

**KONRAD
WALLENROD. AN
HISTORICAL POEM**

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Konrad Wallenrod. An Historical Poem by Adam Mickiewicz

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ADAM MICKIEWICZ

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KONRAD WALLENROD.

An Historical Poem.

BY

ADAM MICKIEWICZ.

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY

MISS MAUDE ASHURST BIGGS.

"Dovete adunque sapere come sono due animali da combattere
... bisogna essere volpe e leone."



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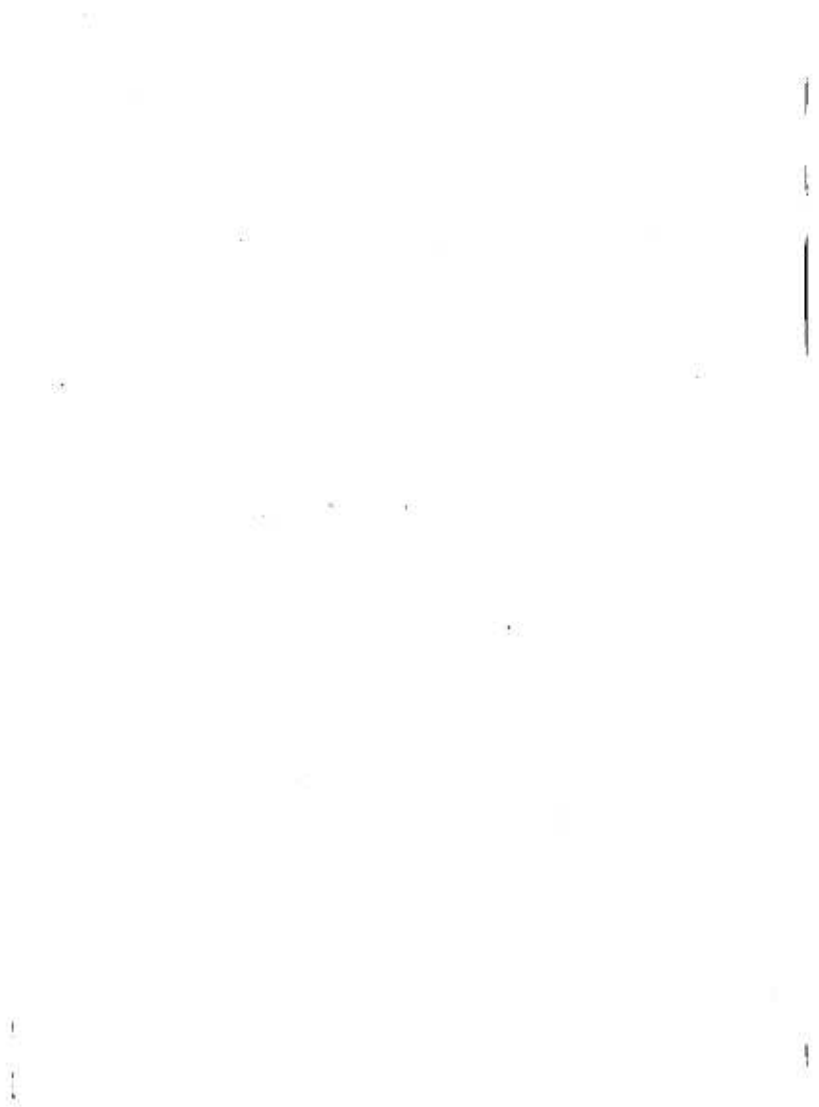
AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE Lithuanian nation, formed out of the tribes of the Litwini, Prussians and Leti, not very numerous, settled in an inextensive country, not very fertile, long unknown to Europe, was called, about the thirteenth century, by the incursions of its neighbours, to a more active part. When the Prussians submitted to the swords of the Teutonic knights, the Lithuanians, issuing from their forests and marshes, annihilated with sword and fire the neighbouring empires, and soon became terrible in the north. History has not as yet satisfactorily explained by what means a nation so weak, and so long tributary to foreigners, was able all at once to oppose and threaten all its enemies—on one side, carrying on a constant and murderous war with the Teutonic Order; on the other, plundering Poland, exacting tribute from Great Novgorod, and pushing itself as far as the borders of the Wolga and the Crimean peninsula. The brightest period of Lithuanian

history occurs in the time of *Olgierd* and *Witold*, whose rule extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea. But this monstrous empire, having sprung up too quickly, could not create in itself internal strength, to unite and invigorate its differing portions. The Lithuanian nationality, spread over too large a surface of territory, lost its proper character. The *Litwini* subjugated many Russian tribes, and entered into political relations with Poland. The Slavs, long since Christians, stood in a higher degree of civilisation, and although conquered, or threatened by Lithuania, gained by gradual influence a moral preponderance over their strong, but barbarous tyrants, and absorbed them, as the Chinese their Tartar invaders. The *Jagellons*, and their more powerful vassals, became Poles; many Lithuanian princes adopted the Russian religion, language, and nationality. By these means the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ceased to be Lithuanian; the nation proper found itself within its former boundaries, its speech ceased to be the language of the court and nobility, and was only preserved among the common people. *Litwa* presents the singular spectacle of a people which disappeared in the immensity of its conquests, as a brook sinks after an excessive overflow, and flows in a narrower bed than before.

The circumstances here mentioned are covered by some centuries. Both Lithuania, and her cruellest enemy, the Teutonic Order, have disappeared from the scene of political life ; the relations between neighbouring nations are entirely changed ; the interests and passions which kindled the wars of that time are now expired ; even popular song has not preserved their memory. Litwa is now entirely in the past : her history presents from this circumstance a happy theme for poetry ; so that a poet, in singing of the events of that time, objects only of historic interest, must occupy himself with searching into, and with artfully rendering the subject, without summoning to his aid the interests, passions, or fashions of his readers. For such subjects Schiller recommended poets to seek.

“Was unsterblich im Gesang will leben,
Muss im Leben untergehen.”



TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Teutonic Order, originally, like the Knights Hospitallers, established in the Holy Land about 1199, settled, after the cessation of the Crusades, in the country bordering upon the Baltic Sea, at the mouth of the Vistula, in the year 1225. The possession of the Baltic shores, and of such lands as the Order should conquer from the pagan Prussians and Litwini, was assured to them by Konrad, Duke of Masowsze, brother to Leszek the White of Poland. The fatal error thus committed, in abandoning a hold on the sea-coast, had afterwards a disastrous effect on the history of Poland. The Order speedily made themselves masters of the whole country of Prussia, and were engaged in ceaseless war with the pagans of Lithuania, under pretext of their conversion; more frequently, it is however to be feared, for purposes of raid and plunder. It is, in fact, upon record that a certain Lithuanian prince, who had