TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This English verse translation of *Pan Tadeusz* was begun in 1951 as a joint enterprise of the late George Rapall Noyes and myself. He was to provide the basic understanding of the Polish text, while I was to be wholly responsible for the prosody. Since Professor Noyes died early in 1952, when only two of the epic's twelve books had been completed, the work as a whole has lacked the *summa manus* of the senior colleague.

My standard Polish text of *Pan Tadeusz* has been the one edited by Stanisław Pigoń (Biblioteka Narodowa, 2nd edn., Cracow, 1929); but I have been grateful to Dr. Noyes and to Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons for permitting me from the beginning to lean heavily on his prose translation (London, 1930).

That 9,843 lines in Mickiewicz's Polish have become 12,572 lines in my English version, is due to the different textures of the two languages and to the exigencies of rhyme and rhythm. The poetic vehicle used by Mickiewicz is a closed "heroic couplet" consisting of two Alexandrines linked by a feminine rhyme. In other words, his line normally has thirteen syllables and his couplet twenty-six. The English heroic couplet, however, is in iambic pentameter and the rhyme, because of the language's poverty in inflections, is normally of one syllable only. The standard English couplet, therefore, consists of only twenty syllables. The absence of all articles in Polish, together with the frequent use of oblique cases where English would have a prepositional phrase, adds to the semantic density of the lines.

To pour the contents of this longer and denser Polish couplet into the mould of the shorter English couplet, confronts the translator with two alternatives: he may either trim off some of the Polish meaning, so as to produce a single closed couplet in English, or he may retain all of the Polish meaning but allow the sense to run over, couplet after couplet, in a long series of enjambements. The first alternative would make the English couplet a bed of Procrustes, where

the feet of the Polish sleeper were always lopped off. I have therefore preferred to keep the whole of Mickiewicz's meaning, even though it has meant a vast number of run-on lines and an effect very different from that of the original.

Another compulsory liberty has been the occasional concocting of a new phrase in order to secure any rhyme at all. English is gravely lacking in consonance and there are instances where no amount of juggling with the synonyms of every word in a sentence will provide a chiming pair. In amplifying the sense to fill out the prosody, one must, of course, seek to echo phrases that are in the original and to avoid anything alien to the spirit of the poet. One must not put a pigskin patch on a silk garment.

Still another problem concerns the rhythm of the English line. While its iambic character is fairly strict, common usage permits a trochaic inversion in the first foot. Milton even used such an inversion after a strong caesura deep within the line, but the practice is rare and questionable. This rigidity of the rhythmic pattern has frequently resulted in the use of synonyms that are far from exact in their connotations. Scholarly precisians may insist, for example, that *Moskale*, as understood by Poles a century and a half ago, is best rendered by "Muscovites;" yet there are times when no amount of tinkering can possibly fit "Muscovites" into the iambic pentameter line, while "Russians" will do the trick. *Woźny* may well be rendered by the archaic word "Apparitor," yet there are lines where only the more pliable "Summoner" will serve.

Another limiting factor has been the necessity of ensuring that continual modulation of the caesura, line after line, which is fundamental in the iambic pentameter in English. To disregard it, produces broken crockery rather than any graceful organic shape of the vase.

For encouragement in my task, I am grateful to President and Mrs. Arthur P. Coleman, of Alliance College, and to my Acadia colleagues, Dr. K. Rayski-Kietlicz and Dr. Adam Gillon. These latter have read through my entire manuscript and have made valued suggestions. I am also indebted to a six-man flyspeck reading-panel furnished by the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, which has made a similar line-by-line check of my translation with the original Polish.

I have permitted myself two editorial liberties. The first is using as a prologue certain lines that Mickiewicz prepared as "An Epilogue"

to *Pan Tadeusz* but never brought to polished completion. They were not printed during his lifetime. I have also added to Book III some sixteen lines (lines 1011-1026) which, though left by Mickiewicz in manuscript, are commonly omitted from the printed Polish text. Without them, however, the Telimena portion of the plot long remains hopelessly vague to an English reader.

Finally, I wish to record my gratitude to the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America and to the Canadian Polish Congress, who have undertaken, on behalf of all Americans and Canadians of Polish extraction, to underwrite the publication of this book as a tribute to their Motherland's Millennial Year. Poland entered European history as a nation-state in A. D. 960; and a translation of its greatest epic poem, rendered for the first time into rhymed English verse, would seem to be a fitting birthday present from Poles of the Diaspora. I am also grateful to Mr. G. H. Southam, Canadian Ambassador to Poland, for a generous cheque towards the cost of publication. I also wish to thank Dr. William J. Rose of London and Vancouver for an historical essay and Dr. H. B. Segel of Columbia for a revision of the notes by Dr. Noyes.

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