality? No, no! my humble tongue tells the records of eternal truth. A privilege never can be lasting. Liberty restricted to one nation never can be sure. You may say, "We are the prophets of God;" but you shall not say "God is only our God." The Jews have said so, and the pride of Jerusalem lies in the dust. Our Saviour taught all humanity to say "Our Father in heaven;" and his Jerusalem is lasting to the end of days.

"There is a community in man's destiny." That was the greeting which I read on the arch of welcome on the Capitol Hill of Massachusetts. I pray to God the republic of America would weigh the eternal truth of those words and act accordingly. Liberty in America would then be sure to the end of time. But if you say "American liberty," and take that grammar for your policy, I dare say the time will yet come when humanity will have to mourn over a new proof of the ancient truth, that without community national freedom is never sure. You should change "American liberty" into "Liberty,"—then liberty would be forever sure in America, and that which found a cradle in Faneuil Hall never would find a coffin through all coming days. I like not the word cradle connected with the word liberty,—it has a scent of mortality. But these are vain words, I know; though in the life of nations the spirits of future be marching in present events, visible to every reflecting mind, still those who foretell them are charged with arrogantly claiming the title of prophets, and prophecies are never believed. However, the cradle of American liberty is not only famous from the reputa-

tion of having been always the lists of the most powerful eloquence; it is still more conspicuous for having seen that eloquence attended by practical success. To understand the mystery of this rare circumstance a man must see the people of New England and especially the people of Massachusetts.

In what I have seen of New England there are two things the evidence of which strikes the observer at every step—prosperity and intelligence. I have seen thousands assembled, following the noble impulses of generous hearts; almost the entire population of every city, of every town, of every village, where I passed, gathered around me, throwing the flowers of consolation in my thorny way. I can say I have seen the people here, and I have looked at it with a keen eye, sharpened in the school of a toilsome life. Well, I have seen not a single man bearing the mark of that poverty upon himself which in old Europe strikes the eye sadly at every step. I have seen no ragged poor; I have seen not a single house bearing the appearance of desolated poverty. The cheerfulness of a comfortable condition, the result of industry, spreads over the land. One sees at a glance that the people work assiduously,—not with the depressing thought just to get from day to day, by hard toil, through the cares of a miserable life, but they work with the cheerful consciousness of substantial happiness. And the second thing which I could not fail to remark is the stamp of intelligence impressed upon the very eyes and outward appearance of the people at large. I and my companions have seen that people in the factories, in the workshops, in their houses, and in the streets, and could not fail a thousand times to think "how intelligent that people looks." It is to such a people that the orators of Faneuil Hall had to speak, and therein is the mystery of their success. They were not wiser than the public spirit of their audience,

but they were the eloquent interpreters of the people's enlightened instinct.

No man can force the harp of his own individuality into the people's heart; but every man may play upon the chords of his people's heart, who draws his inspiration from the people's instinct. Well, I thank God for having seen the public spirit of the people of Massachusetts bestowing its attention to the cause I plead and pronouncing its verdict. After the spontaneous manifestations of public opinion which I have met in Massachusetts, there can be not the slightest doubt that his Excellency the high-minded Governor of Massachusetts, when he wrote his memorable address to the legislature,—the joint committee of the legislative assembly, after a careful and candid consideration of the subject, not only concurring in the views of the executive government, but elucidating them in a report the irrefutable logic and elevated statesmanship of which will forever endear the name of Hazewell to oppressed nations; and the senate of Massachusetts adopting the resolutions proposed by the legislative committee, in respect to the question of national intervention,—I say the spontaneous manifestation of public opinion leaves not the slightest doubt that all these executive and legislative proceedings not only met the full approbation of the people of Massachusetts, but were in fact nothing else but the solemn interpretation of that public opinion of the people of Massachusetts. A spontaneous outburst of popular sentiments tells often more in a single word than all the skill of elaborate eloquence could. I have met that word. "We worship not the man but we worship the principle," shouted out a man in Worcester, amidst the thundering cheers of a countless multitude. It was a word like those words of flame spoken in Faneuil Hall out of which liberty in America was born.

That word is a revelation that the spirit of eternal truth and of present exigencies moves through the people's heart. That word is teeming with the destinies of America.

Would to God that in the leading quarters small party considerations should never prevent the due appreciation of the people's instinctive sagacity! It is with joyful consolation and heartfelt gratitude I own that of that fear I am forever relieved in respect to Massachusetts. Once more I have met the revelation of the truth that the people of Massachusetts worship principles. I have met it on the front of your Capitol, in those words raised to the consolation of the oppressed world, by the constitutional authorities of Massachusetts, to the high heaven, upon an arch of triumph,—"Remember that there is a community in mankind's destiny."

I cannot express the emotion I felt when, standing on the steps of your Capitol, these words above my head, the people of Massachusetts tendered me its hand in the person of its chief magistrate. The emotion which thrilled through my heart was something like that Lazarus must have felt when the Saviour spoke to him "Rise;" and when I looked up with a tender tear of heartfelt gratitude in my eyes, I saw the motto of Massachusetts all along the Capitol, "We seek with the sword the mild quietness of liberty."

You have proved this motto not to be an empty word. The heroic truth of it is recorded in the annals of Faneuil Hall, it is recorded on Bunker Hill, recorded in the Declaration of Independence.

Having read that motto, coupled with the acknowledgment of the principle that there is a community in the destiny of all humanity, I know what answer I have to take to those millions who look with profound anxiety to America.

