

Our Little Slavic Cousins

Russian, Polish, Czecho-Slovak

VOLUME ELEVEN

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Volume 11

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Libraries of Hope

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Our Little Russian Cousin

Mary Hazelton Wade

Illustrated by L.J. Bridgman



Petrovna

Preface

A large country, called Russia, lies in the eastern part of Europe. It stretches from the icy shores of the Arctic Ocean, on the north, to the warm waters of the Black Sea, on the south.

Many of the children of this great country have fair skins and blue eyes. They belong to the same race as their English and American cousins, although they speak a different language.

Some of them live in palaces, and have everything that heart could desire; but a vast number of them are very poor, and their parents are obliged to work hard to keep the grim wolf, hunger, away from the door.

Russia, as a nation, is very young, as compared with many others. She is still in her childhood. Perhaps it is because of this that her people do not enjoy as much freedom as ourselves.

A few years ago the Emperor of Russia spoke some words to which the people of the western world listened with surprise and delight. He said, "I wish there were peace between all countries, and that we could settle our differences with each other without fighting." These wise words did a great deal of good. The emperor, without doubt, meant what he said. He did wish heartily that wars should be at an end. He has not felt able, however, to carry out his ideas of peace, for at this very moment he is at war with the people of Japan.

Let us hope that this war will soon be over, and that the nation to which our Russian Cousin belongs will become as truly free and wise as she is now large and powerful.

Malden, Mass., *May 1904.*

Our Little Russian Cousin

Petrovna is a dainty little floweret of the cold lands far away. She is your little Russian cousin. Her home is in the largest country of this great round ball, the Earth. How fair are her cheeks, how blue her eyes, and what long, beautiful, yellow hair she has! Her hands are so white and soft and plump, I know you would like to squeeze them.

She is very gentle and ladylike. Her mamma has taught her that is the right way to behave. Yet she is full of fun, and laughs at every joke that her brother Ivan makes. They have great sport together, these two children. Petrovna is ten, and Ivan eight years old.

Sometimes they play they are grown up, just as you do. Then Petrovna puts on her mother's gown with a long train, and Ivan dresses himself up like a soldier. Petrovna "makes believe" that she is a princess at the court of the Emperor. She powders her hair, and puffs it on the top of her head,

and places feathers in it. Ivan cuts shining ornaments out of a sheet of tin and fastens them on his coat. He pretends that these were given him for bravery in battle.

These little children live in a fine city near the sea. Its name is St. Petersburg. The streets look very much like those of Chicago and New York. There are many grand palaces, however, and the churches are quite different from ours.

Perhaps you would like to know why St. Petersburg was built. A long time ago Peter the Great was the ruler of Russia. There was no large city in the country near the sea at that time. Peter said, "If my country is to be powerful, I must have a city that is near the coast and that looks toward the rest of Europe."

Peter went to the shores of the river Neva, near the Baltic Sea. The land was low and marshy. That did not matter to him. He sent out an order for workmen. Great numbers of men came to the spot he had chosen, to prepare it for streets and houses. Thousands of piles must first be driven into the marshy soil. Millions of stones must be brought to fill it up before streets could be laid. It was such unhealthful work that, before the city was finished, hundreds of the poor workmen died of fever. But the work was done, and Peter

the Great went to live there.

He brought all his court with him. He made the place his capital. It is now the most important city of Russia, and one of the largest in the world. It is often called the "Czar's Window," because he is said to look out over Europe from this place. (I forgot to tell you that the Emperor of Russia is called the Czar.)

Let us come back to Petrovna and Ivan, who are just going out on the river to skate. Their home is almost a palace, it is so big and grand. Their father is a merchant. He buys tea from the East and sells it to the people of his own country. He has grown so rich that he owns a fine house in the city, in which the family live during the long, cold winter. They go to another home on an island of the river Neva in the summer-time.

Let us look into the big drawing-room, where papa and mamma entertain their friends in the evening. How high the walls are! At one side of the room is an immense porcelain stove. It looks somewhat like a tomb. It is big enough for a play-house for Petrovna and Ivan. A big wood fire is built in the stove on cold winter mornings. When it has burnt down to glowing coals, the chimney is closed up, and port-holes

from the stove are opened. Then the heat rushes out into the room. How close the air becomes! You do not wonder at it when you look around and notice that there are three sets of windows at each casing. There is only one pane in the whole room which can be opened to let in the outside air. The Russians are afraid of having the cold enter their houses. They have enough of it out-of-doors during at least six months of the year.

What is that strange-looking vessel on the side table? It is of shining copper. The maid polishes it very often, as it is used every evening by papa and mamma. They call it a "samovar," and no Russian home is complete without one. You probably can't guess the reason, so I will have to tell you.

You must understand that the people of this far-away land are great tea-drinkers. Tea in the morning, tea at noon, tea at night, and tea between-whiles. They like it fresh, too. Tea always tastes best and is least harmful when drunk as soon as it is made. So these good Russians must have something near them on which to heat the water. In the middle of the samovar is a cylinder in which hot coals are placed, and the water is heated around this cylinder.

The boiling water is taken out whenever it is wanted and poured on the tea in papa's tumbler or mamma's cup. No milk, if you please, to suit their taste, and no sugar in the tea. They prefer to take a lump of the very hardest sugar in their fingers and nibble it as they swallow the beverage they like so much.

A slice of lemon is often put in the tumbler with the tea. People in our own country have begun to copy this custom, and drink what we call "Russian tea." No doubt you have heard of it.

Let us turn to the wall and notice the large picture of the Madonna and the infant Jesus hanging there. A lamp is burning in front of it. If Petrovna comes into the room now, she will go to that picture at once and cross herself before it. Every devout Russian has at least one religious picture in his house, and will always pay it reverence when he enters.

If a thief should happen to come into Petrovna's house in the night, he would not dare to steal in the presence of such a picture, however brave he might be. He would first hang a cloth over the painting. Then he would go on with his wicked work without further thought.

There is a large organ in this grand drawing-room. It is

played almost automatically. (A big word, isn't it?) Petrovna and Ivan have music boxes here, as the Russians are very fond of music. I fear they are rather lazy, though, for many of their musical instruments do not depend on the skill of those who play upon them. They make what we call mechanical music.

There are several little tables about the room, as Petrovna's mamma and papa are fond of playing cards with their friends. Indeed, you need not be surprised at seeing the rich merchant playing a game at his store any hour of the day. He smokes and drinks tea while he plays. And mamma does the same. Yes, my dears, the women of Russia, of your own white race, roll their dainty cigarettes and smoke them as commonly as the men do. Petrovna will doubtless do this very thing when she is older. When she comes to America she will probably be much surprised to see only men practising the habit.

Petrovna and Ivan go to bed much later than their cousins across the Atlantic, while their parents often sit up till three or four o'clock in the morning. Such a gay city as they live in! Balls and parties, theatres and sleigh-rides, night after night in the winter season. Of course people cannot



Baby Brother and His Nurse

rise early for breakfast if they are awake nearly all night. It is not often that Petrovna's papa goes to his store before ten or eleven o'clock in the morning. The whole city looks sleepy and dismal before that time. The sky is gray and dreary, and the fog is thick and damp. The stores are closed, and few people are to be seen.

But it is dinner-time. Here come the children with their skates on their arms, and with them are the nurse and their baby brother. He has been out for a ride in his little sleigh. He is wrapped up so tightly you can hardly see his fat cheeks and the dimple in his chin.

As nurse takes off her hood and cape, I want you to notice her dress. It is the national costume of Russia. She wears a loose white undergarment with full short sleeves. It is low in the neck. She has a dark skirt over this. The band is fastened around her body under the arms, while straps over the shoulders hold it in place. I must not forget to mention a large white apron, which is fastened by a belt around her waist. Nor would she think herself dressed without her ear-rings and bead necklace. The moment her hood is taken off she puts a high cap of bright-coloured muslin on her head. This is always worn in the house to

show she is a married woman.

And here come papa and mamma. Papa is a fine-looking man with a long beard. Mamma looks good and kind, and has a sweet voice, but she could not be called pretty.

Dinner is waiting, and all have fine appetites. As they enter the dining-room they do not sit down to the table at once. One by one they go up to a sideboard where all sorts of cold dishes are served. There are dried beef, smoked salmon, cheese, radishes, and other relishes of which Russians are fond. Each one helps himself to some of these dainties. They take small portions, however, for this is what they call the zakushka, or appetiser. You need not try to pronounce it unless you wish. It is to make them hungrier for the solid meal, which comes afterward. How these people do eat! First there is cabbage soup, made of chopped cabbage which has been boiled with a piece of meat. Petrovna first dips her spoon into a dish of barley beside her plate, and then into the soup. She is very fond of this national dish. The richest and the poorest people, even the Czar himself, eat it continually and never tire of it. The only difference is that the poor peasant can seldom afford the meat which improves its flavour so much.

Next comes a pie made of fish and raisins. It seems rather queer to us to have these two things cooked together, but our Russian cousins think it is very good. And now a roast lamb is served with salted cucumbers, followed by buckwheat pudding, and ices, for dessert.

Last, but not least, the samovar is set on the table, and cup after cup of delicious tea is drunk by the family.

I forgot to tell you that sour cream was served with the soup, and papa and mamma drank some cordial while they ate of the zakushka. This was to encourage their appetites still more. But I certainly can't see what need there was. They ate and ate, and drank tea and still more tea, till it seemed as if they would be made ill.

It is said that Russians are among the largest eaters in the world. If this be so, I do not wonder that so many of them grow stout. This makes me think of a story I read the other day. Perhaps you would like to hear it. There was a certain soldier in Russia who ate so much that his friends used to lay wagers with strangers as to the quantity he could eat at a single time. His friends generally won, too. It happened one day that the colonel of the regiment made a large wager that the man could eat a whole sheep at one meal. The cook

prepared the sheep in many ways, in order to encourage the man's appetite. Of one part he made a pie, of another a stew, of still another a hash, and so on.

The man swallowed one preparation after another until the sheep was almost eaten, when he looked up and said, "If you give me so much zakushka, I am afraid I will not be able to eat the sheep when it is brought in." You understand the joke, of course, when you remember that the zakushka is made of the side dishes one eats before the regular meal is begun. Of course the colonel won his bet.

Besides the cabbage soup, there are still others of which the Russians are very fond. One of these is made with cold beer with pieces of cucumber, meat, and red herrings floating about in it, as well as bits of ice. Still another is made of a fish called the sterlet, which is found only in the Volga, the principal river of Russia. Then there are trout soup, perch soup, and several other kinds of which you probably never heard.

But now let us leave the dinner-table and go out into Petrovna's yard. At one end of it there is a high platform. It is built at least twenty feet above the ground. Steps lead up to it on one side, while from the other a long slant reaches

down to a frozen pond below. This slant looks as though it were solid shining ice. But underneath there are stout boards to keep it smooth and unbending. They are fastened to a very strong framework. Now guess, if you please, why this ice hill, as it is called, was made in Petrovna's back yard. To amuse her and her little brother, of course.

They are very fond of coasting. They like it even better than skating. So their thoughtful papa hired two workmen. They made the framework and laid great blocks of ice close together upon the slant. They then poured water over the ice to make it perfectly smooth. The cold winds blew upon it. It froze solid in a few minutes, and not a crack in the ice can be seen. It will last all winter, for in Russia the warm days, that we sometimes have in January, are scarcely known.

Petrovna and Ivan take their sleds every morning as soon as lessons are over, and away they run up the steps of their ice hill. Hurrah! Now hold your breath, for away they go, faster and faster, down the hill and over the pond below. How they shout with delight! They travel more quickly than any express train you ever saw.

I am afraid you will be a little envious of their fun and wish you had a private ice hill like theirs. The best part of it

is that these little Russians don't have to wait for a good snow-storm to make coasting for them. It is always on hand and made to order.

Petrovna has a hill made of polished wood at her summer home on the island. It cost a good deal of money, but her papa thought, "What does that matter? The children like coasting better than any other sport, so coasting they shall have."

There are public ice-hills in several parts of the city. Both old and young people are very fond of coasting. The Emperor himself has a slide of beautiful mahogany in his palace. It has been polished until it shines like one of the finest pieces of furniture.

Petrovna and Ivan do not go to school as some of the poor children do. They have a French governess. She teaches them to read, write, and spell. She also gives them lessons in French and German. She is a fine scholar, and Petrovna's papa and mamma respect her greatly. She is treated like one of the family and meets all of their friends. Petrovna's mamma wished her children's governess to be a Frenchwoman, because French is generally spoken in good society in Russia. Of course she can teach them to

pronounce it better than a person of their own country could.

Besides the two languages they are studying now, Ivan and Petrovna will soon take Latin, and perhaps Italian. Well-educated people of Russia often speak several different languages. But there are thousands, yes, millions of the poor in their land who cannot read their own language or even write their own names! The schools are not as common, you see, as in this country, but they are growing better every year.

By the way, I must tell you that there are more than forty different tongues spoken in the various parts of the great country of Russia. If you learned to speak the Russian language in one part of it, you might not understand what the people say in a different part.

In Petrovna's yard there is a little house close to the main one. If she should let you look in, you would see a large brick oven at the end of the room. Wide shelves are fastened one above another on the side of the wall. You can't imagine what this place is used for, so I shall certainly have to tell you. It is the family bath-house. I can hear you cry, "What a bath-house! I don't see any tub, or, in fact, anything that looks like a bath-house." But the children of Russia do not

take water baths as you do. They are bathed by steam.

Every Saturday a big fire is made in the stove, and when the bricks are very hot, water is poured over them. The room is filled with hot steam. Petrovna delights in this weekly bath. At first she lies on a low shelf until she gets quite warm. The perspiration starts out all over her little naked body. Then her maid places her on a higher shelf and pours more water over the stove. More steam rises, and Petrovna grows warmer and warmer. It seems as though she would suffocate. Now for a still higher shelf in the room. Of course the higher up the little girl goes, the hotter she grows. The water fairly runs out of the pores of her skin, now. Instead of looking like a lily, she would remind you of a boiled lobster.

Shouldn't you think she would get cold after a hot bath like that, especially as she is going out of doors into the freezing air? She never does, however, and I will tell you why. When she has been steamed enough, she is slowly cooled off by having first warm and then cold water poured over her. When all is finished, and she has been rubbed down, she feels as fresh and sweet as a flower.

She is ready for the next day's duty and pleasure now. To-morrow is the Sabbath, and every good Russian takes his

bath on the day before. Sunday morning comes. Every one of the family wears his holiday clothes, for, after breakfast, all will attend church service.

Petrovna's mamma has promised to take her to-day to the cathedral of St. Mark. She is so pleased she can hardly wait till the time comes to put on her wraps. No hat for her, if you please. That would not keep her dear little head warm enough. She wears a hood with a deep cape, and a long white cloak of astrakhan. Perhaps you have a muff of the same material. I wonder if you think it is fur. Astrakhan is the soft white fleece taken from the new-born lamb of a peculiar kind of sheep. The sooner the baby lamb is killed, the handsomer is the wool. Every year thousands of sheep are raised in Asia so that the beautiful white, gray, and black astrakhan can be sent to Russia, and to people in other parts of the world.

Petrovna wears her hood and cloak with the wool inside to keep her all the warmer. Her mamma has a hood and cloak of the richest sable. It cost thousands of dollars. You cannot see its beauty, for she wears it with the fur on the inside to keep her comfortable, just as Petrovna does.

The sleigh is at the door, and it is time to leave. What a

curious one it is! It is low and small, and the back of the seat is so low that Petrovna might fall over backward if she were not used to it. There is just room enough for the little girl and her mamma, with a small seat in front for the coachman. Notice his queer clothes and his funny-looking hat. It makes you think of a battered stovepipe. The upper part of the crown is much wider than the lower part, and the narrow brim curls up. His blue cloak is quite loose, and has a long plaited skirt. It is fastened on one side with six metal buttons. A heavy leather belt is clasped around his waist.

Observe the horses. They are fine-looking animals, but how queerly they are harnessed. The middle one has a high wooden yoke about his neck. The rest of the harness is fastened to that. The horses on the outside are attached to the one in the middle by a single rein. They are left quite free in their motions. They are called madmen. Some sleighs have one horse, some two, and some three.

And now Petrovna and her mamma are seated, the fur robes are tucked snugly in, the coachman jumps to his seat and makes a kind of clucking noise. The horses rush onward at a furious rate, and still Petrovna calls out, "Faster!" She is

not afraid of accident, nor is she satisfied, although the horses seem to be doing their best. Russians are not fond of exercising themselves, but they dearly like to be moved as fast as possible. This is why they like sleighing and coasting better than any other sports.

As Petrovna rides along she finds that the streets are full of sleighs, yet they do not sound so merry as they do in our own land. What is the difference? There are no sleigh-bells. There is a law that none can be used in the cities of Russia. I will tell you the reason. There are so many sleighs, and the streets are so crowded with them (for hardly any person walks), that the drivers would get confused by the sound of so many bells, and run into each other. There is a very severe punishment for the one who causes such an accident. But strange to say, although there is so much driving, few people are injured. The coachmen are very careful, although they probably drive faster than the people of any other country.

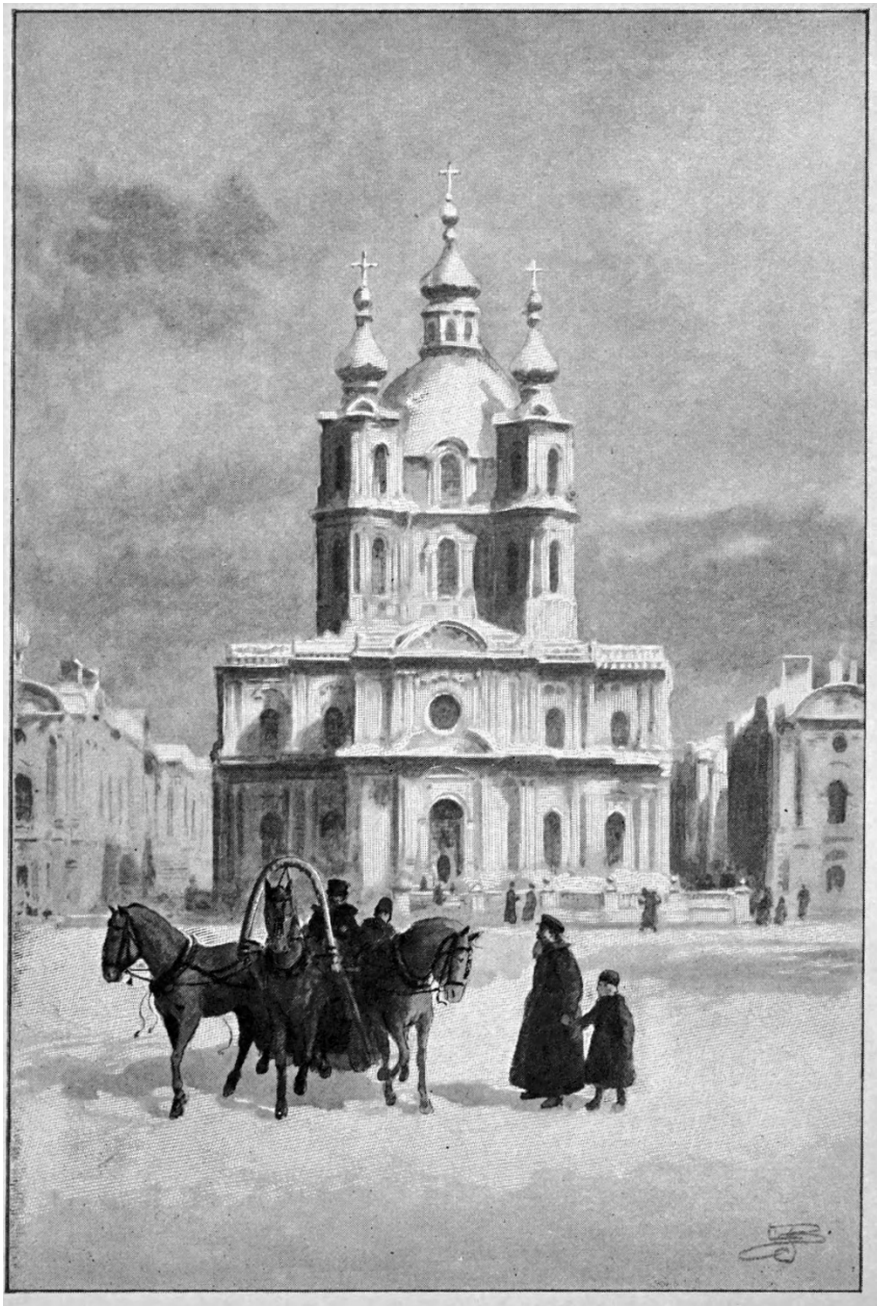
In a few minutes Petrovna and her mamma arrive in front of a very grand building. This is the cathedral. Papa and the rest of the family drive up at the same time, and all alight. See the crowd of beggars at the gates! There are poor men and women who ask for enough money to buy a dinner

of coarse black bread. There are nuns who are asking alms to support their convent. Few people are willing to refuse at the very doors of the church.

The cathedral is built in the shape of a cross. All churches in Russia are built in the same way. But notice these massive steps. Each is cut out of a single block of granite. Stand off a little and look at the great, shining dome. It is made of copper but is covered thickly with gold. It is so far up, and shines so brightly in the sunlight, that it is a beacon-light to the sailors far out on the sea.

Now let us follow our little cousin and enter the cathedral. How dark, and yet how beautiful it is! There are no seats. Rich and poor are standing together in worship. See those great columns of beautiful stones. The delicate sea-green is malachite. That heavenly blue is lapis lazuli. Does it not make you think of fairy-land? Notice, please, the number of beautiful pictures. There are no statues or images in the building, because the Russian Church does not think it right to worship them.

Listen to the music. There is no organ, but hidden from sight is a choir of men who are chanting. Are not their voices fine? Would you not like to stay all day to listen to such



A Very Grand Building

music? But what is Petrovna doing? As she entered the church she bought a candle at a stand near the door. Now she brings it to a shrine at the side of the great building. She offers it to a priest, who lights it and places it in a silver stand in front of the sacred picture. There are several holes in the stand, in which other candles are burning. The priest allows each candle to burn only a minute or two, because many other people keep coming up. They wish to have their candles burn there also.

As our dear little cousin stands there crossing herself devoutly, let us notice the picture of the Madonna before which the candles are burning. Her dress, as well as the halo around her head, is fairly covered with gold and silver and precious stones. Good and pious people have spent thousands of dollars for these beautiful gems. The only parts not covered are the face and hands. The background, even, is covered with gold. There are many other such shrines in the cathedral. A white-robed priest attends to the candles, which are kept burning night and day in each one of these shrines.

The church is filled with the odour of incense. Through the faint blue smoke we can still watch Petrovna as she

stands throughout the service. Now and then she bows her body to the floor, or crosses herself as some sacred name is repeated.

And now it is over. A ride once more, and home is reached. The rest of the day is given up to play and pleasure. Papa goes to his club for a game of cards. Perhaps Petrovna and Ivan will go out coasting, or mamma will take them for a visit to some friends. After church service, Sunday in Russia is a gala-day for rich and poor. It is a time for parties in winter, and picnics in the summer-time.

