

KOSSUTH (Lajos). Born 1802. The noted Hungarian Patriot. Educated for a lawyer, at twenty-seven he took his seat in the National Diet of Presburg and published reports of the proceedings of that assembly, for which he was prosecuted for high treason, and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. After his release he became chief editor of the *Hirlass* newspaper, and obtained such influence over his countrymen that, in 1848, he was created Governor of Hungary; but eventually was forced to retire into Turkey with 5000 of his followers. After remaining prisoner in Asia Minor he came to England, where he resided for some years, but has now long lived in retirement in Italy, devoting much of his time to science.

I. A. L. S. (in English) to (Mr. James Holden). Dated Turin, December 11th, 1871.
3 pages 8vo.

'Absence from quarters (I cannot say from home, I have no home) prevented my earlier answering your favor of November 20th. Please excuse the unintentional delay.

'I shall with great pleasure receive your work* you intend to present me with, and I beg you will accept my sincere thanks for having remembered me. It is strange that anybody should.

'When you happen to meet Mr. Jacob Bright, please to present him my best compliments, and to tell him that I have always kept a pleasant recollection of the hospitality I once enjoyed at his house. It would be too presumptuous in me to desire that he too should kindly remember me? Why should he waste his time on such indifferent things? Naying, as I know he has, better things to do! I hope he will live to see a full success of his advocacy of woman suffrage. I really can't see any reasonable motive why women otherwise possessing the legal qualifications should any longer rest deprived of the right of suffrage merely on account of their sex. Why, this preposterously arrogant exclusiveness of the stronger (I cannot say wiser) sex is nothing better than a barbarous relic of the dark ages, long ago gone by—quite an Asiatic idea to be sure.

'By the bye, it so appears that you, too, you have a kind of Republican movement in your England. Strange country your dear old England, sir! On the one hand, such stubborn Conservatism, such tenacious clinging to established custom however absurd, so tenacious that even the flaxen wig of Mister Speaker and of the Bench defies the sweeping hand of centuries; and, in spite of this Conservatism, on the other hand, such resolute "go-a-headism" (as that marvellous fellow Brother Jonathan would say) always striving to take rank and file in the foremost battle order of progress.

'Well, I knew it would come to that. The lustre of Royalty is waning away fast. Time was when it may have been useful, even necessary, if so you like it. It had its marked place in the economy of the historical development of Society. But Society has organically advanced, and Royalty either has sunk to a mere pageant, in which case it is an antiquated commodity, as useless as it is expensive; or where-soever it still entertains the pretensions to be something more, it is nothing better than a nuisance, incompatible with the sacred principle of self-government. And it is one of the eternal laws of nature and of nature's God, that things having no rational motive to last, in general, and nuisances in particular, cannot resist the advancing tide of progressive change. So I knew it would come to that, only I did not expect it to come so soon in Old England. Why, you see, sir, I have grown so absurdly old, old with years (I am very near to threescore and ten) and much older still with disappointment and with grief, that I feel quite astonished at having lived to hear of a Republican movement in England.

'Dear old England, with what pious affection I remember her! There the homeless exile has had a home, in the true acceptance of that sweet word; a modest but happy home, cheered by the sun of domestic felicity, and by the affection of many true friends. Here my family life has been shattered to

1871

Lásd előző lapot



Kossuth to James HOLDEN

(Cont'd)

Autograph Letters

ruins, and as to friends, I have not even acquaintances. It may be my fault, it very likely is, since it was my own choice to keep my door forbidden to intercourse with the genus homo. However, fault or not fault, it is a fact, strangely contrasting with my order of life while in your country.

'Dear old England! how glad I should feel to see her once again before I lay down to eternal rest my weary, weary head. I really think a smile stole over my features at the thought of seeing England once again. A strange visitor that foolish smile! Quite a stranger to me! And Rochdale, that mother-beehive of the wonderfully efficient institution of Co-operative Societies, better calculated than anything else to advance the peaceful solution of the great social problem, which the necessary result of the errors, the crimes, and the improvidence of thousands of years, is at the same time the fatal query, from the answer to which the future of human society depends. Rochdale, I say, would certainly not be amongst the last I should like to see once again; but of course only from one of Messrs. Glaisher and Coxwell's balloons, sweeping high in the air, over mountains and dales, far above the region of "how d'you-do's," and handshakings, and speeches, at the very idea of which I shudder with horror and fear.

'Well, let it pass. It was a foolish fancy, and nothing more. The bubble burst, and there is an end of it.'