

A PULASKI LÉGIÓ' zászlaja

Longfellow

fiatalkori verse

HYMN OF THE MORAVIAN NUNS OF BETHLEHEM

AT THE CONSECRATION OF PULASKI'S BANNER

The historical basis of the poem is discussed in a note at the end of this volume.

WHEN the dying flame of day
Through the chancel shot its ray,
Far the glimmering tapers shed
Faint light on the cowléd head ;
And the censor burning swung,
Where, before the altar, hung
The crimson banner, that with prayer
Had been consecrated there.
And the nuns' sweet hymn was heard the
while,
Sung low, in the dim, mysterious aisle.

"Take thy banner ! May it wave
Proudly o'er the good and brave ;
When the battle's distant wail
Breaks the sabbath of our vale,
When the clarion's music thrills
To the hearts of these lone hills,
When the spear in conflict shakes,
And the strong lance shivering breaks.

"Take thy banner ! and, beneath
The battle-cloud's encircling wreath,
Guard it, till our homes are fires !
Guard it ! God will prosper thee !
In the dark and trying hour,
In the breaking forth of power,
In the rush of steeds and men,
His right hand will shield thee then.

Take thy banner ! But when night
Closes round the ghastly fight,
If the vanquished warrior bow,
Spare him ! By our holy vow,
By our prayers and many tears,
By the mercy that endears,
Spare him ! he our love hath shared !
Spare him ! as thou wouldst be spared !

Take thy banner ! and if e'er
Thou shouldst press the soldier's bier,
And the muffled drum should beat
To the tread of mournful feet,
Then this crimson flag shall be
Martial cloak and shroud for thee."

The warrior took that banner proud,
And it was his martial cloak and shroud !

III. NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Page 9. *Hymn of the Moravian Nuns Bethlehem.*

[This poem was suggested by the following sentence in an article upon Pulaski in the *North American Review*, for April, 1825: "The standard of his legion was formed of piece of crimson silk embroidered by the Moravian Nuns of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania. The historic facts in regard to the banner bear to be that Pulaski ordered it of Moravian sisters at Bethlehem, who helped support their house by needlework. This banner is preserved in the cabinet of the Maryland Historical Society at Baltimore; it is two

feet square and made to be carried on a lance. It is of double silk, now so much faded and discolored by time as to make it impossible to determine its original color. On both sides designs are embroidered with what was yellow silk, shaded with green, and deep silk fringe bordering. On one side are the letters "U. S.," and in a circle around them the words, "Unitas Virtus Fortior"; on the other side, in the centre, is embroidered an all-seeing eye and the words "Non Alius Regit." Pulaski received a mortal wound at the siege of Savannah, and dying on one of the vessels of the fleet when he was on his way north, was buried at sea. It is said that Lafayette lay sick at Bethlehem, and that it was on a visit to his brother officer that Pulaski ordered the flag. Its size, in any event, would have precluded its use as a shroud.]

1825