Sometimes in the morning Petrovna and her brother go to early market with the maid. It is more fun in winter than in summer, even though "Jack Frost" is on the watch to nip off their noses. Snow is everywhere to be seen on the housetops and fences, and great drifts of snow are being dug out in the streets. Icicles are hanging from every corner. Yes, Jack Frost is a merry-looking fellow, but he is ready to bite you if he has half a chance. Petrovna touches her nose and cheeks every little while to be sure they are not numb. It is so easy in northern Russia to find oneself with a frozen ear or nose. A disagreeable surprise party, indeed.

But the market! You never saw anything like it. It is well

that it is called "the frozen market." Here are whole sheep standing on their stiff, frozen legs, and looking at you with their frozen eyes. Beside them are pigs with their four legs pulled outwards, and looking, oh! so queer and odd. Quails, grouse, chickens, ducks, partridges—all kinds of fowls and game, and all frozen. They have been frozen for weeks, and will stay so in this frosty air till they are handed over to the hard-hearted cooks. Then into the oven they will go, and come out, brown and tender, on the dinner-table.

Russia is a great place for game of all kinds. In the market there are great piles of fish in a solid frozen heap. Petrovna takes hold of a string, and lifts a brick of frozen milk. That is the way milk is sold. No quart measures are needed in winter in St. Petersburg.

The children ask the maid to take the long way home, for they wish to look again at the statue of their loved Kriloff. How dear he is to all Russian children! His stories of dogs, cats, rabbits, foxes, squirrels, and other living creatures, bring them nearer to the hearts of everybody. The figures of many of the animals that live in his stories are carved on his monument.

But look! What is all this commotion about? See the

crowd gathering on the sidewalks. The street is cleared by the police, for the Emperor is coming, the Great White Czar. First comes a squadron of cavalry, and behind them is the royal sleigh. It is drawn by two beautiful horses. Three officers sit in the sleigh with the Emperor.

What a fine face and figure he has! He looks kind and noble, but worn with the cares of his great empire. As he passes along, the people cheer with might. They love him with all their hearts. He is the head of their Church. He is the father of this great people. They worship him, and would save him all his care if they could. But alas! there are enemies in this very city who may even now be plotting to take his life. They do not believe in kings, nor, indeed, in rulers of any kind. They work secretly against him with other people all over Russia. Although from time to time they are discovered and killed or sent into exile, others take their places. This great ruler, who is warmly loved by his subjects, is in danger of his life all the time. No wonder he looks so careworn.

Petrovna and Ivan look long and tenderly after him, cheering till their little throats are quite tired out. Then they hurry home to tell mamma what they have seen to-day.

At dinner Ivan said, "Papa, I wish you would tell me something about the Cossacks. They seem to go everywhere the Czar does. I noticed them in the body of cavalry this morning. They look and dress so differently from us, but they ride their horses nobly. I would like to look like a Cossack when on horseback."

"They are noble men, indeed," said papa. "Their home is far away from us, in the south of Russia. A long time ago they were at war with us, but now they are good friends and strong defenders of our country. In time of war they are the spies and scouts. They are so faithful that the Emperor can feel perfectly safe when they are near. They pay no taxes, but give their services in the army instead."

"Papa," interrupted Ivan, "why do they wear long beards and have no buttons on their coats? That is not like the rest of the cavalry. And they carry no cartridge-boxes."

"That is true," was the reply. "The Cossacks detest buttons, and hook their coats over, just as ladies often do. The cartridges are carried in a row of pockets on the breasts of their coats. You see they are a very independent people, and insist on dressing in their own manner. The Czar allows them to do so because they are so good in other ways.

"You should see them in war. They dare to go into the greatest of dangers. They admire bravery more than anything else in the world. Just before a battle they wash themselves and dress with the greatest care. They believe that they must be clean if they would enter heaven. But when the battle is over they draw up in line, leaving empty places for their fellows who have fallen. Then they sing sad songs in memory of them.

"In their own home they treat each other like brothers, and share the land in common. They are good to their cattle and horses. After a long march they will always care for their horses and feed them before doing anything for themselves. Before they eat they always wash themselves, oil their hair, and pray. They are as fond of tea as we are, my boy.

"But this is enough for to-night. I hope you will study your history carefully as you grow older. I want you to know more about the Cossacks, as well as many other interesting people who live in this great strong country of ours."

Not many miles from the fine city in which Petrovna lives are some other children whose home is very different from hers. Their parents are peasants who were serfs not many years ago. A serf was one kind of slave, for he belonged either

to the Emperor or some rich nobleman. He could be bought and sold just like a horse. But the grandfather of the present Czar said, "My people must all be free. No human being in my empire shall be a slave any longer." That was the end of serfdom.

But these people are still very, very poor. Few of them can read a book. Many of them are lazy and fond of strong drink. They live in little villages all over Russia. There are more peasants than all other classes of people in the country.

Petrovna's papa must soon go to one of these villages on business. His little daughter is going with him. She is sorry for the poor peasants. She wishes she could give their children some pretty playthings like hers. She carries a new red skirt for a little girl there whom she knows.

The village looks very bare in the winter season. It is still more so in the summer time. No trees, no sidewalks, scanty gardens, and scarcely what you could call a street. Only wide pathways between the rows of huts, which are huddled together. There is only one two-story house in the place. This is owned by the storekeeper or village merchant. He sells the peasants everything they need to buy. He is not of the peasant class himself. He came to live here in order to

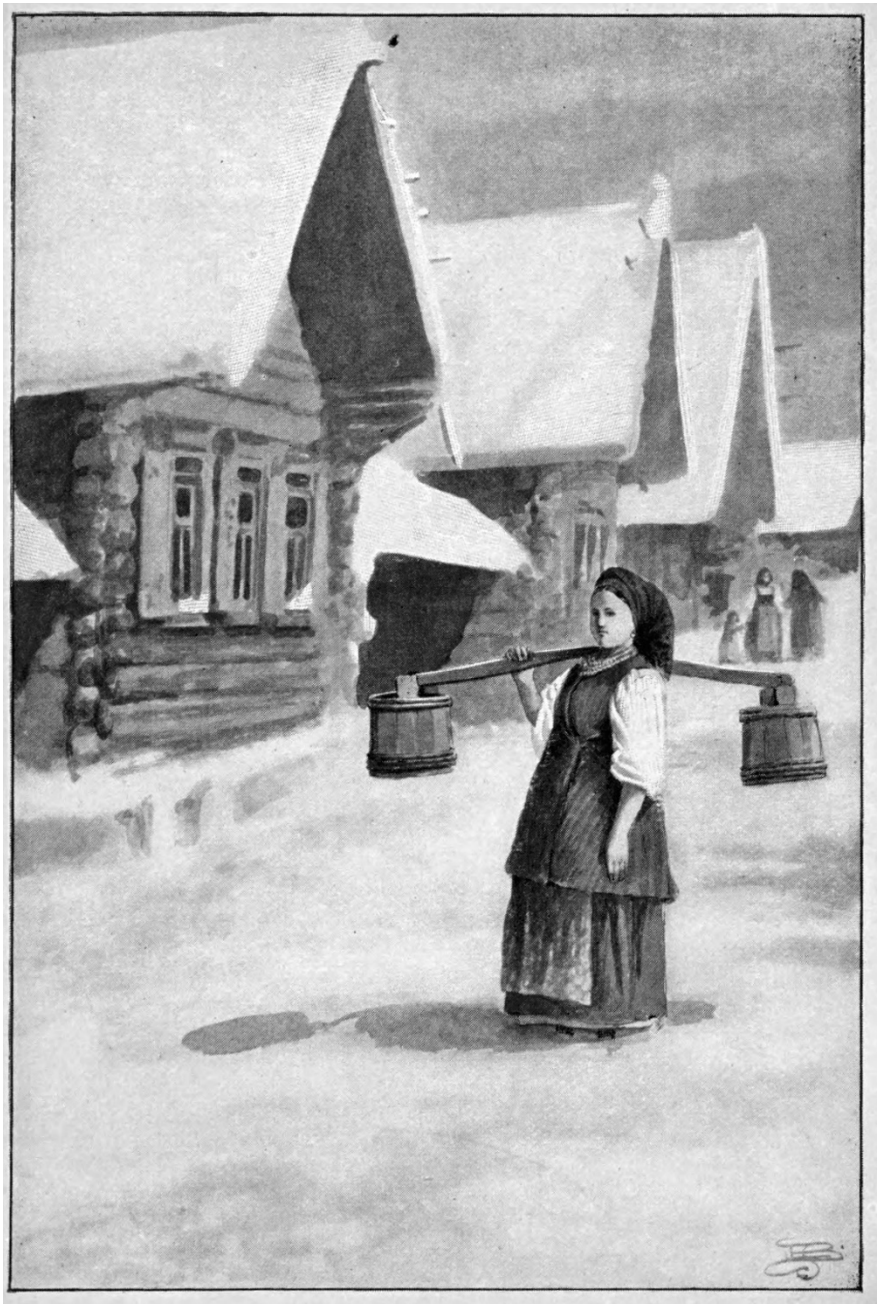
make money out of these poor men and women. The village well, from which every one in the place draws his water, is near his house. On the side of the well hangs a sacred picture, so that every one who comes there may worship first.

On the front of each hut are three little windows, close together. The sashes and frames are painted a bright red, or perhaps a gaudy purple. The Russian peasant is very fond of colour, and will work hard for the sake of a new red shirt for himself or a yellow skirt for his wife.

The porch and doorway are on one side of the hut. In summer time an earthen kettle hangs down from the roof, and as the father comes home from his work he will stop a moment and tip a little water out of the kettle over his hands. He rubs them together and wipes himself on the tail of his shirt. This is the only washing he has except the weekly steaming in the village bath-house.

Look at the flocks of pigeons around the house. They are very tame. They appear well fed and fat. In Russia the pigeon or dove is a sacred bird and is never harmed. The rough peasant will share his last crust with a pigeon.

Petrovna goes to the door of one of the cottages and



A Peasant Village

passes inside. Oh dear, how close the place is! It smells strongly of the cabbage soup boiling for the day's dinner. Only one small room in the house. Yet there is a large family of children living here, besides half a dozen shaggy-haired dogs. With the exception of the big brick stove, there is no furniture except what the father made himself. In one corner of the room is a rickety table.

A narrow bench is built against the wall on two sides of the room. There are no chairs and no beds. How do they get along? And yet they seem quite happy and comfortable. Papa and mamma sleep up on top of the big stove. The older children sleep beside them. Don't worry, my dears. They do not get burned, but like their hard, warm bed very much. The logs burn down to ashes in the daytime. The bricks are just pleasantly warm by night.

But the little girl to whom Petrovna has brought the dress, and her three-year-old brother, where do they sleep? On the benches against the walls. If they should have bad dreams and tumble off in the night, it would not matter so very much, for the bench is near the floor.

When mealtime comes, the family does not gather around the table, for as I told you, there are no seats that

can be moved. They sit on the benches, and the table is therefore kept in the corner of the room. They can sit at only two sides of it, of course.

But I have not yet spoken of the most important thing in the house. It is the Ikon, or sacred picture. The priest blessed it before it was brought to the home. There is a place for a candle to burn in front of it, but these poor people cannot afford to keep one lighted all the time. This picture has no gold upon it, like the one in Petrovna's house. It cost only a few pennies, but it is sacred, nevertheless. The family give it reverence many times a day. It is never forgotten as they enter the room.

It sometimes happens, I am sorry to say, that the father comes home the worse for taking strong drink. Perhaps he cannot walk straight, and hangs his head from side to side. But when he opens the door, he remembers to turn to the sacred picture and cross himself before it.

Although there is so little furniture and so few windows, the room looks bright and gay. The table is painted a gorgeous red, while the benches are a brilliant green.

Black bread made from coarse rye-meal, cabbage soup, weak tea (for they cannot afford to have it strong), are the

daily food of the peasants. If they can get some buckwheat and dried herring, once in awhile, they think themselves well-off.

They have many happy times, these poor people of Russia. When work is done for the day, they dance and sing, and play upon the concertina, if any one in the village owns one of these cheap musical instruments.

When Petrovna takes out the red dress for the little girl and a large package of buckwheat which mamma has sent to the family, every one in the house shouts with delight. It seems as though they could not thank her enough. Even the dogs wake up and begin to bark in excitement. In the midst of it all Petrovna's papa calls for her. She must go back to the grand city and her fine home. She will forget for a time that all children in the world cannot be as well dressed and well fed as herself.

Petrovna has never yet been far away from St. Petersburg. She longs to go to the beautiful white-walled city of Moscow. Her mamma has been there, and has described its beauties over and over again.

It is a long journey from St. Petersburg. As you draw near the city, a blaze of colour is spread out before you. Domes

of red and gold and purple are shining on the hilltops in the glorious sunlight. Churches and towers and palaces are without number, and differ from each other in shape and beauty. Moscow is a mass of colour made of countless gems and countless tints. In the midst of the city is the Kremlin or citadel. But the Kremlin is not one building. It is really a fortress surrounded by a massive wall that encloses many palaces and cathedrals, beautiful gardens and stately convents. Great gates open into it, and each has its story. One of them is called the Nicholas gate. A picture of St. Nicholas, whom the Russians worship, hangs over it. At one time the French were at war with the Russians. They stormed this gate and split its solid stonework, but the picture was unharmed. "It is a miracle," the people said.

There is a picture of the Virgin over another gate. The French tried to get this picture, but they did not succeed. This was another miracle, all thought, and no one passes through that gate now without taking off his hat. Within the Kremlin are other sacred pictures, which the people believe can work miracles.

The oil of baptism is prepared and blessed by the high-priest in a certain cathedral in Moscow. It is sent to every

church in Russia, that all new-born children may be baptised with it.

Petrovna's mamma went to the city of Moscow when the Czar was crowned. He could not be formally made Emperor in St. Petersburg. That was not to be thought of. All Czars must be married as well as crowned in Moscow, and, until the time of Peter the Great, all have been buried there.

The coronation of the present Czar was the greatest spectacle of modern times. Petrovna hears her mamma sigh when she tries to describe it. Everything was so grand and shining and gorgeous—processions and fireworks, music and feasting, everybody pleased and gaily dressed; men in silk and velvet, ladies sparkling in satins covered with pearls and diamonds; the double-headed eagle, the bird of Russia, showing its gilded crowns everywhere.

In the evening there were no rockets and Roman candles, but fireworks that were constantly shining, while the fronts of the buildings were covered with candles burning in glass globes.

Such horses, such elegant carriages, and such fine parks to drive in! And through the city ran the river, reflecting the lights from all sides.

There were days and days of feasting, from the time the new Emperor arrived in the city. He appeared in the grand procession mounted on a snow-white horse. He was dressed very simply in dark green, wearing a cap of astrakhan. Behind him came a great array of princes and grand-dukes. Next came the Emperor's mother in a carriage drawn by eight superb horses. After this appeared the carriage of the Empress. It was all of gold, and also drawn by eight snow-white horses.

How the crowd cheered, and cheered again! If this could show how devoted the people were to their ruler, their love could not be measured.

The governor of the city came out to meet the Czar and presented him with bread and salt.

These are the emblems of trust and friendship. Then the royal family rode onward till they came to a little chapel, where the Emperor and Empress alighted. They passed in alone to worship.

Now to the Kremlin, where a multitude was waiting for them. There were thousands of the peasants, who had travelled hundreds of miles on foot. They wished to see, if only for one moment, the head of their Church and State.

There were princes and officers from every country of the world. There were Chinese mandarins, Persian rulers, wealthy Indians, people of all colours and races. And all were dressed in the richest robes that money could buy and art design. Such a mass of colour! Such sparkling of precious stones! Such a wealth of satin and lace and velvet and cloth of silver and gold!

After his entrance of triumph into the city, the Emperor and Empress retired from the public eye for three days. They must fast and pray until the time that the Czar should be crowned, else they would not be in right condition for this ceremony. But the others in the crowded city did not fast. The days were given to pleasures of all kinds—eating, drinking, music, and dancing.

At last the Czar was crowned! It was in the cathedral, where all other Czars have been crowned before. He himself put on the robe and collar, and assumed the crown of empire. The heavy crown of gold was placed on his head by his own hands. He then made a noble prayer for himself and the great empire, and for the millions of people who are his devoted subjects. How fair and strong and kindly was his face! Never had Petrovna's mamma seen anything so grand

or so solemn. She stops and repeats a prayer now for the good Emperor Nicholas II.

When the ceremony was ended there was a ringing of bells all over the city. Hundreds of cannon were fired. Then more feasting and merriment followed for days yet to come. Free dinners were served every day to five thousand of the poor. The Czar did not forget them. They feasted as they had never done before in their lives.

At last came the great day of the festival. It was called the "people's fête." Every one was welcome. There were shows of all kinds that you can imagine. There were concerts and plays, boxing and fencing matches, trained animals—everything to make the people happy. Overlooking it all sat the Czar in a grand pavilion. All the lords and ladies of the land were about him.

How delightful it was! Petrovna's mamma leans back in her chair and smiles softly to herself as she thinks of that joyful time.

On many a winter evening, as they sit around the big porcelain stove and sip the tea, Petrovna and Ivan beg for stories. They like fairy tales best of all. Their favourite one is the story of "Frost." Perhaps you would like to hear it.

Once upon a time there was a man who had three children. His wife was extremely fond of two of the daughters, but she was cruel and unkind to the third girl, whose name was Marfa. This was because Marfa was her stepdaughter. She made Marfa get up early in the morning to work, while her stepsisters were having a nice nap. The poor girl had to feed the cattle, bring in the wood, make the fire, and sweep the room. After this she must mend the clothes and do many other things before the rest of the family stirred. What a hard time she had, poor child! And then she was only scolded for her labour.

She did not have a kind word from any one except her old father, and then only when they were alone together. He was afraid of his wife, and did not dare to be good to Marfa when the others were around. She was a beautiful girl, and was sweet and patient, besides. Her stepmother was jealous of her because she was so much lovelier than her sisters. The old woman said to herself, "I will put the girl out of my sight and get rid of her. I hate her."

That very night she said to her husband, "Come, old man, get up early in the morning and harness the horse. Take Marfa away on a visit." Then she turned to her

stepdaughter, and said, "Put your clothes together and dress neatly when you get up, for your father will be ready to take you away."

The girl was delighted. She thought how nice it would be to go where people would be kind to her. Morning came. Marfa washed herself carefully, prayed to God, put on her best dress, and looked lovely enough to be a bride.

The old stepmother called her to a breakfast of cold cabbage soup, and then said to her, "Now, Marfa, get out of my sight for ever. I have seen enough of you. The sledge is at the door. Husband, take Marfa to her bridegroom. Go straight down the road, turn to the right, go up the hill till you come to an old pine-tree, and there leave the girl for Frost. He will soon come to get her."

The poor old father looked sad enough when he heard these words, but he did not dare to disobey his wife. He and Marfa got into the sledge and rode away slowly. His daughter was weeping bitterly. In a little while they came to the place where they were ordered to stop. Marfa got out and sat down under the pine-tree. The old man rode away. He thought he should never see his darling child again. He wept at the thought. Soon he was out of sight.



Marfa and Frost

There was nothing but snow for Marfa to look upon now. The ground was covered with great drifts. The bushes were buried under it. The branches of the trees were bending under its weight. Not a sound could be heard save the falling of icicles and the creaking steps of Frost as he leaped from tree to tree.

Marfa was chilled through. Her teeth chattered. Her lips were blue and stiff. She was too cold to sob or cry out. Frost was coming nearer and nearer. Pretty soon he was in the tree above Marfa's head. He cried out, "Maiden, are you warm?" "Oh, yes, quite warm enough, dear Father Frost," she answered. Then he came down from the tree. Now she was almost frozen.

He called again, "Are you warm, my sweet girl? Are you sure you are warm enough?" By this time Marfa was so numb she could hardly move her lips. But she tried to answer, "Oh, yes, dearest sir, I am warm enough." Frost took pity on the poor patient maiden. He brought furs and warm blankets and wrapped her up in them. Then he left her.

She slept unharmed all night, and, when she woke in the morning, she found gifts of rich clothing which Frost had brought her in the night. Her father soon appeared with the

sledge. He had expected to find her dead body, but she was well and healthy. Not even a finger was frozen. How the old man rejoiced. He took Marfa and her fine presents into the sledge, and they rode home together.

You can imagine how angry the stepmother was when she saw the girl again. But when she heard how kind Frost had been, and saw the beautiful clothing he had given Marfa, she said, "Husband, you must take my girls to their bridegroom. He will be far kinder to them than he has been to Marfa, I am sure of that." Then she said to her daughters, "I have found a bridegroom for you. You must go to meet him."

The next morning the girls got up and dressed themselves in their best. They were very happy. They thought to themselves, "Oh, my, what a fine time we shall have!" They got into the sledge with their father and away they went. They soon came to the pine-tree where Marfa had stayed the other night. They got out and sat down. Their father drove away.

The girls began to laugh together. They said, "What a queer idea of mother to send us here for a bridegroom—as if there were not enough young men in the village." It was

bitter cold, and they soon began to get cross and quarrel with each other. One of them said, "Suppose only one bridegroom comes, whom will he take?" "It will be I, of course," was her sister's reply. "Indeed, no," exclaimed the other; "I will be the chosen one." They grew colder and colder, stiffer and stiffer. But they kept quarrelling and calling each other bad names.

Frost was some way off, but the girls now heard him cracking his fingers and snapping the pine-trees. "Listen, some one is coming. I hear sleigh-bells," said the older sister. But the other would not listen. She declared she was too cold.

Frost came nearer and nearer. At last he stood in front of the two girls. He spoke to them just as he had to Marfa before. "Well, my darlings, are you cold?" But the girls only answered with bad words. They called Frost names such as no wise person would dare to speak to this great being. Yet again he called out, "Are you warm, my pretty ones?" And again they answered him with curses. But as they did so they fell dead to the ground.

The next morning the old woman said to her husband, "Come, harness the horse quickly, and go fetch the girls

home. There was a terrible frost last night. They must be half-dead with cold." The father did as she bid him, and drove away to the pine-tree. But what did he see? Two lifeless bodies, frozen stiff! He put them in the sledge, covered them over, and carried them home. As he drove up to the cottage, the old woman went out to meet her daughters.

What a sight was there! The girls had indeed met their bridegroom, but it was Death. After this the old woman treated her stepdaughter all the worse for awhile, but she soon got over it. She grew kind and loving. They lived pleasantly ever after.

Marfa married a neighbour who had a good home to give her. She and her children are very happy. But when her children are naughty, their grandfather frightens them by saying, "Look out, or Frost will get you."

Petrovna and Ivan shiver as the story ends, and draw nearer their dear mamma, as though she could protect them from any danger.

The long, cold winter is gone at last. The ice of the river begins to break up. It has been frozen solid for months, but now it is cracking and softening and beginning to move out to the sea. The commander of the fort on the opposite side

of the river discovered this last midnight. He did not wait a single moment. He started at once to carry the glad news to the Emperor, while cannon were fired off from the fort.

When he reached the palace, perhaps you think the attendants kept him waiting because the Czar was asleep. Not at all. He was shown at once into the royal presence. He presented the Czar with a goblet filled with ice-cold water he had brought from the river. This was his way of stating the good news. The Emperor drank to the good fortune of the city, and then filled the goblet with silver for the bringer of the news. In olden times the goblets grew larger every year. It cost the Czar more money each time. At last he said, "Let the glass always be of a certain size, after this." Of course, that settled it.

When the news was brought to the city, everybody was glad. The next day was made a holiday. Petrovna and Ivan were excused from lessons and went out to see the sights.