Gentlemen, the Mahometans say that the city of Bokhara

receives not light from without, but is lustrous with its own light. I don't know much about Bokhara; but so much I know, that Boston is the sun whence radiated the light of resistance against oppression. And from what it has been my good fortune to experience in Boston I have full reason to believe that the sun which shone forth with such a bright lustre in the days of oppression has not lost its lustre by freedom and prosperity. Boston is the metropolis of Massachusetts, and Massachusetts has given its vote. It has given it after having, with the penetrating sagacity of its intelligence, looked attentively into the subject and fixed with calm consideration its judgment thereabout. After having had so much to speak, it was with infinite gratification I heard myself addressed in Brookfield, Framingham, and several other places, with these words, "We know your country's history; we agree with your principles; we want no speech; just let us hear your voice, and then go on; we trust and wish you may have other things to do than speak."

Thus having neither to tell my country's tale, because it is known, nor having to argue about principles, because they are agreed with, I am in the happy condition of being able to restrain myself to a few desultory remarks about the nature of the difficulties I have to contend with in other quarters, that the people of Massachusetts may see upon what ground those stand who are following a direction contrary to the distinctly pronounced opinion of Massachusetts in relation to the cause I plead.

Give me leave to mention that, having had an opportunity to converse with leading men of the great political parties, which are on the eve of an animated contest for the presidency,—would it had been possible for me to have come to America either before that contest was engaged, or after it

will be decided! I came, unhappily, in a bad hour,—I availed myself of that opportunity to be informed about what are considered to be the principal issues in case the one or the other party carries the prize; and, indeed, having got the information thereof, I could not forbear to exclaim, "But, my God! all these questions together cannot outweigh the all-outruling importance of foreign policy!" It is there, in the question of foreign policy, that the heart of the next future throbs. Security and danger, developing prosperity, and its check, peace and war, tranquillity and embarrassment,—yes, life and death will be weighed in the scale of foreign policy! It is evident things are come to the point where they have been in ancient Rome, when old Cato never spoke privately or publicly about whatever topic without closing his speech with these words: "However, my opinion is that Carthage must be destroyed;" thus advertising his countrymen that there was one question outweighing in importance all other questions, from which public attention should never for a moment be withdrawn.

Such, in my opinion, is the condition of the world now. Carthage and Rome had no place on earth together. Republican America and all-overwhelming Russian absolutism cannot much longer subsist together on earth. Russia active,—America passive,—there is an immense danger in that fact; it is like the avalanche in the Alps which the noise of a bird's wing may move and thrust down with irresistible force, growing every moment. I cannot but believe it were highly time to do as old Cato did and finish every speech with these words: "However, the law of nations should be maintained and absolutism not permitted to become omnipotent."

I could not forbear to make these remarks; and the answer I got was, "That is all true, and all right, and will be attended

to when the election is over; but, after all, the party must come into power, and you know there are so many considerations,—men want to be managed, and even prejudices spared, and so forth.”

And it is true; but it is sorrowful that it is true. That reminds me of what, in Schiller's "Maria Stuart," Mortimer says to Lord Leicester, the all-mighty favorite of Elizabeth: "O God, what little steps has such a great lord to go at this court!" There is the first obstacle I have to meet with. This consolation, at least, I have, that the chief difficulty I have to contend with is neither lasting nor an argument against the justice of my cause or against the righteousness of my principles. Just as the calumnies by which I am assailed can but harm my own self but cannot impair the justice of my country's cause or weaken the propriety of my principles,—so that difficulty, being just a difficulty and no argument, cannot change the public opinion of the people, which always cares more about principles than about wire-pullings.

The second difficulty I have to contend with is rather curious. Many a man has told me that if I had only not fallen into the hands of the Abolitionists and Free-Soilers he would have supported me; and had I landed somewhere in the South, instead of New York, I would have met quite different things from that quarter; but being supported by the Free-Soilers, of course I must be opposed by the South. On the other side, I received a letter from which I beg leave to quote a few lines:

"You are silent on the subject of slavery. Surrounded as you have been by slaveholders ever since you put your foot on English soil, if not during your whole voyage from Constantinople,—and ever since you have been in this country

surrounded by them, whose threats, promises, and flattery make the stoutest hearts succumb,—your position has put me in mind of a scene described by the apostle of Jesus Christ, when the devil took him up into a high mountain."

Now, gentlemen, thus being charged from one side with being in the hands of Abolitionists, and from the other side with being in the hands of the slaveholders, I indeed am at a loss what course to take, if these very contradictory charges were not giving me the satisfaction to feel that I stand just where it is my duty to stand, on a truly American ground.

I must beg leave to say a few words in that respect, the more because I could not escape vehement attacks for not committing myself even in that respect with whatever interior party question. I claim the right for my people to regulate its own domestic concerns. I claim this as a law of nations, common to all humanity; and because common to all I claim to see them protected by the United States, not only because they have the power to defend what despots dare offend, but also because it is the necessity of their position to be a power on earth, which they would not be if the law of nations can be changed and the general condition of the world altered without their vote. Now, that being my position and my cause, it would be the most absurd inconsistency if I would offend that principle which I claim and which I advocate.

And O, my God, have I not enough sorrows and cares to bear on these poor shoulders? Is it not astonishing that the moral power of duties and the iron will of my heart sustain yet this shattered frame; that I am desired yet to take up additional cares? If the cause I plead be just, if it be worthy of your sympathy, and at the same time consistent with the impartial considerations of your own moral and material interests,—which a patriot never should disregard, not even out