Eight weeks before Easter, comes Butter-Week. The whole city gives itself up for seven days of feasting and festival. Pancakes are eaten at every meal. Not like the pancakes your mamma makes, my dears. At least, I hope not. For the Russian pancakes, or "blini," as they are called,

are much too rich for your little stomachs. They are made of flour and butter, cooked in butter, and eaten with butter. And not only is this greasy food eaten in quantities, but many other things containing a great deal of fat.

Petrovna's mamma has a blini party for her friends, and Petrovna has another for her playmates. The family are invited out to blini parties at other houses. They are the queerest parties you ever heard of. Even in the grandest houses they are held in the kitchen. Perhaps you can guess the reason. The cakes must be eaten hot, as soon as they come off the griddle. Therefore the people must sit as near the stove as possible.

Petrovna eats her favourite cakes, until she can swallow nothing more. By the end of the week her head, as well as her stomach, begins to ache. She is all ready for the seven weeks of fasting before Easter. She is a faithful little girl, and never thinks of fussing because she must now live very quietly. She goes often to church, and repeats many prayers. She eats the simplest food, but all Russia does the same, so she has plenty of company.

The night before Easter comes at last. Petrovna and Ivan do not go to bed as early as usual. They leave home with

their parents a little while before midnight. They are going to church. Everybody else in the city goes, too.

The streets are full of carriages as they ride along. Our little Russian cousins are driven to the same cathedral to which you have been with them before. They enter and join the crowd of worshippers. The lights burn dimly. All is silent. The great bell begins to ring the midnight hour. The other bells of the city join. As the last stroke is sounded the priests come out through the doors of the sanctuary. Listen! they are chanting, "Christ is risen! Christ is risen!" The people respond, "Christ is risen."

At the beginning of the chant all begin to move around, kissing friends and acquaintances in every direction. The bells keep pealing forth the glad news. Cannon are fired off throughout the city. Rockets are flashing in the sky. The cathedral itself suddenly becomes ablaze with light.

The kissing lasts all night and during the next day. No one thinks of meeting another without a cordial greeting and a kiss. Old men kiss each other. Old women kiss, children kiss. The Emperor kisses all those of his household. Petrovna's papa kisses his clerks. Petrovna herself, dear little maiden, kisses right and left, with the most loving heart in

the world. For this is Easter-time, the glorious time when all should love each other and show it as best they can.

Feasting begins with the kissing. It is a great holiday for everybody. Petrovna's mamma has a grand dinner-party for her friends. But she does not forget those who are not so well off as herself. Many a basket of good things is sent out to poor homes. Many a blessing is given our little Petrovna, who rides about the city leaving her mamma's gifts. Yes, indeed, it is a beautiful time, this Easter day in Russia.

As the weather gets warmer, Petrovna begins to look forward to the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod. It will be a long, long journey. She has never travelled so far in her life before. But dear kind papa has promised her she shall go with him this time. He travels there himself every year to trade with the merchants of far-away countries.

The day before they are ready to start, he comes home earlier than usual from his place of business. He says, "Come, Petrovna and Ivan, ask the maid to put on your best clothes. I am going to take you to the Winter Palace. You have teased me to take you there often enough. Hurry, or we shall not have time."

The children scamper away. They are soon dressed. Their

papa looks at his pretty children with pride, as he helps them into the carriage. Away they dash over the pavements till they draw up in front of an immense building. It is painted brownish-red and yellow. The outside is ornamented with the figures of angels, and many other beautiful things.

This is the Winter Palace. It is the largest residence in the whole world. Six thousand people live in it. Shouldn't you be afraid of getting lost there? There is a story that a servant kept some cows in one of the garrets there, a long time ago, and no one found it out for a long while.

Petrovna and Ivan open their eyes wide as they pass through the high gilded halls; they see so many beautiful things to admire. Such richly carved chairs and tables! Such immense vases of malachite and jasper and porphyry! So many fine paintings of the Czars and generals and other great people of Russia!

In the throne-room of Peter the Great the walls are hung with red velvet. Golden eagles are beautifully embroidered upon it. But the royal jewels! How Petrovna's blue eyes sparkle as she looks upon the crown of her Emperor. It is in the shape of a dome, and is studded with large diamonds, with a border of pearls. At the very top of it is an immense

ruby. It is very beautiful. The Empress's coronet is most dainty. It is of diamonds of the same size. It is enough to dazzle one with its beauty. In the room where these jewels are kept and guarded there are many others noted all over the world.

The sceptre of the Czar bears one of the largest diamonds ever discovered. Many years ago a rich count gave it to the Empress Catherine II. There are bracelets and necklaces and coronets made of precious stones. It seems as though Petrovna and Ivan had suddenly landed in the cave of Aladdin.

But it is getting late. It is long after their dinner hour. They must leave these beautiful sights and hasten home to mamma.

The morning for the great journey comes. It finds our Russian cousins awake bright and early. The trunks are strapped, the dear baby brother is fondly kissed, and papa, mamma, Petrovna, and Ivan begin their long ride. They pass many little villages as the express train rushes along. Then they go onward over great plains of barley and rye. The train is crowded with others, who are taking the same journey as themselves, and papa talks with many friends who have

business at the great fair.

They travel all day and all night, besides several hours of the next day. As they near the end, the weather grows warmer, the trees are larger and the grass greener than at home. For they are farther south. They are too tired to look out of the windows any longer. Petrovna is dozing away, and dreaming of her loved ice-hill, when she finds herself gently shaken. Mamma is smiling at her and saying, "Wake up, my darling, we are here at last."

The train has stopped. Every one is getting out. Our little cousins are helped out of the car into a comfortable low carriage and are driven to a grand hotel. A good dinner is served, and Petrovna and Ivan are put to bed. They must get rested and prepare for the excitement of the coming week. They are both so tired and sleepy they are glad to rest after the long, hard journey.

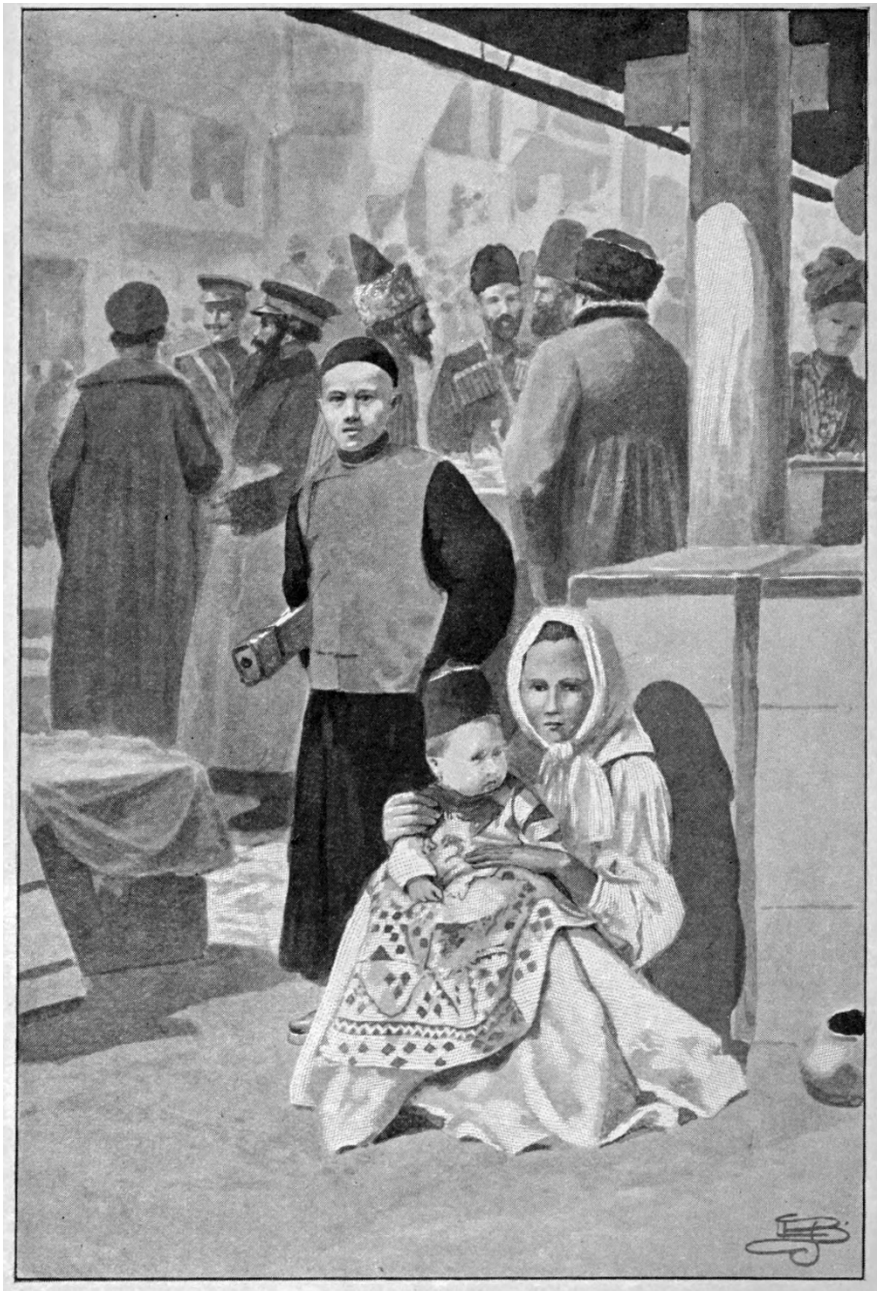
Perhaps you do not know that this great fair is held every year for the benefit of the people of Asia as well as Russia. After a long night's sleep our merchant's family go out into the streets of the old city and see many curious sights. Men of many nations are gathered together. Chinamen with their long queues and big sleeves are jostling Persians in flowing

silk robes and gay turbans. Here are Cossacks mounted on fine horses acting as policemen. There are some gypsies on their way to the fair. They expect to tell fortunes and make much money out of the curious peasants.

What a bustle and commotion! What a discord of strange languages on every side! What variety of costumes, and, above all, what dust!

The fair grounds are about a mile from the hotel. Our little cousins are in as much of a hurry to get there as you would be. It does not take long, however, for the driver of their carriage hurries his horses onward through the crowd.

Now for the fair itself. It is arranged in the shape of a triangle, and covers a square mile. Not an inch of space is wasted. Everything is in order. Every trade has a street of its own. Many of the bazaars have signs in front. These bear the names of all the goods that are sold inside. Petrovna's papa is, of course, interested most in the tea. He wishes to buy a large stock of it for his trade at home. There are many kinds to choose from. But he must be sure to get some of the delicious yellow tea, which he will sell for fifteen dollars a pound. It is said to be made from the flowers of a certain kind of tea-plant, and is quite rare. The wealthy people of



The Great Fair of Nijni-Novgorod

Russia like it so much that no one else in the world gets a chance to buy any. So I have heard, at least. If you should drink ever so little of it, you might be kept awake all night. Yet it looks very weak.

Besides many expensive teas, Petrovna's papa orders a large supply of tea-bricks. They are made out of the refuse of the tea, and can be sold to the peasants. Poor creatures! they are glad enough to get this poor stuff, if they cannot afford better.

Now follow Petrovna as she stops at the booth of this richly dressed Persian. See the beautiful rugs and carpets hung up for sale. They will last a lifetime for those who have money enough to buy them.

Here is a whole street devoted to the sale of silks. There are many beautiful shades. Petrovna shall have a piece of delicate yellow to make her a new party dress, while her mamma chooses one of rich brocade. It is heavy enough to stand alone.

Let us go with our travellers and look with them at these exquisite gems—amethysts, crystals, and the clearest of topaz. Petrovna's papa will buy one of these, no doubt. He will have it set in a ring to give his wife.

Besides all the rich and rare things which Asia can send to the fair, Russia furnishes many things to exchange with her great neighbour. There are all kinds of goods, which have been made in the factories of her cities. The most important are the cotton goods, the cutlery, and the fine articles of silver. There are also immense stores of wheat, barley, and other grains, and quantities of dried fruits.

Especially for her own people, there are bazaars and bazaars filled with samovars of every style, rich furs from the animals of the cold lands of the north, and candles by millions.

Day after day, Petrovna and Ivan wander about the fair grounds. Each time they see something new they wish to buy. When they are tired of looking about in the bazaars, they go to one of the concert-halls. They will be sure to hear some music they like. Or else they go to a theatre, and see a play that makes them laugh till their sides are sore. Perhaps they watch the performance of some jugglers, and try to discover how they do their wonderful tricks. Quite often they go into one of the restaurants with papa. While he is drinking tea and talking over prices with the men he meets, the children have a dainty lunch, and watch the waiters.

What queer-looking people they are! They are Tartars. They look much like the Chinese, except that their heads are shaven. They wear white linen shirts and trousers. Their feet are bound with pieces of cloth and encased in sandals.

Among other things, Petrovna watches a band of gypsies. They are the very ones she saw in the streets the day she arrived in the city. Some of them are old and withered and ugly. They look like witches. But others are young and quite handsome, with their black hair and bright dark eyes. The women wear bright-coloured handkerchiefs around their heads, and shawls over their shoulders.

Look! Watch that young girl as she dances and twirls her skirt. She is certainly very pretty and graceful. She stops now and comes up to Petrovna. She wishes to tell her fortune. Mamma says yes. Our little girl gives the gypsy a piece of silver and holds out her hand. The gypsy notices her fine clothing, looks well at her mamma, then closely examines the little white palm. She tells the child that she will be very happy and do much good in the world. As she grows up she will marry a rich count and live in a grand mansion. She says many more pleasant things will happen, and Petrovna smiles and believes it all.

Let us leave our dear little cousin here for the present. Let us hope that the gypsy's prophecy is a true one.

THE END.

Our Little Polish Cousin

Florence E. Mendel

Illustrated by Harriet O'Brien



Marya Ostrowska

Preface

There is no doubt whatever but that every little girl and every little boy has heard of the country of Poland, and of its inhabitants the Polacks, or Poles, as you hear them more often spoken of. But there are countless numbers of these same children, I fear, who have not the slightest idea where Poland lies, except in a most vague way; nor how the people live, what they eat, what their pleasures and enjoyments are, and how they dress. Of course, you say at once, "Why, they eat the same things we do; every one eats meat and vegetables, and drinks milk or coffee," but right there you are mistaken. The nations of other lands do not live as we do, for we are the most extravagant nation in the whole world; indeed, other peoples cannot afford to live like us, for most of them are extremely poor; so poor and ignorant, as applied to Polacks, that it would make your heart ache to see them in their homes; they know very little of happiness,

and comfort is a thing unknown to them, except for the wealthy, landed class. But these Polish peasants never think of complaining of their lot. They accept it as their fate, to which they were born; and, with light hearts, they make the best of their surroundings and their holidays; and I believe they derive more real pleasure from their infrequent play-days than we are able to do every day in our blessed, happy lives.

The story of Poland, like the story of every other nation, is not dry and dull. It is intensely interesting. It reads like a fairy-tale, and I am certain you will agree with me after you have finished this little volume. I can but hope it will give you a better and clearer understanding of the life of the Polacks, not only as to the rich, but to the poor.

CHAPTER I

The Origin of Poland

We cross the Atlantic Ocean in one of the great floating palaces which sail from New York; after seven days of good times on board, with not too much sea-sickness, we sight land, the glorious, sunny land of France. We all know and love France, for it has been endeared to us in many ways. Lafayette helped us in our time of need long years ago, and the French school-children have given us that token of their esteem, the Goddess of Liberty, which stands at the entrance of the harbor in New York, a welcome to all the poor, homeless refugees and immigrants who come to this beloved land of ours in search of rest.

After passing through the custom-house at Havre, and our baggage being examined by the officials in charge, to see that we have brought nothing dutiable into their country, we board the waiting train, and are whirled along by the side of the sparkling river Seine, which winds its way lazily among

beautiful green fields under the highest state of cultivation, mostly in vegetables, until we reach the charming city of Paris. As we may not linger here, much as we should love to, we are off again in the morning. We leave behind us the sunny, fair skies of France and emerge into the peaceful country of Germany with its rows upon rows of hops so symmetrically strung upon high poles, and its fertile vegetable gardens, where we see whole families, from the old grandparents, much too old to labor, down to the tiny but sturdy four-year-old, bending over the growing plants, weeding and hoeing and ridding of plant-pests. To see the endless truck gardens, as we pass by in the Schnell-zug (express train), one would be justified in believing that the people of Europe ate nothing but vegetables. And it is quite true. The masses have little else to feed upon, as meat is a rarity in poor families. Even the salaried people are not able to afford that luxury more than once a week, and then it frequently happens that only the head of the house may indulge.

As night descends, our train pulls in at the depot at Dresden; but this is not Poland; a little further, and we find ourselves in the city of Cracow, the ancient city of Chief

Krakus, which we find nestled snugly and boldly at the junction of the three powerful countries, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany. It is here we purpose spending a cycle of months visiting, as Cracow is most typically Polish, with its surrounding vicinities.

What a glorious country we are in! It is true, it is broad, and flat and low, with rugged mountains and rapid rivers separating it, one part from another; nevertheless, it is a wonderful land. At one time it was a large country: now it is divided into three parts, each belonging to a different nation, the Russians, the Austrians and the Germans. The conquering nations have tried very hard to introduce their own customs into this captive land, but the Polacks will not accept them. We shall not enter into this phase of the question, but will visit the native as he is and not as the conquerors would have him.

It is very much more interesting to know just where the country lies about which we are reading, so we shall first learn where Poland lies upon the map of Europe. We open our books, and search the map through, but there is no country marked Poland. We are grieved to say there is no longer any country by that name; it was not enough to wrest

the country asunder, but even its very name must be torn from it; therefore, it is in the southwestern part of Russia, the very northeast tip of Austria-Hungary, and the ragged northeast portion of Germany that we must trace the boundaries of Poland. From Riga on the north to the Black Sea on the south Poland had ample outlets for its great quantities of wheat and sugar which it raised, and which brought enormous wealth into the country.

Everything must have a beginning, even countries, and Poland was no exception. It wasn't like Topsy, who wasn't ever born but just "growed;" so here is the story of the birth of Poland.

Once upon a time, oh, very long ago, there lived a king or chief over the lands which lay near the mouth of the Danube River. Now you all know that the Danube rises at the Black Sea on the west, quite close to the southern border of Russia. This chief had three sons, who were great, strong men. At length the king died, leaving his lands and all his wealth to the care of these sons. Now, in those far-away days, the tribes who lived thereabouts were very savage; they had no learning or education. All they cared for was to fight, and make conquests of other nations so as to enlarge their own

possessions. When the three brothers found themselves left with their father's small domain, they were not satisfied. They could not all rule upon the same throne and be at peace, one with the other. The estate was too small to divide into three separate kingdoms. Consequently, they determined to go in search of other lands which would be large enough to satisfy their demands. They set out and journeyed along happily for some time, meeting with many dangers by the way, for the land was full of wild beasts of all sorts, dangerous reptiles and savage men, who were worse, indeed, than all the wild things of the earth.

While walking along the highroad, one of the brothers chanced to gaze upward. He saw three eagles high in the air. He thought nothing of this, however, for the air was full of all sorts of birds, large and small. But finally he noticed that the birds were following along with them. At last the brothers began to joke about the incident.

"I choose the white bird," said Lekh, the eldest.

"And I the black one," said Russ.

"Then I must take the only one left," remarked Tchekh. And, in this merry manner, they passed the time as they continued their march.

At length the travellers came to three roads, diverging like the rays of a fan. One road led to the north, the direction they were then pursuing; another turned to the northeast, and the third to the northwest.

"Which shall we take?" asked one of them, as they halted their footsteps in order to decide the important question.

"I am for going straight on," Lekh said.

"And I, too," spoke up the other. "There is no use in separating so soon. Let us wait a while!"

As they were arguing the point back and forth, Lekh saw the white eagle, his eagle, winging its way due north. The other two birds were each following the direction of the other two diverging roads.

"There goes your bird," Lekh said to his brother Russ, as he pointed to the black eagle flying toward the right. "Mine goes straight onward, and so shall I. As for the rest of you, you may do what you like."

"Then I shall follow my bird," Russ replied. "Perhaps it will bring us good luck."

So the three brothers bade one another an affectionate farewell and parted. Russ followed the black eagle until he came to the present country of Russia, which he founded

and named. Tchekh founded the country of Bohemia, the people of which are even to-day known as Czechs; as for Lekh, he wandered due north until he came to the broad plain where he settled. As his guide had been a white eagle, he thought it but appropriate to make that his emblem; and, in this way, it happened that Poland has a white eagle upon its flag.

Lekh, as I have just said, settled in an immense plain, the Polish word for which is "Pola." Then Lekh added his own name to that, making Po-Lekh, sometimes written Lakh, and now we have the word Po-lakh, meaning the people of Lekh who lived in the plain.

CHAPTER II

The Arrival at the Dwór

It was snowing fast. The flakes fell in great, thick showers about the occupants of the heavy sleigh, who were fairly covered in a blanket of white, crisp snow. The driver lashed his sturdy, thoroughbred beasts with his long-handled whip, for they were in danger of becoming hopelessly sunk in the heavy drifts which filled the road, and there were yet some miles to go. The sleigh-bells jingled merrily, nevertheless. What cared they whether they were snow-bound or not, so long as they could make their music ring out over the clear, frosty air? It was their purpose in life to chime, and they were doing their best. The harder the horses tugged and the more they floundered about in the great drifts, the more merrily the bells rang out. Some one must keep good-natured, and so they took that task upon themselves. Happy bells!

The horses panted and halted a moment for the much-needed rest. The driver slapped his great arms across his

chest to keep the circulation moving; but the occupants in the rear of the sleigh made no motion whatever. For all one could see of them, the sleigh might have been empty except as to fur robes, for not even the tip of a nose was visible. As the driver called out to his team, "Gee up," one corner of the fur robe in the rear seat moved, and a little voice piped up:

"Mother, are we almost there?"

"Just a little while yet, my dear," the mother replied, as she raised her head from the protecting warmth of the robe and looked about her. "I can see the tall trees of the drive now, just ahead of us. Peep your head out, Jan, and see if you can catch sight of grandfather's dwór," said Mrs. Teczynska, as she rearranged the robes so that Jan could sit upright.

Before them, some mile away, lay an immense park enclosed within a high stone fence. The sleigh made headway easier now, for the road about the entrance to the dwór was in better condition than the ordinary public road. Soon they passed the stone brama or gateway, sped down the splendid broad driveway lined on both sides with overhanging trees, mounted the rise at the top, and with a

whoop and a hurrah, the driver pulled rein at the porch of the dwór or country-home of Mr. Ostrowski, the father of Mrs. Teczynska.

The tinkle of the sleigh bells had announced the arrival of the guests long before they had reached the porch; and the entire family, big and little, with innumerable servants, were awaiting within the reception-hall to greet the newcomers.

The villa was just the hospitable-looking home in which to meet at the Christmas season. One knew, from its very appearance, that it sheltered a warm welcome. It was built of stone, was two stories high and had a red-tiled roof; red chimneys dotted it all over; you never did see so many chimneys all on one house before. There was an immense veranda running along the entire front of the house, supported by heavy columns, giving it a most substantial air, the air of a home and not merely an expensive residence.

Mr. Ostrowski assisted his daughter and the little grandson Jan to disentangle themselves from the heavy fur robes, and they were hurried into the warm reception-room, where a bright fire was burning on an open hearth. As Mrs. Teczynska passed through the massive front door, which was

opened for her by an elderly, not to say old, man-servant, she greeted him kindly.

"And how does Henryk find himself?"

The old man, toothless and very infirm, bowed respectfully.

"Thank you, Mlle. Martha, I keep very well; but it does my old eyes good to see you once more. How you have grown!"

"This is the little Jan, Henryk," Mrs. Teczynska said, as she drew her little son toward the old man. Henryk leaned down and kissed the hand of the little fellow, and tears dimmed his eyes. He had been an old and trusted servant of the family for many, many years, long before Mrs. Teczynska had been born, and was now relegated to the position of doorkeeper, being much too infirm for other duties. Although it is not necessary to have a man sitting in attendance at the front door, yet it is the Polish custom in the upper circles, so as to give employment to as many peasants as possible, and for this service, they receive but a pittance, yet it suffices. It makes the aged feel independent, and that they are not a burden in the already overburdened family.



"Henryk leaned down and kissed the hand
of the little fellow"

What a happy reunion! Such hugging and bustle! All the children of the Ostrowski family were once more gathered together under the home-roof for the Christmas season, which was now at the beginning.

Mr. Ostrowski, the father, was a tall man of spare build; he had the kind, blue eye of the Slav and his heavy head of brown hair was tinged slightly with white. He wore a long coat, quite resembling a dressing-gown, edged with fur about the bottom and along the front, and tied about his waist with a long sash of crimson silk. This was the house costume of Mr. Ostrowski, who leaned toward the former luxurious style of dress in Poland.

His wife was a handsome woman, even in her elderly years; her complexion was as fresh and rosy as a young matron's, and her eye as soft a blue as in her younger days. The Polish women of culture do not age; they live a life of luxury and ease, and Time is gentle with them. But for all their seeming idleness they devote many hours of each day among their poor, and Mrs. Ostrowska was no exception to this rule.

Besides the father and mother, there was the younger brother, Peter, a tall, manly-looking fellow of about sixteen

years, and Marya, the young sister, who had just passed her fourteenth birthday. Then there was the married sister, Mrs. Lechowicz, her husband and two sons, Francis and Frederic, and the oldest brother, Jan Ostrowski, with his wife and two children, Ignace and Marcella. You may well believe there was much to tell each other, and a great deal of commotion, for the married children lived in dwórs of their own or in the city, and were separated, not only by distance, but by family cares and business interests, so that it was not more often than at the Christmas season they were able to meet.

Jan Teczynski was overwhelmed with so many cousins and aunts and uncles; he was but five years old, and had not made their acquaintance before. He gazed about him in wonderment at all he saw; he could not withdraw his big, blue eyes from the immense boar's head which decorated the chimney-piece, and he asked all sorts of questions concerning it. It amused the older children immensely to hear him ask who had killed it. When told his grandfather had done so, he was very proud to think that his grandfather had been so brave; then he wanted to know if the boar had hurt grandfather with his sharp, curved tusks; but Mr. Ostrowski laughingly told him he had not been harmed,

whereupon Jan seemed much relieved. But when he inquired if grandfather was sure the boar had been quite dead before he had cut off its head, the other children burst into roars of merriment. Jan didn't think it a matter to laugh over at all, but from that day he regarded his grandfather as one of the bravest men in the whole world.

The young folks now made off for sports of their own, while Mrs. Teczynska, much fatigued after her long and tiresome journey, went at once to her room to rest before luncheon should be served.

The maid-servant carried up the valises and bags of Mrs. Teczynska and set them down in the room that she had occupied from childhood. Fresh, hot water being brought by yet another maid, and cool drinking water placed upon the night-stand by the side of the great bed, the servants retired and left Mrs. Teczynska alone in her old, familiar room.

It was a very large room, as are all the rooms in Polish homes. The floor was beautifully inlaid in a fancy design with hardwoods of two colors, and polished so highly one had to walk carefully so as not to fall. Against one wall stood a magnificent stove of white glazed tile, with a door of

shining brass, most exquisitely designed, and which could be closed so tightly that not one bit of dust or ash could penetrate through into the room. The peculiarity of this stove was, that only half of it was in the room; the other half extended into the adjoining room, so that, in this manner, one stove did duty for two rooms, thus saving expense, space and chimneys. It reached, too, quite to the ceiling; but, as the ceiling was low, it was not as tall as many other European stoves.

And the bed! It looked quite like any other wooden bed, but what a covering! There were no sheets or blankets such as we have. Instead, there was a blue silk comforter of down, so light you would have thought there was nothing in it, daintily tied here and there with little strands of silk. This silk comforter was put over a white linen sheet, much larger every way than the comforter; the edges were then folded over the silk and buttoned to it, the button-holes being worked in the border of the sheet and the buttons placed upon the comforter. At the top, which we usually turn over the blanket, the sheet was shaped like a triangle. In the middle of the point was worked the monogram of the hostess, while the remainder of the space was filled with the

most elaborate and exquisite embroidery imaginable, done by the young peasant girls upon the estate. This was not a "company" sheet; no, indeed, not at all; the same kind was used every day in the week and in the year. The pillows, too, were covered with blue silk, and over this was buttoned, just to fit, a handsome pillow-case all inset with lace insertion so that the color of the silk beneath might show through. What a luxurious bed in which to sleep! It certainly was inviting.

In one corner of the room stood a small altar to the Holy Virgin, upon which stood freshly gathered flowers from the greenhouses of the estate, and wax candles were burning. As the majority of the Polacks are Roman Catholics, these altars are found in almost every home, each bedroom having its own altar for its occupant's special devotion.

Four large windows, opening inwards like double doors, looked over the covered veranda without, toward the fields stretching as far as the eye could see, covered now with their blanket of snow, while further yet lay great forests, the tops of whose trees were barely discernible in the dim distance.

Just below the windows lay a most magnificent garden, with fountains and bordered walks; but they, too, like everything else, lay under their blanket of winter's white.

The ponds beyond, which supplied the estate with fresh fish, were frozen solid, and here the children had gone for an hour's skating in the crisp air, while their childish voices carried up to where Mrs. Teczynska lay resting upon her couch.

CHAPTER III

The Sending of the Oplatki

At the luncheon table there was great excitement. Something was astir in the air.

"Take your time, children," Mr. Ostrowski said forcibly, as he watched their hurried anxiety. "Brother Paul will be here shortly; but there is p-l-e-n-t-y of time."

"We wish he had come before luncheon," spoke up Peter. "It is now almost too late for Cousin Frederic to receive his oplatki before Christmas."

"A few hours more or less, my son," Mrs. Ostrowska answered, "will make very little difference. We could not have Brother Paul come sooner because we were waiting for your sister to arrive. We all wanted to be together to receive the good Brother."

Turning toward her eldest daughter, Mrs. Lechowicz, she continued:

"Brother Paul, as well as the priest, has had his hands full

this winter. There has been a great deal of sickness among the poor."

"It has been so in our part of the country, too," replied the daughter. "It seems to be a bad year all round."

"The crops are poor; but we are thankful to say there will be sufficient for our own people. What the rest of Poland's poor will do, it is difficult to say. I had planned to take the children to Cracow for St. John's Night—"

"Oh, mother," interrupted the young Marya, "will you?"

"Don't interrupt, Marya; it is very bad manners. I was going to say," Mrs. Ostrowska continued, addressing her children, "I had planned to take you to the feast of St. John's Night in the City if all went well upon the estate. But I know you would not care to go and enjoy yourselves if there were sickness and distress here at home among our people."

"But June is so far away," the young girl pleaded, "there is yet lots of time for a good season."

"But illness lingers," the mother added.

"I will join you, mother," Mrs. Teczynska spoke up. "It will not be a long run up and Jan would love to see the celebration of the Wianki, I am sure."

"Let us all plan to go," added the younger married

daughter. "It would be great fun."

"And will you take us?" added a chorus of young voices from around the great table, while expectant faces beamed.

"Yes, all of you," the elders replied in one voice.

"What is it all about, mother?" Jan managed to say, after vainly endeavoring for some time to edge in his question.

"Once every year," Mrs. Teczynska replied, "in the city of Cracow, where we got off the train and took the sleigh to come up here, the people have a holiday. They call it the celebration of the Wianki, or wreaths, and it takes place on the twenty-fourth day of June, which is the eve of St. John's Night. They have fireworks and all sorts of gayeties."

"But what does it all mean?" the child persisted.

"Well," his mother continued, seeing that the child did not comprehend as the older children did, "many, many years ago there was a good and very wise king in Cracow named Krakus. He had a most beautiful daughter, Wanda, who was so handsome that the fame of her beauty travelled all over the country. Princes and noblemen from other lands sent their messengers to ask her hand in marriage; but the Princess Wanda did not care for any of them. At length, a fierce, determined German prince, named Rytyger, fell so

madly in love with the princess that he swore he would win her for his own. But the father of the princess had meantime died, leaving her in full possession of the kingdom; and, whether it was really the fair princess Rytyger craved, or the kingdom over which she ruled, we may not know for a certainty. However that may be, he sent his messengers to ask her hand in marriage, but the Princess Wanda promptly refused his offer. As soon as the envoys returned with the refusal, Prince Rytyger was more determined than ever to possess the Polish princess. He wrote her a most impertinent letter, demanding that she become his wife at once or else he would march into her domains and carry her off, whether she were willing or not. The Princess Wanda read the letter from the haughty German prince. She set her lips hard with firm determination. If he were determined, so was she. Without a moment's loss of time, she gathered her army together, marched out of Poland and into the country of the German prince. She sent word to him of her arrival, and added that she meant to give battle. The prince was very much surprised at this news, you may be certain; however, there was nothing to do but accept the challenge so long as he had been the one to open the argument. After the battle

was finished many of the Germans were left upon the field, while Wanda returned to her castle-fortress of Wawel in Cracow.

"Seeing there was no use to refuse the offers of marriage that were made her, and fearing that other foreign princes might come into her land and wage war against her subjects on her account, she jumped from the top of the great stone wall that surrounded her palace, and fell into the river Vistula, which runs at the foot. And ever since, the Polish people have commemorated her death by casting wreaths into the river, at about the spot where Princess Wanda jumped into the waters. This is the meaning of the feast of St. John's Eve celebration of the Wianki."

"I should love to see it," the little fellow said, after a few moments' silence. "Will you surely take me?"

"Yes, indeed, if the other little cousins go," his mother replied. "When I was a little girl, like your Aunt Marya here," she continued, glancing at her young sister, "I went to the celebration. And you will open your eyes wide, Jan, I'll tell you that."

"Oh, goody, I wish it was the twenty-fourth of June now."

"But we have the Christmas season now," his

grandfather spoke up. "That is much better, for we are all together. We have the fine snow for sleighing and snowballing. We have the ponds to skate upon, and we have—the Jaselki."

"What's that?" little Jan asked.

"Jan, dear," his mother said, "please do not ask so many questions. Let your grandfather finish before you interrupt."

"But he says so many things I don't know anything about," the child answered.

"That is right, Martha," Mr. Ostrowski said, "let the little chap learn. Of course he doesn't know what the Jaselki are, for he is too little to know everything. But that is a secret, Jan," the grandfather continued, as he shook a gentle finger at the boy. "You will see something wonderful at this Christmas season."

The maid entered; she said a few words in a low tone to Mrs. Ostrowska, and left the room.

"How we have lingered!" the grandmother said, as she rose from her seat at the table. "Brother Paul has been waiting some little time. Let us all rise to greet him!"

As they obeyed, the door at the farther end of the long dining-room opened, and a monk, clad in a long black robe

with a girdle of rope about his waist, stood upon the threshold. In his hand he held his black beaver hat, and under his arm was a small package upon which the children kept their eyes assiduously glued.

"Welcome, Brother Paul," Mr. Ostrowski said as he greeted the monk. "The little folks have been in a fever of impatience; you are well come."

"I hear the same story in every home," the monk replied, as he turned and smiled at the row of happy faces. "They are all anxious for their oplatki."

"Let us go into the library," Mr. Ostrowski said, as he threw open the heavy doors communicating with that room; "the fire burns brightly there, and you must be cold."

"It certainly is raw without," the monk replied. "We are to have a long, hard winter, I fear."

"We just arrived this morning, Brother Paul," Mrs. Teczynska said. "We had a dreadfully cold ride from Cracow. I thought little Jan's nose would be nipped."

"Come here, son, and let's see if Jack Frost got away with any of it," the monk said.

The little fellow obeyed with a very serious face. He had quite an awe for the brotherhood; he held up his face for

inspection.

"I believe it's all there," the brother laughingly said, as he examined the boy's serious face. "But you had a narrow escape."

Brother Paul drew up to the great table in the centre of the room, having sufficiently warmed his numbed hands at the welcome fire. Surrounded by the anxious, waiting children he untied the package he had brought. With keen interest they watched the monk draw forth a neat packet which he handed to Mr. Ostrowski, who untied it. Within, lay a quantity of small, round wafers, thin enough to be almost transparent, made from flour and water, upon each of which was impressed a religious picture. Upon one was the image of the Christ, another bore the resemblance of the manger, or of a saint.

"I shall get mine off right away," Peter said. "May I?" turning to his father.

Seeing there was no holding back the children's impetuosity, Mrs. Ostrowska handed the children some of the oplatki, which they at once proceeded to enclose in letters already waiting.

"I hope Cousin Frederic will get this before Christmas

Day," Peter said, "but it is pretty late."

The rest of the afternoon was spent in writing letters and sending off the oplatki or Christmas cards to such of the relatives as were unable to be present with the family at this season. It is as much an event in Polish families to send these cards as it is with us; they bear messages of love and good-will, although they have no verses upon them. The priest of the village has put his blessing upon them, and these blessings go forth to the dear, absent ones. No written sentiment is necessary, for the absent know that the home-folks are thinking of them. It is a beautiful custom, and if it should happen that any of you children should receive an oplatki at the Christmas season, you will know what it is meant to convey.

Perhaps some of you more observant readers have remarked the difference in spelling the name of Mr. Ostrowski and his wife. While Mr. Ostrowski's name ends in "i," his wife's name ends with an "a;" this is simply a peculiarity of the Polish language, being the masculine and feminine ending of the name.

CHAPTER IV

Christmas at the Dwór

Mr. Teczynski arrived the day before Christmas; business had detained him until then. Jan was delighted to see his father again, from whom he had never been separated so long. Three weeks seemed a very long time to him. He had had such a glorious time at grandfather's, though, with the new cousins and the uncles and the aunts, he had quite forgotten everybody and everything, except when bedtime came. Then he missed his father greatly, for there was no one to tell him his customary stories, and Papa Teczynski was a famous story-teller.

There was no one at home to receive Mr. Teczynski, except little Jan; the entire family had gone to the village to attend service. But then, Jan's father did not mind that; he was glad to be alone with his little son for a while; they had so many things to tell each other, and the time passed too rapidly. They did not even notice that the hour was getting

late and that the electric lamps were lighted, nor did they hear the return of the others from their devotions. There is no festival in the land of Poland which is observed with as much rigor and ceremony as that of the Christmas season. Almost the entire day is spent in fasting and prayer, after which comes the evening meal.

Scarcely were the family returned, and the greetings over between them and the new arrival, than dinner was announced. With great ceremony, they formed in line, the father and mother leading the way, and in this most formal manner the family procession passed through the high folding doors opening from the library into the immense dining-hall. There were few occasions during the year when the younger children were allowed the privilege of sitting at the dinner table with their parents; and these occasions were most awe-inspiring to them. But upon this Christmas Eve there was an atmosphere of reserve and restraint in the attitude of the elders which had its quieting effect upon the younger ones, as they brought up the rear of the line and seated themselves about the great table. At a glance, one could readily see that something was different from the ordinary course of events. The air was heavy with the scene

of fresh hay, which lay in a thick padding under the table cloth, and in various parts of the large room. Straw was upon the sideboard, straw upon the window-sills, and some was even sprinkled lightly about the highly polished floor, as though dropped carelessly.

The usually gorgeously decorated dining-table was now quite devoid of all ornamentation; not even a bouquet of flowers brightened the centre of the board. Christmas, for Polish families, means fasting and prayer, and not feasting; it is looked upon as a day apart for the observance of religious rites, and to keep before their minds the memory of their Christ and his life of self-denial and goodness.

There was no gayety in the conversation about the table during the meal; all was as solemn and reserved as though some great sorrow had descended upon the family. In almost absolute silence the various courses were brought in and partaken of. Meat was prohibited during this day, but, as if to make up for this deficiency, there were many courses of soups and fish, so that the bill-of-fare was exceedingly lengthy and somewhat tedious.

Not content with serving one kind of soup, there were as many as three upon this occasion, and it was no uncommon

thing to serve several more, in very pretentious homes where the head of the house did not consider it unseemly to waste of his plenty. There was a delicious soup made from almonds, then one called barszcz, which was made of fish, and a third made from the juice of beets, which had been allowed to ferment, giving the soup a very sour taste; and, while neither you nor I may care for this sort of broth, yet the Polacks are very fond of it, and have honored it by making it the national soup of the country.

The soup course finished, fish is served. There is tench and pike and carp, besides herring and several kinds of smaller fish, mostly from the great ponds just at the back of the manor-house. It might seem a bit monotonous to eat such quantities of fish at one meal, but each was served with a different kind of gravy or sauce, which quite changed the taste of the dish. Besides, there were vegetables which accompanied them, each differing from the other with each course: mushrooms, and lettuce and cabbages. Plebeian as it may sound to the ears of American children, who are brought up in such a luxuriant manner, the cabbage is a great factor in Polish menus; not being confined to the tables of the poor alone, either.

Salads are now served, with crisp lettuce or water-cress, and a most delicious dish known as "kutia," which is made from oats and honey with poppy seeds added, to give it zest. This is the national dish of the Lithuanians, who have annexed their province to that of Poland.

At last we have arrived at the dessert; but, as puddings and pies are unknown upon the Continent, dessert, or "sweets," as the Polacks call it, consists of fruit, both uncooked and conserved, and a variety of small cakes, or pierogi which are filled with almond paste, or, sometimes, cheese or other toothsome combinations such as poppy seeds, of which the Polacks are very fond.

The meal is finished; the hour draws near that marks the close of day. And now, as a last addition to the feast, the oplatki are broken, each with the other, just as we are accustomed to call out in the wee, small hours of the night, "Merry Christmas," and in this manner do the Polacks wish each other all the compliments of the season.

Mrs. Ostrowska arose from the table first; the children knew full well where she was going, and they eagerly hastened for their heavy wraps and fur caps. Then the little procession filed down the road to the bottom of the hill,

merrily singing carols and Christmas hymns, passing from house to house breaking the wafers with the peasants and wishing them all sorts of good things for the coming year. This custom brings master and mistress closer to the tenants, and forms between them a bond of brotherhood.

Mrs. Ostrowska stroked one young girl gently under the chin, as she said:

"This will be your last Christmas under the home-roof, Emilia?"

"I hope so," the girl replied blushingly, as she curtsied and kissed the finger-tips of her patroness. "Francois and I are to be married at the Easter time."

"And then the young sister Helena will find her young man?"

"I hope so," the young girl reiterated.

"We shall be on the lookout for some fine fellow for her," Mrs. Ostrowska said lightly. "There are some very fine young men over to the village at the east of the estate; we must see what we can do," and she moved on, the troop of children at her heels.

Their round of the village over, the whole party returned to the dwór, where they found a servant carrying away the

straw which had adorned the dining-hall.

The man stopped as he encountered the mistress of the house, and bowed his head, as if in apology.

"Our cow was taken ill last night, Madame," he explained guiltily. "We thought, perhaps, this might bring her back to health again. We need her milk for the babies. May I?" and he questioned his mistress' face hopefully.

"Take it and welcome," the latter replied kindly, "and may you realize your hopes." Well she knew the superstitions of the peasants in regard to the straw from the Christmas table, which was now supposed to be holy. They had been taught from childhood, and for centuries back from one generation to another had the story been handed down, that this straw possessed remarkable virtues and would not only cure illness in cattle but ward off evil spirits from their homes. It is a harmless delusion, and Mrs. Ostrowska did not interfere in any way with the beliefs of her people. She had even known them to tie the sacred straw about the trunks of the fruit trees, when scale would attack them, and if it chanced that they bore well the following year, they attributed it entirely to the efficacy of the straw.

The younger children were now sent off to bed, while the

older ones, with their parents, awaited the hour of Pasterka, or midnight mass.

Service over, in the dim light of early morning, the occupants of the manor made their way slowly homewards on foot. They passed groups of peasant girls, shawls over their heads, loitering on their way to their homes.

"For what are they waiting, mother?" Marya asked, as she noticed that the girls were evidently lingering for an object.

"They are waiting to accost the first young man they meet," the mother replied, "in order to learn his name."

"But what for?" asked Marya a second time.

"That is a peasant custom," the mother answered. "Whatever name is given her, she believes that that will be the name of the man she is destined to marry with. As the girls do not meet with many strangers outside of their own village, it is quite a certainty that they will eventually happen to wed with the one accosted."

"I should like to learn who my future husband will be," the girl said, somewhat in an undertone, scarce daring to voice her wish.

"Marya!" the mother reproved. "What ideas! There is no harm in a peasant girl stopping a stranger on the road upon

Christmas Eve; but for you to do so would be unpardonable."

"But I'm a child, mother, too," she persisted, "just as they are children. I don't see any harm in it. It's all in fun, anyway. Please let me," she pleaded, "just this once."

"No, Marya," the mother replied, in a tone of finality. "But you may draw near so as to listen to the girls as they address this young man who approaches around the turn," and the two moved closer toward the knot of village maidens, tittering and giggling among themselves, as they slowly wended their way along the road, half-lingering so that the eligible might overtake them, as if by accident.

"Good evening, sir," the eldest of them said, half timidly, almost afraid of her own boldness, for peasant maidens are modest, "and may I know your name?"

The young man stopped; he swept his fur cap from his head with a lordly air, and replied:

"With pleasure, mademoiselle. Thaddeus."

The village girls tittered; the young man replaced his cap upon his thick hair, and passed on. The "fun" was over until the next "victim" should appear for the next young lady. Every one understands this Christmas Eve custom, and no

one would think, even for one instant, of violating its freedom by forcing attention upon the unescorted young girls.

"It wasn't a bit pretty name at all," Marya said. "I'm glad I didn't ask him. I should not like to have my husband's name Thaddeus."

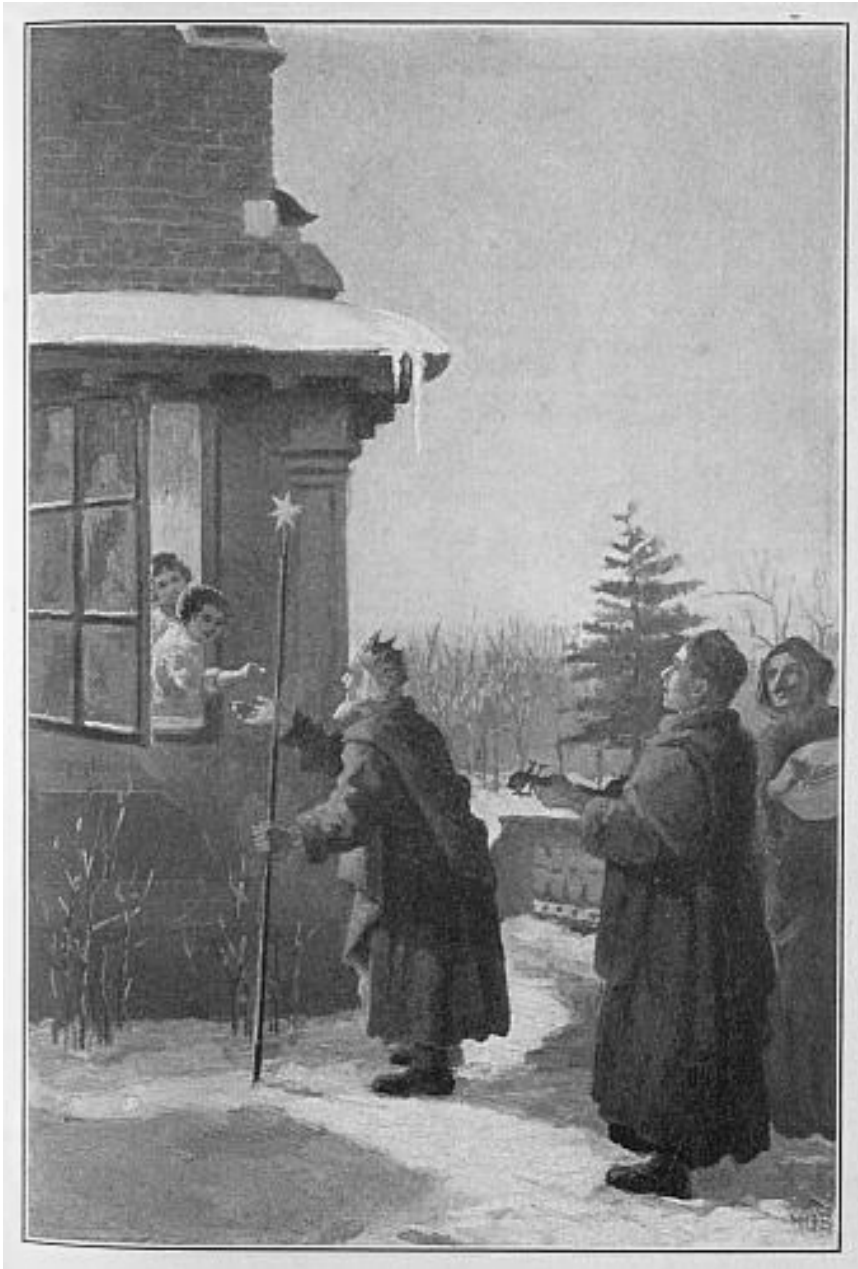
"Don't say that, Marya," the mother reproved gently, "for you know that one of Poland's grandest men was named Thaddeus; Kosciuszco, I mean."

"Yes, mother, I know," the young girl answered; nevertheless she knew it was not a name she would choose for her own particular swain were she able to make her choice. However, she wisely said nothing, but walked briskly along by her mother's side, believing that, perhaps, her mother had been quite right in the matter.

There was very little sleep, if any, for the family the remainder of the night, or rather, morning. No sooner were they arrived at their home and in their beds, than they were awakened by the shouts of the younger children, who pranced about the house in their night-robes in a most injudicious manner. There was music somewhere; some one was singing the kolendy, or Christmas carol. At length the

music was discovered to issue from beneath one of the windows in the rear of the house. Pressing their faces against the cold panes, the children saw below them a most wonderful sight. A group of men were singing as they accompanied themselves upon various instruments. Some of them were clad in long, flowing robes, with hair descending upon their shoulders, who represented characters in the Bible, at the time of Christ's life; others wore the aspect of birds, all decked out with gay plumage, and yet another man, the one who wore a golden crown upon his white hair, waved aloft a long wand, upon the very top of which rested a golden star which sparkled in the dim light of the frosty morning.

As soon as he saw the children at the windows he held out his hands, into which the little ones threw quantities of small coins begged from their elders. With profound thanks the procession moved on, still singing their kolendy, while the children crept back to their beds, but not to sleep. The Gwiazda, or "Star," had been too much excitement for their little heads, and for full an hour they talked in muffled voices about the wonderful Star of Bethlehem and the queer antics of the men in the cocks' feathers.



“The little ones threw quantities of small coins”

Christmas Day dawned; the fasting and penance were finished; merry-making could begin. But, unlike the little American cousin, the Polish cousin does not celebrate Christmas Day with a tree and gifts and romping. It is for him strictly a religious day; there is no gift-giving, these being reserved for his birthdays, which are made occasions for great festivity. And this custom prevails throughout nearly, if not all, the countries in Europe; the birthday is more thought of and celebrated with great gayety than any other holiday in the year.

The day wore on quietly. The older folks sat in the library about the roaring fire and chatted or read, while the younger ones spent their time out of doors, snowballing, sledding and skating.

After luncheon little Jan said:

"Grandfather, you never told me your secret yet, and Christmas Day is almost over."

"What secret?" asked the grandfather, somewhat astonished.

"We know," rang out a small chorus from the older ones.

"Don't you remember what you told me the day I came? You said I should see something wonderful; you told me the

name, but I don't remember, it was such a big one."

"Oh, yes," Mr. Ostrowski replied slowly, as he stroked his chin and a merry twinkle came into his eye. "The Jaselki. I had quite forgotten."

"Then we shall not have it," Jan said disappointedly.

"Oh, yes, you shall," his grandfather replied. "It will come just the same. I have already arranged for it. But I wonder what keeps them?" And he pulled out his watch and looked at it.

"The snow is very deep, and the roads bad," Mrs. Ostrowska said, as she looked out of the window toward the avenue of linden trees. "There is no one in sight yet."

"Maybe they won't come," Jan said doubtingly.

"They always do," his grandfather replied. "They haven't missed a single year. But it is only three o'clock; there is plenty of time."

"Will it come by the road?" Jan asked.

"Yes; that is the only way it can come," his grandfather said.

"Then I shall watch," the child said. "When I see them I shall call you."

Jan seated himself at the library window so that he might

be able to look far down the wide road leading to the entrance of the park. There was silence for a long time. Then he suddenly called out:

"What will they look like, grandfather?"

"They will come in a covered wagon," Mr. Ostrowski answered.

Silence again. After some little time, Jan called out excitedly:

"I see them; they have just come through the brama."

Such a jumping and scampering as there was then in the great house! There was no holding the children back from running out to the front porch to meet the arrivals. It was indeed a peculiar-looking crowd that made its appearance. A huge wagon, mounted on runners, most gorgeously decorated with tinsel of gold and silver, and covered with strings upon strings of tiny bells, was making its way slowly up the driveway. Had it been a little American child who had seen it, he would at once have remarked that it was a circus-wagon. The sleigh bells jingled merrily; and, as the wagon pulled up at the entrance of the manor, the driver smiled pleasantly at the children's welcome. He knew Peter and Marya well, for he had come every year to their home

upon Christmas Day to present his plays. He nodded to them and wished them a happy Christmastide; he bowed respectfully to the other children, with whom he was unacquainted, for he considered all children as his own peculiar property.

Before the wondering eyes of the excited children, the driver and his assistants set up the show. They watched them, with wide-opened eyes, light the numberless small candles about the stage arch; the gold and silver tinsel now sparkled out like a miniature fairy-land. The old horse would look around every little while, as though trained to do so, to see that everything was being done in an approved manner. This set the strings of bells to vibrating, so that their melody rang out over the snow, attracting the attention of the peasants in the village beyond, who promptly gathered to witness the exhibition.

Jaselki means a manger; and because these travelling showmen give scenes from the life of Christ they are called jaselki, or manger-men. For over an hour the children, not to mention the grown folks, were fascinated by the miracle-play. Then, the entertainment over, the men were ushered into the servants' quarters, where they received warm food

and drink, after which they packed up their wagon and departed for Cracow, where they were to give more representations during the evening upon the rynek, or public square.

It is only at Christmas that these plays are given; during other seasons of the year these showmen present other sorts of entertainments, so that from one year's end to the other, they travel about in their gorgeously decorated wagons, sometimes on wheels, sometimes on runners, living in the open air, the life of nomads. Christmas Day is over. Night descends and quiet reigns at the dwór. The great house is early wrapped in slumber, and thus ends the holiday season.

CHAPTER V

The Visit to the Gaily Painted Cottage

A day or two later, the guests departed, and the Ostrowski family took up its daily routine. The boy Peter resumed his studies under the care and instruction of his tutor, while the little Marya returned to the guidance of her governess, for each child in a wealthy family in Poland has his or her own tutor or tutoress. Child life in upper circles is quite a thing apart from the lives of the grown-ups. Their hours are widely different; they dress simply and live simply, receiving instruction in the arts and languages; the girls to be fine housekeepers and womanly; the boys to be courteous, manly and well versed in those matters which pertain to the care and interest of the estate which is later to devolve upon their shoulders.

Mrs. Ostrowska never breakfasted with her children. She rose about eleven o'clock, had her morning meal in her own rooms, and after tending to her household duties, devoted

the better part of the afternoon to the needs of her peasantry. She was a very charitable woman, as are all the upper-class Polacks, and devoted many hours among these people. She had sewing classes for the young girls, where they were taught to do, not only the plain sewing necessary for their own use, but embroidery of the most exquisite kind, so that they might employ their idle moments, during the long, cold winter days, in making articles to sell in the cities. Furthermore, she established cooking classes; she aided the sick; and doctors being very far away, the mistress of the manor was usually called upon in case of illness among the peasantry; even the children were taught that most useful and beneficial branch of science, first aid to the injured. Were it not for the generosity and far-sightedness of the landed proprietors in looking after the interests and education of these peasants, there would be most abject poverty and suffering among them.

The Ostrowski estate is one of the oldest in Poland; it numbers fully four hundred thousand acres; and, in order to grasp the immensity of this, you must know that one ordinary city block measures five acres, so that it would require about six hundred and twenty-five blocks each way

to cover this enormous estate. And you may be quite certain, it is no small task to properly look after and make profitable an estate of this size.

There is a distillery which distils spirits from the potatoes raised upon one portion of the estate; there is a sugar refinery, which transforms the juicy red beets into snowy white sugar; there are cotton-mills, which are kept going by the thousands of bales of soft, fluffy cotton grown upon the place; there are endless factories and mills of every description, all under the care of the master of the manor. He would much prefer not to add these industries to his business cares, but he is a charitable man; he knows that to every rich man there are thousands of poor. If the beets and the potatoes, the grain and the cotton were allowed to go out in their raw state, for manufacture elsewhere, there would be many workmen thrown out of employment. Perhaps these same poor might be compelled to seek their fortunes in our own beloved land, and this would mean the loss of many valuable citizens, who will be wanted some day, to stand up for Poland and help her win back her lost liberty. Therefore, Mr. Ostrowski, having a clear head, decided to use his products upon his land, and, in this way, he gave

employment to thousands of families, for not only were the men put to work at the heavier tasks, but the women helped out with the spinning and the lighter tasks.

The villages attached to the Ostrowski estate are model ones. They are naturally situated at great distances apart, each village clustering itself about the particular factory near by. The huts nestle snugly at the foot of the hill upon which stands the dwór, as if they craved protection from their superior. In groups of two and threes they huddle together, these low-roofed, whitewashed, plastered houses, a door in the centre, a window at either side affording scant light to the two rooms within. The European peasants seem greatly to object to admitting light into their home; perhaps it is but the lingering custom of barbaric days when man feared to present an entrance into his sacred precincts to a possible enemy; perhaps it is but the relic of an ancient law, but recently repealed in France, that every opening, be it door or window, giving upon the street or road, is taxed; and if there is one bugbear in the vocabulary of the peasant, it is "taxes."

A bit of a garden lies in front of each home, while at the rear is the truck garden, where enough vegetables are raised

to last during the winter season. Some of the more prosperous tenants possess a cow, or a pig, or perhaps even a goose; nevertheless, whatever the size of the family, brute and otherwise, they all live in harmony and happiness together in the two low-ceiled rooms. The roof of thatch, covered with its thick coating of mud, moss-grown, tones the scene to one of great picturesqueness, as seen from the distance.

Toward one of these huts Mrs. Ostrowska bent her steps this bright, sunny morning in early January. It was much like all the other huts in the village, but infinitely gayer. Over the doors and windows were broad bands of red and blue and yellow painted with a rude hand, with dabs of triangles and other geometrical forms. There were all sorts of attempts at decoration. Mrs. Ostrowska smiled as she viewed the fresh colors, and knocked loudly at the heavy wooden door.

It was opened by an elderly woman, whose gray hair fell carelessly from its loose coil upon her head. She was greatly surprised to see the mistress of the manor, but motioned her graciously to enter.

"Good morning," Mrs. Ostrowska said, as she stepped into the smoky atmosphere of the room, "and how do you

find yourself this morning, Mrs. Gadenz?"

"Oh, very well, thank you, Madame, except that the little Henryk is not so well; his cough is worse."

"I must have the doctor look after him when he makes his rounds," the mistress answered. Then she added, "I see by the decorations upon your home that Helena is to be allowed to receive visits from the young men. Any prospects of a husband yet?"

"No," the woman replied. "Thad put the colors on just before Christmas, so there hasn't been much time for the young men to know that Helena is old enough to have callers. Now that Emilia is to be married at the Easter time, we thought it better to get her sister started."

"She isn't fifteen yet, is she?"

"No," answered the peasant, "but then there are so many of us we must not keep them all at home. Some must make way for the younger ones. I did it, and my daughters must do so, too."

"You were married very young, were you not?" Mrs. Ostrowska asked kindly, not meaning to be inquisitive, but Mrs. Gadenz was a comparative stranger upon the estate; that is, she was not born there, as so many of the other

peasants had been; she had come with her husband and small children from other parts to find work in the distillery of Mr. Ostrowski.

"At thirteen," the peasant woman replied proudly.

She was now in her thirty-eighth year, although she appeared much older; taking up her wifely burdens at such a tender age, so common to the peasants of Poland, had made her seem much older. But despite her faded cheeks and hair fast turning gray, she was strong and active, and the fire of the Slav still shone in her eye.

The three or four younger children, ranging from ten to three, were playing upon the floor, tumbling one another about over the cat and her kittens, and frolicking with the shaggy-coated dog, who was monopolizing the warmest corner of the great stove.

"Be quiet, children," the mother spoke sharply, as she reproved the boisterous youngsters. "Don't you know that the lady of the manor is here?"

"Let them play," the lady interposed, "they get but little of it, at best."

Meanwhile, Emilia had left her duty of stirring the porridge on the great plaster stove and withdrawn into the

only other room. In a moment she returned, followed by the younger sister, who approached the mistress of the dwór and respectfully kissed her hand.

"I wish to be the first to congratulate you," the great lady said, "upon being out in the world now. You are, indeed, growing to be quite a young lady. Not yet fifteen, and waiting for a lover. I want you to come up to the manor Thursday afternoon with Emilia. I have some sewing for you, and perhaps we shall be able to fill out that linen chest so that you may find a most superior husband."

The young girl blushed and thanked her benefactress kindly, promising to be on hand promptly. Then she retired to the next room to finish her tasks there.

"I'm glad to see you so housewifely," Mrs. Ostrowska said, as she watched the young Emilia move about the room, stirring the great pot of porridge one moment, while in the next she was tending to the little wants of the younger ones. "Jan will have need of a good cook."

Emilia blushed deeply and her face brightened up; into her soft blue eyes came a look of tenderness, for was she not thinking of her own dear one, beloved Jan, to whom she was to be married at the Easter-tide? And these latter days she

was indeed busy with the last preparations; there was much left to do, for she herself was to make the wedding gown.

"You will be glad to have your own little home, Emilia?" the lady queried kindly.

"Yes," came the quick reply. "There are so many of us, and the house is very crowded. It will be far better when I have a home of my own."

Emilia set the iron pot on the back of the stove, where its contents might keep warm until the visitor had departed, when the children might then have their midday meal. She turned to still the whimpering of the little child in the far corner, stretched upon the straw, the child with the cough.

"You are nearly ready for the wedding day?" continued the interlocutor of the young girl, as the latter stooped to pick up the child and hold him in her lap.

"Almost. There is yet the wedding gown to make, besides some small household things not quite ready. Oh, how I wish the day would hasten!" she added, with a long-drawn sigh, drawing the young child's fair head closer to her breast and pressing a warm, tender kiss upon the glossy curls.

Mrs. Ostrowska could understand why. She regarded the young girl carefully. She knew that the poor have very few

pleasures, that the older must always care for the younger, and that young girls crave merriment and company. With a house full of young children, the mother away all day in the mills or the fields, it devolved upon her, the eldest, to manage the little household, to hush the sobs of the offended baby, or bind up a hurt finger; she it was who prepared the meals for the many mouths, who washed the few necessary articles of apparel, and the common every-day round of family cares was distasteful to her simply because she had no recreations interspersed among them, for we all know the old adage, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Mrs. Ostrowska understood very well the wants of her people; it was for this reason she came among them every day; seeing an opportunity here to lighten the burden of one young girl, or helping a talented young boy to gain instruction in the art or trade that appealed to him. She was attempting to teach her peasantry that each one should be given the chance for which he so longed; and that he should not be brought up to follow such and such a calling simply because his father had followed the same calling from boyhood, which he, in turn, had followed after his father.

The elder peasants sometimes resented this interference

in their family affairs, as they were sometimes wont to call it, in moments of peevishness, but Mrs. Ostrowska did her good work quietly and unostentatiously; she helped the marriageable girls fill their linen chests, which somewhat ameliorated the feelings of the elders toward her, for it meant a saving of much expense to them; she introduced social etiquette in her sewing circles on Friday mornings; she taught the valuable science of aiding the sick and injured so that there should be less illness among the poor; for rather than spend their hard-earned pence for medical services they will suffer uncomplainingly. Furthermore, she was slowly making progress in instilling into them the need and benefits of sanitation in their homes.

Every week Mr. Ostrowski made the rounds of his estate on horseback, to inspect the cottages which he took such pride in; he argued with the tenants to compel them to maintain these homes in cleanliness; for it is a difficult matter to keep things ship-shape when a dozen or more often occupy two or three rooms, to make no mention of the four-footed occupants, or the feathered tribe.

"I want you to come up to the dwór Thursday afternoon with Helena," Mrs. Ostrowska said, after a long silence.

"You can begin your gown then, and you two sisters can work together."

"I should love to," the young girl replied, as her face brightened. She was glad of the opportunity to get away from the confinement of the hut and the household duties for a short time, and this meant an afternoon of extreme pleasure for her. All the peasant girls loved to be invited to the manor, for a cup of warm, delicious tea served with lemon, and pierogi, those most delectable cakes filled with almond meal which were such luxuries to them, awaited them.

"I have a woman coming from Cracow," Mrs. Ostrowska continued, as she rose to leave, "who is bringing some very pretty little trinkets from the city. I should like to have you there to make a selection of such as you would care to have."

"You are more than kind," the girl replied, in a low voice. "You are always thinking of our pleasure and happiness."

"That is my duty," the older woman answered; "you are all my children, and I must give you as much happiness as I can, for some day you will be beyond my care and protection, and will have no one but your Jan to look after you."

Again the girl blushed a deep red, and the tender look returned to her soft eyes at the mention of her fiancé. She escorted her patroness to the door of the cottage and closed it after her. Then she resumed her tasks about the kitchen, giving the little ones their meal of barszcz and a slice cut from a cake of cabbage which had been pressed into a solid loaf.

Mrs. Ostrowska was glad to be in the clear, crisp air once more, after the stifling atmosphere of the cottage, for her peasants were slow to learn the value of ventilation. As she continued her way down the road toward the manor-house, she thought of her "young people," as she called them fondly, for she took a personal interest in each of them, whether large or small, girl or boy.

She reviewed their lives, as they live them from one generation to the other. How they roll and toss upon the floor of their cabins or upon the greensward, in unconscious bliss of childhood. How they attain the age of youth when they must begin to help share the burdens of the elders either in the fields or the mills, if they be boys, or in spinning and caring for the helpless ones at home, if they be girls. How they grow up to manhood and womanhood with very

little time for pleasures and holidays, for all hands must take hold that the weight may not fall upon one. How finally, the young girls attain the age of fifteen or more, when they are allowed to consider the question of marriage. Then comes to them courters, and love enters into their lives, to brighten the eye and redden the cheek. They live for months and months upon the delights they will experience in attending church, the wedding procession, and the carrying-off of the bride; then the settling down in their own nests. After that, they are no longer helpers in the household, they are the mainstays of their own homes, and they realize then what it really means to be home-makers. They take up their cares and their duties; they arise early, but then, they have always been used to that; they must spin and knit, and sew and darn, and there are no other fingers to help them. For many years they must do all, until the little fingers are big enough and strong enough to aid. Sometimes, they must go out into the forest and gather fagots for their fires so that the little one may not suffer from the chill; they must learn the wonderful art of making a few pence do duty of many. And year by year passes; they see their daughters grow up to that age when they, in turn, must leave their homes for homes of

their own; they see their sons going away to the army or to other lands, perhaps, to seek their fortunes; and thus, from generation to generation, they continue in this routine, living in memory, throughout those days when their lives are filled with busy cares, that day, so long ago, when they drove to the village church, the bridal veil falling about their slender shoulders, the wedding supper and the gay dance, and the clamor of voices as they rolled away with their loved ones in the village cart for the honeymoon. And all the burdens of their lives, all the toil, all the care and the endless sameness are more than compensated for by that one glorious day of their existence—their wedding day.

Mrs. Ostrowska planned and planned how she could educate these peasants in such wise as to fit them for more than mere care-takers; that they might learn a little of the refinements of life, and that, by education, they might gradually raise themselves to a higher and better plane. Her work was slow, but she felt that already she could see signs of having accomplished something material of betterment in their lives.

CHAPTER VI

Carnival Season

January has passed, and February is ushered in with the Feast of the Candles, or Candlemas Day, which takes place upon the second day of the month. This is one of the most devout religious celebrations in the land, for the peasants believe, were they to forget this ceremony even once, that their villages would be devastated by the wolves which prowl about over the plains in search of food when the ground is covered thick with snow, and it is difficult for them to find sustenance. Long years before, the villages were not as frequent, nor as well protected as they now are; therefore, it did happen that the wild beasts would descend in droves upon the homes of these poor people, who were powerless to drive them away. Sometimes, these voracious animals would even carry off the peasants' children before their very eyes. Consequently, as the peasants were unable to cope with the enemy, they must seek assistance somewhere, and

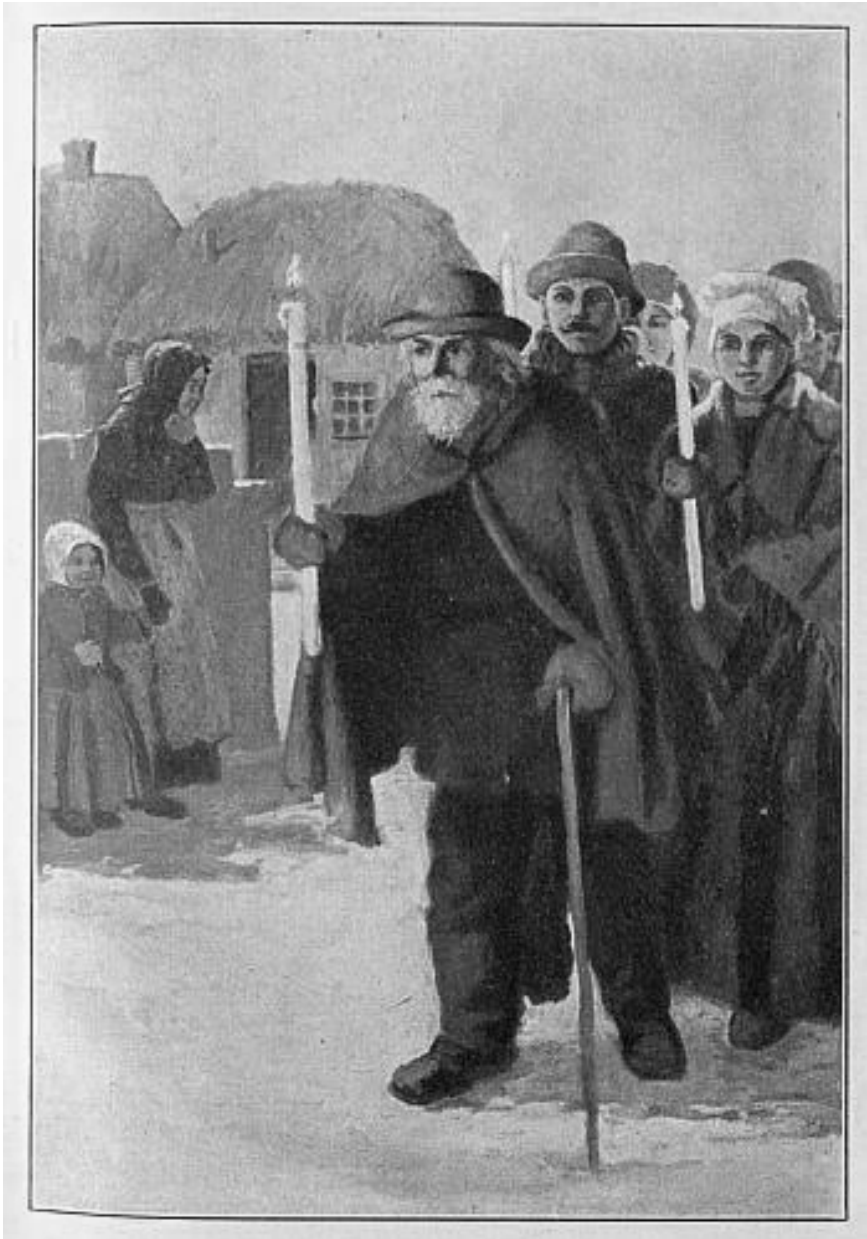
where more naturally than of their patron saint? This chanced to be the good St. Michael; but even he was at times without sufficient power to repel the advances of these beasts. Therefore, with one accord, the villagers banded together and made a vow to offer up their prayers to the Virgin Mother. They pleaded with her, on bended knees, in the village church, to ward off this dread enemy and to send them protection. Whether the prayer was effective or not is a question. But the story goes that the Holy Mother seized a lighted candle in her hand, and holding it in such a manner as to send the bright flame in the faces of the animals that preyed at the very borders of the village, so frightened them that they turned tail and fled, leaving the peasants in peace and security, for wild beasts do not take kindly to fire. It was because they were so miraculously saved from this dreadful menace that the people thenceforth celebrated the day each year, which is known as the Gromnice. And to-day, when they hear the familiar voices of their tormentor in the far distance of the woods, they mutter in their half-waking sleep, "In Thy care, O Mary," and they leave the rest of the responsibility to their intercessor.

Early in the morning of the second of February, the

peasants begin to congregate in the village square, which is the usual meeting place on all occasions of public demonstration. Each one, whether he be an old, bowed man or a tiny tot just able to stand, holds in his hand a candle, whose light falls upon his face all lit up with religious fervor. The procession formed, the march begins to the church, the oldest leading.

It is not the custom of European churches to provide pews for the worshippers; consequently, unless one is able to afford the luxury of a low-seated chair upon which to kneel, for the chairs are never used to sit upon, he must content himself with kneeling upon the hard, cold stone floor. It is truly an imposing sight to see the tall aisle of the church lighted by the flicker of hundreds of candles, the peasants, in their vari-colored garments, kneeling devoutly upon the floor, heads bowed. It is very real to them, this service for their deliverance from the fangs of the wolf; and so strong is their faith that they even place the blessed candles, after the ceremony is finished, safely away in some treasured chest or upon their own private altar, that they may serve them in time of sickness, trouble or any calamity.

But woe betide the one whose candle blows out! Evil is



"The procession formed, the march begins
to the church"

certain to follow in his footsteps; from that moment, he believes himself a doomed man. Should it prove to be the candle of a young girl, perhaps one upon the verge of her wedding day, it would instantly throw her into hysterics, for she would know to a certainty that she will never get a husband. And what a disgrace she would be in the eyes of the whole village! A girl without a husband, an "old maid," as commonly known in our parlance, would be an unpardonable offence to the relatives, who would look askance at her, so strongly is the idea of marriage imparted to them. It is quite as much of a disgrace for a woman to remain unmarried, among the Polish peasantry, as it is for a man to have no home of his own. When a Polish peasant dies, he usually leaves behind him a small bit of ground, upon which stands his cottage with its tiny garden-space. This is partitioned equally among the man's children, be they many or few.

But all men are not fortunate. It sometimes happens that illness will rob a man of his little he has saved during his years of toil, or careless habits, perhaps, will dwindle his patrimony to almost nothing, so that when at last he leaves this world, he has nothing which may be divided among his

children. But the peasants do not take these matters into consideration at all. They have one code and they can see no other way of looking at things. If a child has been willed no patrimony, then he must get one of his own, for he is looked down upon as thoroughly worthless who is compelled to find lodgings in the home of a stranger. These men are known as kormorniki, from the word komora, meaning room. In Poland a kormorniki has about the same reputation among his companions as a tramp has among respectable people in America.

After Candlemas Day comes the Carnival week, which is the week, as you all know, preceding Lent. As a final respite before the forty days of fasting and prayer which will follow so soon, the people allow themselves all sorts of liberties and gayeties. Balls are given, "hunts" are on, and joy reigns supreme, not only in the city, but in the remote country places.

Again the manor-house is alive with brilliant lights and many faces. The owners of adjoining estates, with their wives and grown-up sons and daughters, friends of the family, from quite remote parts even, are gathered together for one week of holidays. It is a pleasure to see such wit and beauty

gathered together under one roof; for Polish women are almost all handsome, with their soft eyes, their beautiful complexions and their glossy, dark hair. Their manners are a marvel, and their bearing graceful and easy. They are capital company and well informed on all the topics of the day, so that conversation never lags, nor are they obliged to fall back upon the inevitable "cards" for amusement. With them the art of conversation has not died out, nor the art of entertaining.

The snow lay thick upon the ground; the branches of the tall fir trees were clothed in a heavy coating of whiteness. The sky overhead was a dull, leaden color; but the guests at the manor-house were pleased with the wintry conditions, for it but aided them in the "hunt" that was "on" that morning.

Breakfast finished, a hearty affair of meat, cheese and beverages of various sorts, the sleighs drew up to the portico with boisterous jangling of sleigh-bells and champing of horses' bits; the thoroughbred animals pawing in impatience to be off in the crisp, frosty air. Gay with red tassels, which swept the front dash of the heavy sleighs, and joyful with the chime of the tiny bells, the party drove off to

the neighboring woods, where lay, in unconscious innocence of their fate, the fleet deer. The chill of the winter's morning did not affect the spirits of the party in any degree, for they were all snugly wrapped in thick fur robes, and large fur caps completely swathed their heads, so that nothing visible remained of them but their vivacious eyes and their ruddy noses.

Along the broad road the sleighs sped, in single file, past the peasant village around the bend of the hill, and off toward the forest stretching miles ahead of them, the tall tops of the trees nodding a "good morning" to them as they approached. Among the firs and oaks the sleighs were soon lost to sight, winding in and out among the dark trees until the wagon-road came abruptly to an end and only a path stretched in front. It was but the work of a few moments to clear a considerable circle, and light the huge bonfire around which every one gathered, stretching out their half-benumbed hands. Such a chattering and rumpus! Instead of grown-ups, you might have imagined them to be a bunch of school-children just out for recess. But Polish aristocracy understand how to enjoy themselves under all conditions.

Not long did they tarry about the camp-fire. It was not

for this they had taken the long, chilly drive. Gathering together their equipment, and shouldering their guns, off they tramped through the heavy underbrush; only a few of the more delicate ladies remained by the warmth of the cheery flame.

Slowly, slowly they made their way cautiously, until they came within sight of the tiny tracks, for the freshly fallen snow was a sorry telltale for the "game."

Shivering, but happy under their load of game, the party returned a couple of hours later, to find everything prepared for the ensuing meal. The great iron pot hung steaming over the glowing coals, the aroma of something therein greeting their nostrils with delight. For all were famished and in good mood to enjoy a camp dinner. It seemed but a matter of a few minutes before the cook and his assistants had the game ready for the steaming sauce which awaited it in the iron pot; and while the company regaled themselves with jokes and talk of the day's sport, the sauce bubbled and boiled, but tantalizing the group about the fire. However, all things come to those who wait, and it really was not such a great wait before they were all "falling-to" with keen appetites. The cuisine was excellent, and the gamey meat had a relish all its

own.

But now the party must hasten home. Too long have they lingered among the pine trees, and much longer yet could they tarry, were there not other arrangements for the evening. But dinner was awaiting them at the dwór; and at nine o'clock, as the dining-hall filled with the gay company, in evening dress, you scarce would have recognized them as the same persons who had gathered about the camp-fire among the pine trees but a few hours previously.

There is always time for everything in Poland, for the rich. The dinner lengthened itself out until well toward eleven o'clock. Then came the "grand ball," for this is Ash Wednesday, the last day of gayety before the Lenten season begins.

What a delight it is to watch the Polish men and women dance! It comes naturally to them, and I really believe they would much prefer dancing to any other occupation. While the manor-folks confine themselves to the more conventional forms of the dance, down in the village the peasants dance to the wild mazurkas and sing weird folk-songs. But in hut or mansion, there is gayety abroad this last night of freedom; a short hour, and then, Lent, fasting,

prayer for forty days, observed in most rigorous manner.

Forty days, nearly six weeks, pass after all, and before the Lenten days are two-thirds over, preparations are already begun for the Easter day. Those indeed are busy times in the culinary quarters at the dwór. Such heaps and heaps of food as are prepared in the great kitchens! Such stacks and stacks of bread as are baked in the huge ovens, so different from our own cook-stoves. Gas stoves are unknown in Poland; all the ovens are brick affairs, such as are used by bakers, in to which great logs of heavy wood are placed. And, when the bricks have been heated to the degree necessary for the food which is to be cooked, the fire is withdrawn by long rakes of iron and this heat is retained for a long enough time to bake.

The Saturday before Easter the table is set in the long dining-room. This table presents quite a different appearance from that of the Christmas table. Now there is every sort of decoration one could wish for. Hot-house flowers everywhere; colored Easter eggs, just as we have, fruit, and sugar lambs. We American folks can scarce conceive of such lavishness in articles of food. Not only is there a young pig served whole upon a gayly decorated platter, but there are, at intervals the length of the great

table, immense roasts of all kinds; hams with accompanying sauces, beef, mutton, and not even the "sweets" are forgotten.

All being in readiness, the village priest enters and places his blessing upon the food which graces the groaning board. This is really quite a serious custom, this blessing of the food, the houses and everything that pertains to existence. The peasants are most superstitious in this, and would no more dare to enter a new home or even a theatre which had not received this blessing at the hands of the priest or bishop, than they would purposely run into danger.

Easter day itself is quiet. There is the heavy dinner in the early part of the day, when Easter wishes are bestowed upon one and all, even the giving of Easter eggs, as we do, not being omitted.

And now dawns Easter Monday. The religious ceremonies are finished; the Sabbath has passed, and on Monday may begin the merry-making once more. The Polacks are very fond of life and merriment. They take advantage of every occasion upon which to indulge in relaxation from work, and always, in a quiet way, they get the most out of living that is possible. Just as we celebrate

Hallowe'en with pranks and games, so the Polacks celebrate the Smigus on Easter Monday. Among the peasantry, the jokes are a trifle rougher than in upper circles, but they are always good-natured, and never do they allow themselves to overstep, even in the slightest degree. The Smigus is, indeed, a merry romp.

Watch this jaunty little chap as he whistles gayly on his way to the home of his adored one. Much courage does it take to venture forth such a night as this. But when one goes to visit her, he cares not; he is only too proud to display his courage, for will not she love him the better for it? Swish! The whistling is stopped. A series of muffled sounds, and the young man regains his equilibrium once again. He journeys on, but not quite so merrily. His teeth chatter just a little in his head, and he walks a trifle quicker. For the water was cold, and it is not very comfortable to be drenched unawares. Nevertheless, he feels himself more or less of a martyr for her sake, and he carries his head high with self-satisfied pride.

And hark! There is tittering somewhere. Now we can trace it to the village well. Let us go and enjoy the sport. My, but what a screaming! It fairly makes one's ears tingle. We

hasten our steps, for we know there are girls mixed up in this affair; their shrill, nervous voices proclaim it upon the still, clear air of the night. As Helena and her two young friends from across the road were making their way to the public well, they, too, were drenched in exactly the same manner as the young man had been but a moment before. But, then, Helena and her friends should have known better than to venture out upon Easter Monday evening. Who can say but that they rather enjoyed the experience? However, they had their reward, for the young gallants, good-hearted men if somewhat rough, filled the pitchers for the maidens and carried them to the doors of their homes upon their own stout shoulders. And they all laughed heartily at the joke. Perhaps, who knows, but that they might meet their future husbands here?

While the peasants amuse themselves in these harmless, jolly pranks, the occupants of the dwór enjoy similar ones, but somewhat differently. There, the young men are more courtly. Catching their prey unawares, they shower her with delicate cologne-water, or twine gayly colored ribbons about her neck, making her their captive. And thus, in hut and manor-house, passes Easter Monday.

But you must not believe that the sports are all confined to the country-side. Indeed not. The city folks have their own form of entertainment, and in the City of Cracow there is observed a most peculiar custom known as Renkawka or the Sleeve.

In very olden times, I believe about the year 560 a. d., there lived in the south, among the Carpathian Mountains, a very unimportant chief named Krakus. He was a good man, a most unusual thing in that age; therefore everybody loved him, and that was a great honor, because the times were warlike and people cared more for a chief who showed himself brave but fierce than they did about one who was gentle and kind. It so happened that Krakus made a journey to the north. He came to a fine hill, about whose foot ran a broad, clear river called the Vistula. As he was looking for a site upon which to build himself a fortress, he decided this was just the very place for his. But he found it one thing to wish and quite another thing to obtain. The hill was guarded by a fierce dragon who kept watch, day and night, that no one might take it away. However, Krakus was a brave man, and he longed so intensely for the hill, especially now that he knew he ought not to have it, that he decided to fight the

dreadful dragon. Therefore, he took his trusty sword and shield, mounted the hill, fought the monster and conquered it. Had he not done so, there would have been no story. He then set to work to build his castle upon the very top of that impregnable hill, with the beautiful river running around its base. He called the fortress-castle the Wawel, because that was the name of the hill upon which it stood.

This castle of Krakus still is standing, but it is in a sad state of ruin. However, the Russian government, to whom it now belongs, is putting it in repair, so that it may present the same appearance of grandeur and splendor that it did in the days of good King Krakus.

You all know what a castle is; but perhaps there are few of you who understand what it means when applied to an ancient stronghold. The Wawel castle really included quite a small village inside its massive walls, for here the chief or king, with his retainers and his army, were wont to lock themselves safely in at close of day, that the enemy, who was always lurking in wait in those times, could do them no harm. It is here, to this Wawel, that Mrs. Ostrowska had promised to take the children in the June time, upon St. John's Eve, to witness the ceremony of the Wianki.

Now, when King Krakus died, his people mourned him exceedingly. They erected a huge mound outside the city on the further side of the river in his honor. The peasants wore a sort of tunic, at that time, with very wide sleeves, much like the sleeves worn by Japanese women. It was in these convenient sleeves they carried the earth with which to erect the mound, hence the ceremony takes its name Renkawka or Sleeve.

It is a peculiarity of the Polish peasant that, once a custom is established, it is never abandoned, even though the necessity has long since passed away. I doubt very much if any of those who participate in the Renkawka could tell you why the custom is observed; nevertheless each Easter Monday they gather about the mound, dressed in these old-fashioned garments with wide sleeves. They no longer carry earth with them, as in the old days, however; they bring nothing, but they return with full sleeves, for it has developed into a custom for the rich to send the food which has been left from the Easter feast, that it might be distributed among the needy.

CHAPTER VII

The Village Wedding

Some few days after Easter, while the children at the dwór were reading to their mother in the library, the clatter of hoofs was heard upon the hard road without. Marya jumped up from her chair and ran, with fleet steps, to the front window overlooking the entrance-porch. Such a clatter and racket as there was! One would almost imagine himself back in the days of post-horses and outriders. There, under cover of the carriage entrance, were four gayly dressed young peasants, proudly seated upon slick horses, who were stamping their feet and neighing most strenuously.

"Mother," cried Marya excitedly, "see what's here! Quick!"

Mrs. Ostrowska smiled, but did not hasten, for she well knew the meaning of this hubbub. This was the formal invitation to the krakowich, the wedding of Emilia. She approached the French window and stepped out upon the

wide veranda, and she smiled a welcome to the druzbowie, who had come to extend their best wishes from the bride and the groom, and all their relatives, to the mistress and master of the manor, together with their family and their guests, and to request their presence at the wedding of the fair Emilia at the village church at noon.

After Mrs. Ostrowska assured the best men of their acceptance and that they all would be most pleased to accept the kind invitation, the four young men rode gayly down the sloping driveway and disappeared at the bend of the road, their gorgeous feathers flowing free in the breeze. And only the clatter of their horses' feet were heard in the distance.

In great state, the family coach drew up to the entrance-porch some time later and the Ostrowski family drove off toward the home of the bride. It seemed as though the entire populace had turned out for the occasion. Such a crowd as there was gathered before the tiny home! And such colors! And yet more people pouring out of the one small door of the humble cottage. One would scarce believe it possible for so small a space to hold so many persons! But no one asks or wishes much room upon such a festal occasion as this; and there was nothing but smiling faces, bright eyes, and gay

colors to be seen.

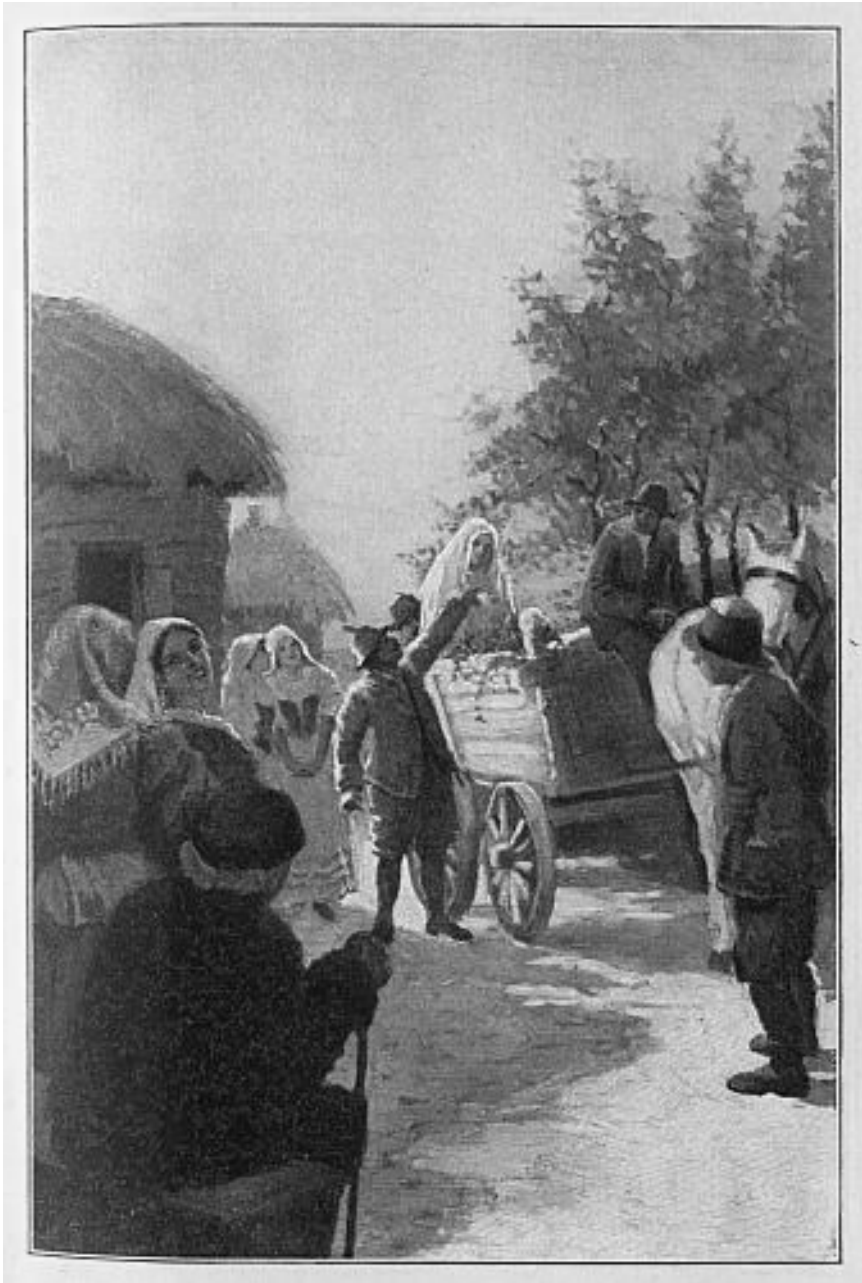
One wondered, too, where the simple peasant girls could have obtained such gorgeous raiment. There were black velvet gowns, all tight-fitting, with short sleeves, and ankle length. Some were exquisitely embroidered in gold or silver thread, others in bright silks, or even in colored cotton thread. But there was every conceivable hue and shade. If they have nothing else, these peasant maidens will have a holiday attire of the most gorgeous, and they take delight and pride in saving up for years in order to make their own costumes more beautiful than their neighbors'. Over their dark, glossy hair a brilliant handkerchief is knotted, one in one manner, one in another, but all of them picturesque. It would seem impossible for the Polish peasant to be other than charming in her holiday dress.

Some of the more fortunate ones wore long pendants from their brown ears, while yet others had on long strings of beads, some of coral, others of pearls, or yet of a bluish stone resembling turquoise. Every bit of finery, some handed down from one generation to another, priceless treasures, was in evidence upon this occasion, and even the young men were scarce outdone in their velvet jackets and

gay sashes.

The occupants of the carriage from the manor-house saluted the assembled peasants warmly, who returned their salute. Marya looked in vain for the young bride; she was nowhere to be seen. But Helena, the younger sister, approached and offered the master and mistress a drink in which to toast her sister.

At length Marya spied her; she was just issuing forth from the cottage-door. Her white veil fell over her young shoulder with grace as she made her way slowly to the carriage in order to receive the blessing of her master and mistress. Suddenly, kneeling in respect, the bride was seized by several burly men in gala attire. With a scream of terror, and amid copious tears, all of which were part of the programme, she was bundled into the village cart and the procession moved onwards, headed by two of the best men, while the other two druzbowie brought up the rear to escort the bridal couple to the church. This is one of the pretty customs left of the old days when the grooms were in the habit of virtually and truly stealing away their brides before the very eyes of their fond parents, often without the consent of the young lady herself. It is a harmless practice at this day, and



“She was bundled into the village cart”

a pretty one, affording much pleasure to the bride, and much satisfaction to the groom. Besides, the peasants would scarce believe themselves properly married unless this ceremony prevailed.

The longest part of a wedding is not at the church; the service lasted but a very short time when every one wended his way back to the home of the bride once again. During their absence the tables had been laid for the wedding supper, supplied by the generosity of the master of the dwór, and then having drank a last health to the young couple, the rooms were cleared for the wedding dance.

The village had not seen such a wedding for many years as Emilia had. She was a general favorite, with her quiet manners, her soft voice and her kind ways to all.

After the grand march, led by the bride, who leaned upon the arm of Mr. Ostrowski himself, followed by the groom with Mrs. Ostrowska, the master and mistress withdrew from the scene, leaving the peasants to enjoy the dancing and gayety to their hearts' content without the consequent restraint of their presence.

Now, indeed, did the stout old walls of the plastered hut ring with merriment! The beams fairly shook under the

heavy tread of so many husky feet, and it was not until a late hour of the afternoon that the bride and her husband were able to make their escape.

Until every ceremony has been gone through with, the young Polish peasant bride may not free herself from the attentions of the four best men, who take it upon themselves to act as a sort of body-guard and chaperones. Therefore, under their protection, the newly-weds repaired to the top of the hill for their final blessing, as well, no doubt, as a substantial wedding gift.

The day for them was about finished. The visit to the village photographer was the end; here they were photographed in all the finery of their wedding dress, the one leaning lovingly upon the arm of the other; and what a comfort it will be to them, in the years that are to come, when trials and tribulations come to them, to look upon the picture of themselves as they were upon that delightful day of their wedding, young, care-free and happy.

And thus the wedding day of Emilia drew to a close.

There was one very amusing incident which occurred at the wedding, but not at all out of the ordinary among the Polish peasantry. Necessarily, being poor, they economize in

those things which are not absolute necessities; and shoes being one of these, they are in the habit of going barefoot. But they always possess one pair of best shoes, usually with very high French heels, of which they are inordinately proud. It would amount almost to sacrilege for them to wear these creations on any but the grandest and most important occasions. It would be a pity to scuff them out upon the dusty, rocky roads; so, as the women made their way to the church, they carried their shoes and put them on at the entrance of the church. I really believe they did this more because they would be unable to walk in such high-heeled affairs, for it is somewhat of an art to manage one's feet properly, even at best. As soon as the occasion was over, the shoes were laid carefully aside for use upon another gala day. In this way, one pair of shoes will last a life-time, and no doubt many of them descend to the younger members of the family, as the older ones outgrow them.

And now the weeks are speeding by, and Corpus Christi Day has come, a religious festival which takes place about eight weeks after Easter. It is a national holiday, and in the city of Cracow the procession Bozé Cialo takes place. Here, in the rynek, or public square, gather the entire population

of the city, from the oldest infirm inhabitant to the youngest toddler each with his candle in his hand. The bishop of the church conducts the ceremony of the day with great solemnity; and the procession marches around the great square with banners and images of the Christ, while little flower girls, crowned with white flowers, scatter rose-petals from the dainty baskets hung from their shoulders. The soldiers, with their bright uniforms and their gay helmets, mingle with the worshippers, and all is bustle, light and solemnity. After the ceremony, however, the crowds disperse to make merry during the remainder of the day; for in Europe, upon fast days, after the religious services are ended, the people are at liberty to enjoy themselves as they best care to.

Spring has truly arrived; the leaves are budding forth now in all their new greenness. The spring flowers are shooting forth from their winter shelter and the sun shines warmly, but the air is yet a trifle crisp.

There has been a general house-cleaning during the past few days among the Polish peasantry, just as we have a general house-cleaning time, so much dreaded by our fathers. The huts in the villages have been freshly

whitewashed; some, even, have been tinted blue to vary the monotony. About the doors and windows are bound great boughs of green, for the Spring Festival has come, and the peasants have been taught to be ever grateful to, and appreciative of, the goodness of their Father, for all the benefits they have received, and for another springtime; believing that, upon the quantity of boughs and leaves with which they decorate their homes, will depend the fruitfulness of the coming crops. And thus, with great joy, is spring welcomed in Poland.

CHAPTER VIII

The Orphanage in the Woods

As the spring season advanced, the two children at the dwór grew more and more excited. They were awaiting, with great impatience, the arrival of St. John's Eve, the 24th of June.

Marya was seated upon the stiff-looking sofa in the reception salon, while her brother Peter was looking through a book of photographs, depicting the celebration of the Wianki.

"Do you suppose mother will allow us to cast a wreath into the Vistula?" asked Peter, without looking up from his book, so intensely wrapped up was he in the illustrations.

"Certainly," Marya replied. "If we go to the celebration at all, we will be allowed to do as the others do. I shall ask her," Marya continued, "for it wouldn't be a bit of fun to go all the way to Cracow just to watch the others; I want some of the fun for myself."

"You don't imagine you will be allowed to go in search of the wonderful fern, do you, Marya?" the boy questioned.

"Why not? Of course I know I may not go alone, but I shall have Mademoiselle with me. It would be quite proper then, and Mademoiselle would enjoy it herself, I am sure. She has never seen the celebration, Peter, and she's just as crazy over it as we are. If sister Martha comes we will be allowed to go," the girl continued, "for she knows what it is to be shut off from every pleasure that even the commonest people have."

"Marya," warned Peter, in a low tone.

At the warning, the girl looked up. She saw her mother upon the threshold. She arose instantly from her seat upon the sofa and advanced toward her mother, saluting her with a kiss upon the cheek. Her brother did likewise, and together they gently led her toward the sofa and seated her, drawing up two chairs for themselves, so as to face her. But Marya did not seat herself by the side of her mother. It is a curious custom throughout Europe that the sofa is the seat of honor, to be occupied by the person highest in rank, and, while one may occupy a sofa when alone in the room, it is considered the height of impoliteness to seat one's self upon

that sacred article of furniture when one of superior rank, or an elder, is in the room; therefore it was for this reason that the children placed their mother upon the sofa while they occupied chairs by her side.

"Now, children, listen," Mrs. Ostrowska said, as she gathered her two children to her. "You need not be a bit afraid that you will not enjoy yourselves in Cracow. I have promised to take you to the celebration of the Wianki, and you have looked forward to it for a long time with great expectation. You shall not be disappointed. We will forget everything for that night, and you may enter into all the sports of the people, if you choose. Even Marya, dear, if she wishes, may penetrate into the depths of the forest and search for the sacred fern which may blossom for her alone this year. Perhaps you may be the fortunate one to find it, Marya. What do you think?"

"I hope I shall," the girl replied. "But suppose Mademoiselle should become frightened and want to return?"

"In that event," the mother said, smiling, "so long as you have the courage, you may continue alone," for she felt quite safe in granting this privilege, as she did not truly believe her

little daughter would be brave enough to continue alone.

"When shall we start?" Marya asked, in great excitement.

"It is now the twentieth of June," Mrs. Ostrowska replied. "Your father has some business to attend to in Cracow, so we shall leave here on the twenty-second, which will give us ample time to look about the city and have a good visit with your sister Martha, for you know she promised to meet us there."

"So did sister Gabriele," added Peter.

"Yes," the mother replied, "we shall all be together, I hope."

"And may I go now and tell Mademoiselle?" Marya inquired, eagerly, as she rose.

"Run along," the mother answered. "And what was my boy reading as I came in?" she continued, turning to her son, who had not had a chance to say much while the irrepressible sister was in the room.

"Oh, I was looking at some old books I found in the library, about the celebration of the Wianki. I wanted to know all about it; there are some wonderful pictures of it too."

"It is a curious custom, no doubt," the mother replied,

as she walked to the table, where the book still remained open. And, for some time, the two looked over the great volume of illustrations, remarking every little while about this one or that.

"You remember the story of the Princess Wanda, and how she threw herself into the Vistula in order to save her country from wars?" the mother asked.

"Very well, indeed," the boy replied. "She was a brave princess. But is it really true, mother?" the boy inquired.

"There was a Princess Wanda at one time, but as to the rest of the story, that is what people say about her."

At this moment Marya re-entered the room, leading her governess by the hand.

"Mother," the child said, as she advanced toward the table where the mother and son were engrossed in their book, "Mademoiselle is as delighted as I am, with the prospect of seeing the celebration, aren't you, Mademoiselle?"

"Indeed I am," the young lady replied. "I have read much about it, in France, but have never witnessed one of the festivals; besides, it happens to be my birthday, so it will be an added pleasure."

"I have arranged for the children of the Orphanage to come out to us just after our return," Mrs. Ostrowska said, addressing the tall, bright-eyed young lady who served in capacity of governess to her daughter; "I wish you would take Marya down to the Bosquet and help prepare the cottage for their reception. The maids are there now, airing the place out, and I will drive over later in the afternoon, when I shall have everything together that I want sent down."

"Very well, Madame," Mademoiselle replied. "Marya and I will attend to it as soon as luncheon is finished. Shall we take the pony cart?"

"Yes, you might," Mrs. Ostrowska said, "and, when you arrive there, see that the beds are well aired, for the maids are apt to be a little careless, and we can't afford to have any of the children take cold."

"There's luncheon now," Marya called out, impulsively.

"Run along then, children," the mistress said, "and remember, day after to-morrow we are off for Cracow."

With hurried steps the two children left the room, followed by Mademoiselle, while Mrs. Ostrowska busied herself about her domestic arrangements, for she never entrusted these duties to any one.

After luncheon Marya and Mademoiselle drove off in the pony cart, through the beautiful gardens, which were blossoming with all sorts of magnificent flowers, past the great fish-ponds at the rear, and on through the thick woods. Finally they pulled rein at a most picturesque maisonette, or cottage, situated in the very heart of the forest. It was built of logs; a wide veranda ran across the entire front. The house was large enough to accommodate one hundred girls with their chaperones. Inside everything was as comfortable as could be. There was a general sitting-room where the orphaned girls could gather in the evening and listen to the folk-tales their hostess or her substitutes would tell. There were great dormitories, with twenty or thirty snowy, white beds arranged in rows against the walls, with large airy windows between. There was the dining-room, with its long table spread with good, substantial food; and how the walls did ring with the laughter and joyousness of these little orphaned children from the city, who were invited each year to spend two weeks or more as the guests of the benevolent proprietor's wife, Mrs. Ostrowska. And all over the country of Poland this is the custom for the wives of the landed proprietors to do. They give of their wealth for the

betterment of the poor and to ease their burden a little.

Each morning a group of girls, selected by the mistress in charge, tramp off through the woods, baskets on arms, to receive from the kitchen of the dwór the supplies for the following day; and you may be sure this is no small matter, to fill fifty or one hundred hungry mouths. In the afternoons, after the day's work is finished, for these girls do all their own housekeeping in the maisonette, they gather berries or wood-flowers, which they present to their kind hostess, a delicate thoughtfulness which she fully appreciates, for these poor little orphaned ones have no other way in which to express their gratitude for the pleasures they accept.

Everything being in readiness, Marya and her governess returned home through the woods, driving leisurely so as to enjoy the fresh odor of the firs. It was quite late when they reached the dwór; tea was being served on the veranda. Here they sought out Mrs. Ostrowska and reported their progress. Then Marya was whisked off by Mademoiselle to attend to her practising.

The morning of the twenty-second dawned bright and warm. Immediately after breakfast, the great carriage pulled

up at the porch, and all were soon installed within. The whips were cracked, and away the horses sped down the wide avenue of linden trees, through the great stone brama and out into the country road. They had not gone very far when the animals were reined in most emphatically, for the highway had become a horrible mass of mud and ruts. The public roads of Poland are proverbial for their wretchedness. The carriage swayed from side to side as it lurched from one deep rut into another; and had it not been for the splendid springs of the carriage, it would have been much more comfortable to have walked. You may imagine what it would mean to jolt over these same roads in a britschka, or public cart, which is so widely in use in Poland. It is a sort of open carriage, without springs of any kind, with a hood which can either be raised or lowered, at the will of the occupant. I fear a ride in such a contrivance would not be very enjoyable. However, in spite of the ill condition of the road, Cracow was reached safely late in the afternoon. Upon reaching the hotel where accommodations had been reserved, they found the two sisters awaiting them.

Mrs. Ostrowska had found the journey very fatiguing, consequently she did not care to dress and descend for

dinner; dinner, therefore, was served upstairs in her private sitting-room, and the family spent the remainder of the evening in discussing their plans for the morrow, and in visiting.

CHAPTER IX

What Happened When the Brothers Disagreed

It is market-day in Cracow; but then it is always market-day in Cracow, so that would be nothing extraordinary. The rynek, or square, is crowded with groups of peasants, some sitting on stools beside their vegetables exposed for sale; others sheltered under huge umbrellas, knitting stockings for their family, while awaiting customers. Here are displayed laces, vegetables, also chickens and ducks, alive and squawking. There is scarcely anything one would have need of that is not displayed in this square. Indeed, it is a lively spot and a beautiful sight.

We have some hours to pass before evening comes, when we may ascend to the Wawel for the celebration; therefore, we shall look about us in this active part of the city and see some of the interesting sights and ancient buildings, for most cities are interesting only as they can present some historical reference. Here is an ancient-looking castle at this

side of the rynek; indeed, it not only looks ancient, but it is ancient. Like everything else in Poland, it has a queer-sounding name to us; it is known as Pod Baranami, which means Under the Ram's Head, from its heraldic sign over the front. This is the home of the Potockis, one of the very ancient families of the country. So prominent is this castle in the history of Poland that the Emperor has chosen it as his residence when he is in the city of Cracow. But it would be quite improper for the Emperor to accept quarters in the home of another; he must be the veritable head of the house; therefore it happens that, from an old custom, it is usual for the family to move to other quarters and to permit the sovereign full possession. The Emperor, however, is not without graciousness. He accepts the generosity of his subject, and atones for the inconvenience he has been put to by inviting the owner and his family to dine with him. It must seem very strange to be invited to dinner in one's own home with another at the head.

And here, a little further along, is the most interesting building known as the Sukiennice, nothing more nor less than the Cloth Hall. In early days, when there were no great department stores and selling agents for goods, the makers

of cloth formed a guild or club, which became known throughout the land as the Cloth Guild. They built a great hall in which to display their goods, for there were no shops in those times, as there are now. This building became known as the Cloth Hall. Here the Guild met to discuss the prices they should ask for the finished material, and how much they ought to pay for the raw. The Cloth Guild was one of the richest and most influential of all the Guilds, for people were extravagant in their dress and wore most exquisite materials.

The Sukiennice is a great building of stone with the stairway to the second story running up on the outside of the building; there are queer little turrets, one at each corner, and heavy arcades upon the ground floor, which protect the passers-by from the elements, as well as assist in rendering the interior very dark.

Here, in the city of Cracow, the peasants will tell you of a curious belief among them. The founder of Poland was Lekh, as you all have read. He was supposed to have come from the far south, when quite a grown man; but there are always two sides to every story, as the saying is. And no two historians can agree as to which version is really the correct

one concerning Lekh. The peasants here believe that Lekh was born in this very city, and they absolutely refuse to believe anything else. In any event, the story goes that when he was a very young baby, as he was lying in his cradle one day, without any one near, a fierce dragon with three heads tried to devour him; but no harm came to the child, for he grew up safely to manhood. Perhaps his faithful nurse returned in time to avert the threatened danger. However, many, many years later, in this same city of Cracow, in the year 1846, the country of Poland suffered its greatest humiliation, for Cracow was the very last city in the country to fall into the hands of the enemy. And now once more comes the dragon with the three heads; it is the enemy, Austria, Germany and Russia, who joined their forces together to tear beloved Poland into pieces, and this time it won the victory.

The people of Poland will tell you that once upon a time, in the early days of the country's history, there was a certain king reigning over the land, who was very good and wise. He saw that his beloved people and the land in which they lived was not what it should be; that something was wrong. Being a solicitous father for his country, he left no stone unturned

to discover some remedy for the malady which ailed Poland. Physicians, famed throughout the land, were sent for and consultations held, but all in vain. There seemed no cure for the patient. However, there was yet one resource left. In the land was a woman who was very clever at divinations; to her, in his last extremity, the good, kind king went and stated his trouble.

"Fear not," the prophetess answered, after listening to the king's tale, "I will endeavor to aid you."

The king was delighted at her encouraging words, but he felt somewhat doubtful of the result, as so many had failed before her. The old woman selected three brothers from out the land; to each of them she gave a third part of a flute.

"You are to journey together," she said to them, "until you have crossed over seven mountains, and crossed seven flowing rivers. When you reach a certain peak in the Carpathian Mountains to the southwest of Poland, you are to halt, put the pieces of the flute together, and blow upon it. At the sound, your brave old king, Boleslaw, and his valiant knights, will arise from their sleep of death, take up their weapons, and conquer your enemy, when Poland will once more be restored to her former state of splendor and

glory."

The king thanked the prophetess kindly, adding a most substantial gift for her services. He saw the three brothers set off upon their task of salvation for the country.

The three young men journeyed together, as they had been bid, until they crossed seven running rivers and had climbed over seven mountains. At length they reached the Carpathian Mountains as the old woman had told them. Upon the top of the peak she had named they halted, and pieced the flute together. Then arose the important question of which they had not thought before: who should blow upon the flute.

The oldest brother thought he should, for was he not the eldest? The second brother thought he had just as much right to blow upon the flute as his older brother. Why should he have all the glory when they, too, had made the long journey as well as the eldest? But the youngest brother was not content with this arrangement. He felt that he should have a turn at the flute as well as the other two. And, in this manner, they bickered and bickered. The days sped by without the question being settled. And thus it remained. As they could not agree as to which one should blow upon

the flute, no one blew upon it. King Boleslaw did not awaken from his sleep. His knights, in their suits of armor, remained by his side, tranquil and at rest, and Poland, poor Poland, the ill one, was left to its fate. The legend runs, that the names of the three brothers were Aristocracy, Bourgeoisie and Peasantry. And to-day, were they given another opportunity to show their worth, there would be no question as to which one of the three would blow upon the flute, for all Poland has agreed that its hope and life are due to the youngest brother, Peasantry. And in this hope the upper class Polacks are bending every effort towards improving the condition and education of the common people, for thereby they believe the day will come when the peasantry will arise, like the knights of King Boleslaw, and fight for their liberty. The inference is that the peasants are now asleep; they do not see their opportunities, nor know their strength; but that when they do arise they will bring peace and prosperity once more to dear Poland.

Peter and Marya were so interested in the history of the city, and in looking at its magnificent old buildings, they were not aware how rapidly the time was passing, until their mother told them it was time to return to the hotel for

dinner. As soon as the first rays of dusk crept on, they insisted upon making their way to the Wawel, so as not to miss anything; for well they knew, these little children of the aristocracy, they would not be again permitted this privilege. As they drove from the hotel to the top of the hill they passed great crowds, and yet more and more, all making their way on foot up the toilsome incline to the castle, the one spot of activity that night.

A bright fire was already burning within the fortress courtyard. The flames leaped higher and higher until they fairly seemed to reach to the vaulted blue above. About the fire were gathered thousands and thousands of people: old men and women, young men and their wives and sweethearts, for the entire populace had turned out to celebrate the Wianki, or wreaths. Each one bore in his hand a wreath of flowers or leaves, all of different colors; and while the band played entrancing music, wild polonaises and mazurkas, the people cast their wreaths into the waters of the Vistula. Brilliant fireworks of every description lighted up the scene, making the sky one mass of light and color. Every one looked very happy and gave himself up to the joy of the moment.

The wreaths having been cast into the river, the young folks joined hands in a great circle about the blazing fire. They danced round and round, singing Polish airs; strangers all they were, but enjoying each other's company. From among the circle, two young folks were chosen, a man and a young girl, the circle of singers coupling the names of the two together, prophesying that these two might become affianced and wed happily. What mattered it that they were unknown to each other? What mattered anything that night, when all hearts were light, and youth was abroad?

In games and sports of this character, the evening wore away and the hour of midnight approached. Marya was becoming more and more excited. She grasped the hand of Mademoiselle tighter, for fear she should lose her; then she might not penetrate into the forest.

One by one the young girls of the group slipped away and disappeared into the gloom of the surrounding woods; Marya believed it was about time that she, too, were making good her escape. Holding tightly to the hand of her governess, she walked slowly in the direction the others had taken. She had at last set out on her search for the magic fern which grows in the forest. She would try to discover its

hiding-place; for she longed for a happy and successful life. It is no small task, this, that Marya had set for herself. In the first place the fern is magic; it is not to be seen by every one; it blooms just a second, exactly as the midnight hour strikes, and then is gone. And another full year must roll by before the maiden may search a second time.

"I shall find it," Marya kept repeating to herself, over and over again. But she knew she could not hope to do so if she persisted in holding fast to the hand of Mademoiselle. No one must have an escort who would find the precious flower. But Marya was timid. Never before had she been permitted out after dark, even alone with her governess. The woods were very dark. The moon shone through the leaves, 'tis true, but the beams only added to the fright of the young girl, for they cast weird shadows upon the tree-trunks and more than once she was for turning back.

She dared not call out for fear of breaking the magic spell, and she did so want to find the magic fern.

Her heart was beating faster and faster; she groped her way through the thick trees, keeping her eyes riveted upon the ground in search of the prize. Suddenly she saw a bright light ahead of her. She wondered what it could be; whether



“Her heart was beating faster and faster”

it was some sprite's home in the forest, and what was going to happen to her next. Then she heard the tinkle of a bell. "The hejnal," she told herself. "Midnight." She counted the strokes one by one. So intent was she upon her task that she forgot the magic fern. She forgot Mademoiselle. She forgot everything but the musical tones of the church bell tolling the midnight hour. She kept her course toward the light in the distance. When she approached it, she found herself once more on the Wawel hill, by the side of the great fire about which she had danced so happily the early part of the evening. She had been walking in a circle; and there, not ten feet from her, was Mademoiselle; but neither of them had discovered the magic fern.

"Well, it was fun anyway," Marya said, when twitted by her brother for her failure. "And I am sure if I could try again, I would walk in a straight line next time."

The party returned to the hotel; the festival was ended, and on the morrow the Ostrowski family returned to their dwór beyond Cracow.

CHAPTER X

The Harvest Festival

And now our vacation is about ended. The year is drawing to a close. Harvest time has arrived; the crops are stacked up in the fields to be garnered in.

The peasants have finished their year's work out-of-doors. They have served their master's interests well; all that remains is his inspection to see that all is satisfactory, and his approval that they earned their wages.

Mr. Ostrowski, accompanied by his good wife, left their home upon the hill and walked towards the great fields of yellow grain. It was not permitted the peasant to garner in these sheaves until the master had passed by. Suddenly, they were seized from behind. They were seized gently but forcibly. While one young man held the wrists of the mistress, and others the wrists of the master, other peasants picked up strands of the golden straw and assisted in securely binding their captives. The master and mistress

pleaded for their liberty, but their captors were adamant. No ransom, no liberty. At length, after promises of ransom, the peasants unbound their victims, the money was paid over, and the master and mistress were free. Laughing, they passed on their way across the field, while the merry peasants then began to stack the golden grain upon their carts and haul it away to the barns.

It is a very pretty custom, this one of the Harvest Festival; and master and laborer enter into the spirit of it with keen zest. It but endears their patron to them the more that he permits this privilege; the ransom is not more than a few pennies; but the master must pay it before he may regain his liberty. All over the estate, from one field to the other, the same ceremony is indulged in for the harvest crops.

What merry-making there is in the village during the rest of the day and all through the evening, after the crops are safely stowed away for the winter!

The fairest maiden of the village is the queen of the day. She wears her white dress with a queenly air, too; and holds her proud head high, crowned with flowers. Forming in line, the queen at the head, the bridesmaids following, and then the other villagers in the order of their importance, the

gay procession marches slowly up the hill, singing folk songs as they mount. Their sweet, musical voices announce their arrival long beforehand to the mistress of the dwór. She meets them at the porch with graciousness. The queen kneels for her mistress' blessing, and once more they return down the hill toward the village, but now they are enriched with a quantity of small money, with which they straightway proceed to set up a supper, after which they dance the rest of the hours away. They have good cause to be light-hearted, for they know their work is finished for the season, and there are full barns for the winter.

And we have now spent a full year in the delightful, quaint land of Lekh; dear Poland, from whose brow has never vanished the one cloud that mars it. It has learned its tragic lesson too late, that what it does not sow it may not reap. The nobles had been too much enwrapped in their own gayety, in their exclusiveness, to turn their hands to the task of setting things straight. The bourgeoisie were neither of one class nor another; they could not afford to compromise themselves by turning either way, consequently they turned neither, and were useless as aids. The peasants were raised in ignorance, were overburdened and kept

constantly under the leash, so to speak, and while their strength might have saved the country, they had not the brain-power to solve a means therefor. So that neither of the three brothers being able to decide which should blow upon the flute, as neither class would take upon itself to save the land, so they now await the decision. In the meantime, Poland belongs to the three conquering nations, the Russians, the Austrians and the Germans, neither of which the Polacks are devoted to.

And yet, with all its indecision, Poland has given the world some glorious men and women. Copernicus, the world-famed astrologer, was born in the city of Thorn upon the River Vistula, on February 19, 1473. Chopin, the great musical composer, was the son of a Polish woman, although he is buried in France. Marcella Sembrich, Edouard De Reszke and his brother Jean, of grand opera fame, Helena Modjeska, our beloved actress, now passed away, and Jan Paderewski, the celebrated pianist, are all Polacks. And we Americans have much to be indebted for to a great Polish soldier. You may not even know his name; had it not been for Tadeusz Kosciuszko, I doubt very much whether Washington, our dearly beloved George Washington,

would have proven so successful in his endeavors for independence.

It is a long way from Warsaw in Poland to the American colonies; especially was it so in the year 1776, when transportation was not what it now is. But Tadeusz did not consider distance or hardship. He was willing to go anywhere, so long as it would take him from the place where he had suffered so keenly. For back in Poland, Tadeusz loved a beautiful girl. The father of this young lady did not approve of Kosciuszko as a lover. He feared the two might elope, which they had really planned to do. Therefore, he carried off his daughter in the dead of night, so that Tadeusz never saw her again.

Kosciuszko roamed first here and then there in his sorrow; he did not care much where he went to. At last he went to Paris. All the modern world was talking about the courage of the American colonists in taking up their struggle against the mother country. And it happened that during his stay in Paris, Kosciuszko chanced to meet our minister, Benjamin Franklin. When Franklin learned that Tadeusz was skilled in military tactics, and, furthermore, that it made no particular difference to him where he strayed, he at once

offered to give him a letter to Washington. Our general was indeed glad to receive such a valuable aid, and appointed him colonel of engineers and placed him upon his staff. Soon his proficiency in fort-building won for him the honor of scientist of the American Army. He worked by the side of Washington for eight years, until he was no longer needed. Then he returned to Poland, for his heart was ever there. He gained a glorious victory, the victory of Raclawie, which the Polacks can never forget. They have erected a mound to his honor, and even the American government has not been ungrateful to this grand man.

Another Polack, Count Casimir Pulaski, also served us well in our early struggles; he was killed at the battle of Savannah in 1779.

Henryk Sienkiewicz has given us some wonderful masterpieces in literature, and there are countless other Polish authors who might be mentioned, but they are too numerous and one is not as familiar with their works as with those of Sienkiewicz.

We may linger no longer. The Christmas season approaches, when we must return to our own again. Homewards we turn our steps, with intense regret. We leave

behind us the flat, broad plains of Lekh, we re-cross the Continent, take ship at Havre, and are once again in our beloved America, where we see our poor happy and comfortable; where all is bustle and prosperity, and we feel thankful that our independence has lasted throughout these years and that no nation may come in and rob us of our heritage.

THE END.

Our Little Czecho-Slovak Cousin

By Clara Vostrovsky Winlow

Illustrated by Charles E. Meister



“The next day, Ruzena drove the geese to pasture”

Preface

The gallant exploits of the Czecho-Slovak army in Siberia won the attention and sympathy of the world to and for their hopes and sacrifices in the cause of freedom. Fighting the Germanic Powers was not a new thing to them. Bohemia, the chief of the Czecho-Slovak states, has always been the battlefield between Slav and Teuton. All that of which Bohemia is proud to-day was won inch by inch through incessant struggle, through bringing to bear every force of civilization possible, on the German rulers. Bohemia's leaders emphasized the need of education; and so effectually, that Bohemia, to-day, ranks as one of the most literate states of Europe. They emphasized idealism, that not by brute force but by being better fit should they eventually win. They kept alive their faith in a renewal of Bohemia's wonderful, romantic history, that the people might not sink into despair from dwelling on what their proud spirits held to be the degradation of their position. They urged the

development of economic strength, and Bohemia today is self-sustaining. Through ceaseless battling for their rights, through pride in their great accomplishment in the face of great obstruction, the Czechs held their heads as high as the inhabitants of independent lands. It is an interesting fact that every poet, every musician, every artist felt it his duty to devote his art to his native land.

And here it might be well to state that the Czech of Bohemia, although often called Bohemian, has absolutely nothing in common with the Bohemian meaning gypsy. This term was once applied to some gypsies in France, through a misapprehension that they came from Bohemia. It clung even after the error was corrected. These particular gypsies really came from Hungary, which however does not mean that Hungarians or Magyars and gypsies are one and the same. The gypsies, like the Jews, do not belong to any one country.

Besides Bohemia, the Czecho-Slovak states comprise Moravia, a rich farming country, the birthplace of the great educator, John Amos Comenius; a part of Silesia, famous for its mines; and Slovakia, also rich in mineral wealth which is largely undeveloped. Of these, Slovakia suffered

perhaps the most under the scorn, oppression, and exploitation of the Magyar oligarchy. Taxes in all the states were high. Bohemia, especially, because of its wealth, not only paid for itself, but helped support unproductive Austrian German lands. The language in all of these states is so closely allied that the citizen of one can easily understand the citizens of any of the others.

It is thought by some that Czecho-Slovakia will be a small country. This is not exactly true, for it will rank eighth in size among all the European states.

One thing that the Czecho-Slovaks have particularly shown during the War, and which argues well for their future, is their capacity for self-government. Not only did they show splendid organization in their efforts to secure recognition, but when the time came to proclaim the Republic, it was found that their machinery was in perfect working order; and, although great reforms have been inaugurated, so far things have progressed with a smoothness not to be found in any of the other newly-formed states.

CHAPTER I

Land of Persecution

There was mourning in the little village high up in the Tatras, as the Carpathian Mountains are called by the Slovaks. Nine men and women lay dead and four lay wounded behind carefully closed doors of the little homes. Scarcely a person except Magyar gendarmes was to be seen on the one main street. Now and then the curious, frightened face of a child peeped out from behind the shaded windows, and again quickly disappeared.

The day before, Magyar officers and priests had come to consecrate the little square church that had just been erected. It had cost the villagers many sacrifices, but they were proud of it. They had come dressed in their best and full of gayety to the services, never dreaming but that their beloved Slovak pastor would be allowed to assist. When they found, however, that he had been ignored, they pressed closely around those in charge and begged that he be

allowed to take part, that they might feel that the church was actually their own.

Did they beg too hard? Was it because they were loyal to a leader who loved and sympathized with his own people? Was that why Magyar guns suddenly boomed, and why the ground lay covered with blood?

The news of the happening spread even to the little village in the more fertile plains, where Jozef lived. The twelve-year-old boy heard it discussed the very next day as he accompanied the haymakers to the fields. In order to hear, he found it necessary to keep close to the men and women, for they spoke only in half whispers, fearing spies sent out by the Notary, chief officer of the Commune, who seemed to count it among his duties to keep tab on their very thoughts. They knew that they could do nothing, and it gave them a cowed, dejected air. Never had a haying been so dismal.

The killing, dangerous as the topic was, drew the men to the tavern at night. They sat at the plain deal tables in small groups and drank and smoked their long pipes. Now and then one had something to say. Perhaps it concerned the fate of some woman who had resisted the officers during the

mad effort at Slovak denationalization in 1892, when forcible transportation of children to purely Magyar districts had been undertaken. Or it may have dealt with the imprisonment of some editor who had had the courage to denounce some new injustice or atrocity.

A tall athletic-looking man with a broad smooth-shaven face, and hair worn rather long, seemed to be listened to with greatest attention. He was plainly from some other district, for his attire was different from that of his companions. It consisted of felt trousers, the seams piped with red, a linen shirt and a sheepskin waistcoat with the wool inside, heavily embroidered on the leather side. His shoes were of soft leather, laced with rawhide thongs across the ankle, and he wore a low, black hat decorated with a red ribbon band.

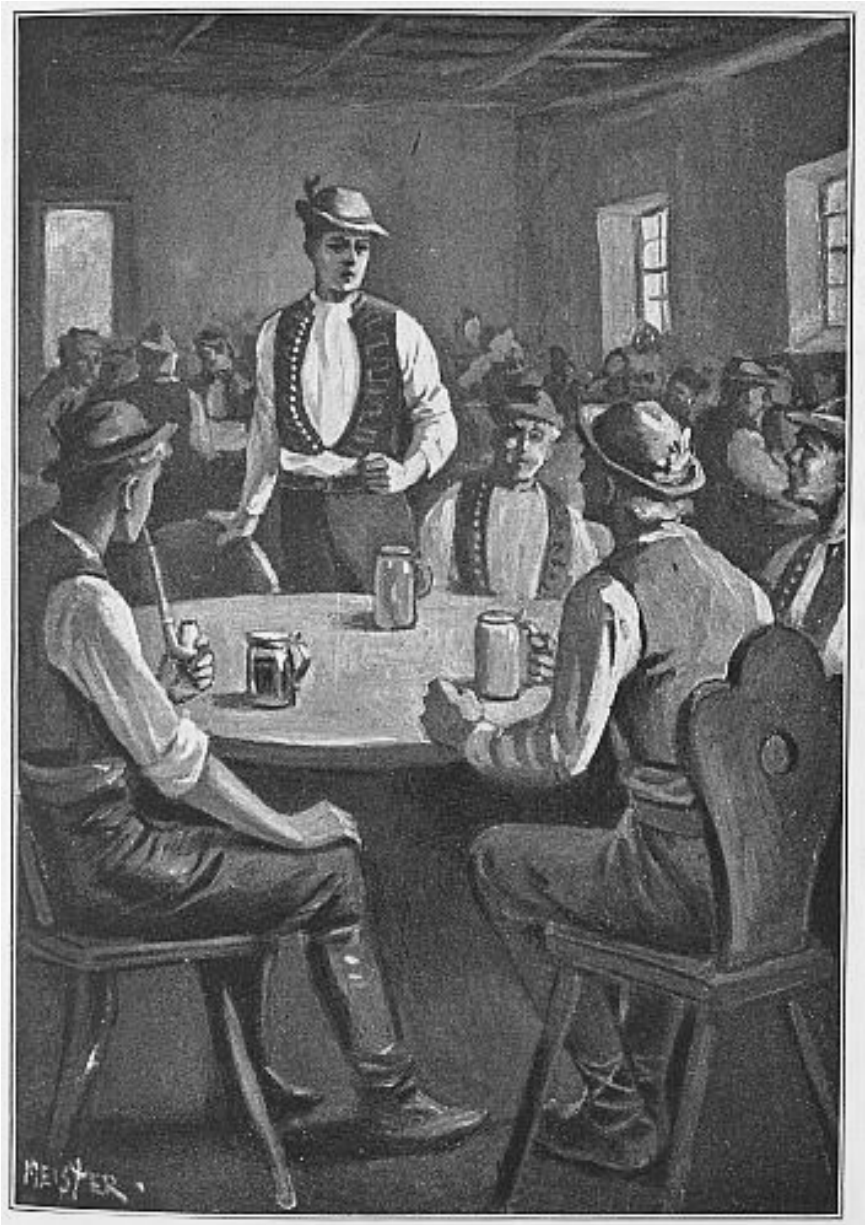
"I was living in Turciansky Sv. Martin, our one national center, when the effort was made to establish a cellulose factory there," he was saying. "It was one of the many efforts on the part of Slovaks to be more prosperous and progressive. Like other citizens, I invested considerable money in it. The building was erected and the machinery installed and we were awaiting our license from the

government, when word came that it could not be given to the present management. We were dumbfounded, although we understood. We were not to be allowed to run our own factory because we did not help oppress our fellow citizens; because we were loyal to our Slovak traditions and to our Slovak land.

"We did not give in without making an effort to secure justice. But, after several months, we knew that we were defeated. During all this time we had not been allowed to do any work in the factory. One thing, finally, the authorities permitted, and that was to run the costly machinery once a week, so that it should not grow rusty. Of course we had to sell, and at a heavy loss to people eagerly awaiting to develop what we had started."

The peasants near nodded their appreciation of the conditions. One more excitable than his fellows jumped up.

"Will a time never come when we shall be free? Will a time never come when the world recognizes the crime of using force to make people false to their own traditions?" he exclaimed. "To outsiders the Magyars boast of their liberal constitution, of the freedom granted to other nations in the kingdom. We who have no opportunities, who are not



“‘Will a time never come when we shall be free?’”

allowed a single higher school of our own, nor even a single Magyar Higher School where our language is taught, know what a lie this is. And what advantage is the Magyar language to our children outside of Hungary? Go even to Vienna or anywhere else in the monarchy, and try to make yourself understood with it! You'll see! And we were here before the Magyars; we helped them to know the glorious religion of Jesus Christ; we fought and bled as well as they for our native land." Here his voice changed curiously and a sort of exaltation lit up his face as he said softly: "We must have faith." Then he began to repeat some lines taken from the great Slovak poet Kollar's "Slavy Dcera" (The Daughter of Slava).

"Stop! It is holy ground on which you tread.
Son of the Tatra, raise your head toward heaven,
Or rather guide your steps towards that oak tree,
Which yet defies destructive Time.
But worse than Time is man who has placed his iron scepter on thy neck, O Slava.
Worse than wild War, more fearful than Thunder, than Fire,

Is the man who, blinded by hate, rages against his own race."

Then again:

"He who is worthy of liberty, respects the liberty of all.
He who forges irons to enslave others, is himself a slave.
Be it that he fetters the language or the hands of others,
It is the same, he proves himself unable to respect the rights of others."

And once more:

"Slavia, Slavia! Thou name of sweet sound but of bitter memory; hundred times divided and destroyed, but yet more honored than ever.

"Much hast thou suffered, but ever hast thou survived the evil deeds of thy enemies, the evil ingratitude also of thy sons.

"While others have built on soft ground, thou hast established thy throne on the ruins of many centuries."

Here in a rich bass voice he broke forth into the Slovak national song: "Nad Tatrou sa bliska":

Above Tatra the lightnings flash,
    The thunder wildly roars;
But fear not, brothers,
    The skies will clear,
And the Slovak's time will come.

At the conclusion, a peculiar silence brooded in the room. Suddenly, little anxious twitchings might have been noticed. The singer turned. In the doorway stood the Notary with a wicked, sneering smile on his supercilious face.

CHAPTER II

Mushroom Gathering

Jozef's home was one of the high-roofed houses whose gable ends faced the broad, whitish main street. It was made of unburnt bricks, plastered outside, with hand-made shingles on the roof. Each window was outlined in pale green and the entrance porch was quite ornamental, having a pretty conventional design, also in green, painted around the door. This, as well as the lines around the window, was the work of Jozef's mother, who enjoyed a certain reputation in the village because she had once been asked to paint some borders around the walls of the rooms of a girls' school in the city of Brno, the capital of Moravia.

Behind the house were the stalls for the cattle and pigs, and, back of all, a small vegetable garden, edged with sweet smelling herbs and brightly colored flowers. This garden ended in an alley way by a brook, surrounded by green meadows in which geese usually pastured.

In the center of the main street was the Church, a small whitewashed building with a square tower. Next to it were a cross and a statue of the village saint.

Through the middle of the street were rows of underground cellars, one belonging to each family, in which it was possible to keep food and milk ice cold. Vehicles made their way on each side of these cellars.

Around the village were meadows dotted with red poppies and blue corn flowers. Some distance further were fields of potatoes, a few vineyards, and a large, privately owned wood.

It was Helena, Jozef's cousin, who planned the day in the wood for a mushroom hunt, and secured the necessary permission from the forester in charge. She invited Jozef, his ten-year-old sister Ruzena, and two of Ruzena's girl friends to go with her.

"Goody!" the little girls shouted, and ran for the permission which was readily granted on the one condition that they do not spend all the time in play but really bring home mushrooms, which are highly valued as food.

First each little girl took her herd of geese to the meadow by the brook, and left her flock in charge of an old woman

who had nothing else to do but tend geese. Then they met Jozef, who had finished his chores of feeding the cattle and pigs, and Helena, who was older and helped her mother at home. All were dressed in old but bright colored clothes, and all were barefoot and bareheaded, the girls' corn-colored hair hanging in long braids down their backs. All carried baskets in which now lay a little lunch. When they started, Jozef did not walk beside the others, but ran on ahead or lagged behind. He was afraid, since this was a girls' party, that some of his boy friends might call him a "sissy." He wouldn't have been left out, however, for the world.

It was still early in the morning, but there was already a heavy warmth in the air, so that the coolness they found underneath the tall trees when they reached them, was very welcome. The road had been dusty, but here the moss and grass were still wet with dew and gave forth a fragrant, pungent odor.

The owner did not live in the wood, the only buildings in it being the picturesque log cabin of the forester or caretaker, and a beautiful hunting lodge.

Soon the fun began.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jozef, discovering two mushrooms, or

champignons, showing a brown and a red head above the moss.

Such a scampering as there was among the trees until every basket was filled to overflowing.

Here Etelka, the youngest of the party, found one that she thought the prize of all. It was red with white raised spots.

"Come here!" she cried. "I have found a new kind. Shall I taste it?"

Helena took two rapid leaps toward her.

"Drop it! Drop it!" she exclaimed. "That's a poison muchomurka. Never, never taste anything of which you are not certain if you don't wish to die."

"I thought it prettier than the red ones you found," said Etelka, somewhat abashed.

"It is entirely different," and then Helena showed her how it differed and again impressed on all to confine themselves to those they knew.

Then the baskets were put down in a circle and the children played hide-and-seek among brown trunked firs with long gray mosses festooned from branch to branch, knotted larch trees, and pines dripping with balsam. At last,

tired, they sank down on some netted roots and ate their lunch of thick slices of rye bread spread with goose fat.

"I found some sweet-root here once," Jozef volunteered when they had eaten every morsel.

"Where?" the girls asked eagerly.

Jozef had very vague notions as to where.

"Let's agree," suggested Helena, "each to give a nice mushroom to the one who finds some sweet-root first."

All were willing, and with shouting, laughter and song the search began. Several times Jozef was quite certain that the prize was his, but it was little Etelka who actually found some underneath some blackberry leaves.

"I'm going exploring," Jozef now announced, somewhat nettled that a girl should have been the discoverer. Leaving the pathways, he made his way down a long incline. Not wishing to have the party separated, Helena led the others as best she could after him.

It was a merry chase Jozef gave them, now to the right, now to the left, then back in a crazy circle. So intent were they in making their way through some underbrush that they were unprepared when, at a sudden turn, they found themselves on the brink of the river that they knew flowed

through an edge of the wood.

Out of breath, they seated themselves in a row on the bank and watched the waters glide past. Then they threw in twigs, which they called boats, and grew quite excited when some of these became entangled in water washed grasses.

"Oh, Helena," at last Etelka begged, as she nibbled at her portion of the sweet-root, "please tell us a story."

"A really truly Slovak fairy story," seconded Ruzena.

"Have it exciting," demanded Jozef.

"And true," put in quiet, blue-eyed Marouska.

Helena laughed. "Very well," she said, "it'll be truly Slovak, and exciting, and as true as any fairy tale can be."

CHAPTER III

A Slovak Folk Tale

There was once an old king who, knowing that his end was nearing, called his son to him and begged him to take a wife.

"I would fain see you settled before I die," he said.

The son knew not what to do, for of all the maidens in his father's court there was none that had especial charm for him. He was thinking this over in the castle garden when an old woman suddenly stood before him. Wherever she came from, she was certainly there.

"Pluck the three lemons on the glass mountain and you will gain a wife such as next to none possesses," she said. As she appeared, so she disappeared. Her words, however, sank into the youth's heart, and leaving good-by for his father, he set out at once to find the glass mountain and the magic lemons.

Far over wooded hill and dale he journeyed but saw

nothing even resembling a glass mountain. At last, tired out, he threw himself under a tree. As he did so, some ravens, croaking loudly, flew out of its top branches.

"Ah," thought the Prince, "these may direct me to where at least refreshment and rest may be obtained." And starting again, he followed in the direction that they had flown.

After three days and three nights he saw a castle before him, and full of rejoicing, approached it. It was entirely of lead and in the door stood Jezibaba leaning on a leaden staff.

"Haste from here, good youth," she said, "for nothing grows here, and when my son comes home he will devour you."

"Nay, old woman," said the Prince, "that must not be, for I come with respect for his power and knowledge, to seek his advice as to how I am to reach the glass mountain on which grows a wonderful lemon tree."

"Then I will help you," said Jezibaba, and hid the Prince behind a big broom. As she did so the castle shook, and peeping, the young man saw an awful being come up brandishing a leaden club.

"Yo, ho!" growled the ogre. "I smell human flesh on which to feast."

"Nay, my son," cajoled Jezibaba, "a youth is here, in truth, but only because he values your advice."

"In that case," responded the giant, "let him appear and I shall not hurt him."

The Prince came out, trembling, for he reached only to the giant's knees; but being brave of heart he courteously asked his question.

"Ah, ah!" returned the giant, looking around as if searching for him. "I don't know where it is, but if you go to my brother in the silver castle, he may direct you. Here, mother, give him some dumplings to last him on his journey."

The Prince bit into a dumpling placed before him and two of his teeth cracked, for the giant's food was of pure lead.

"I shall eat them later," he said, and placing three of them in his pockets, he thanked his hosts and bade them good-by.

Again over hill and dale he traveled, until wearied he sank as before under a thickly branched tree. From the top of this tree twelve ravens flew, and, remembering his former good fortune, he followed in the direction of their flight.

For three days and three nights he had journeyed when he saw before him a castle whose walls glistened in the sun. It was of the finest silver and at the gateway stood Jezibaba, leaning on a silver staff. He greeted her, saying, "I come from the leaden castle and bear a message for the owner here."

"In that case you are welcome, but that harm may not come to you before my son knows, let me hide you."

Soon after an ogre, more terrible than the first, appeared brandishing a silver club. And as he appeared the castle and ground were shaken.

"Yo-ho!" said the giant, "I smell human flesh for my meal to-day."

"Not so," spoke Jezibaba. "A youth is here, in truth, but not to be harmed. He bears a message to you from your brother of the leaden castle."

So the Prince was invited to come out of his hiding-place, which he did trembling, he seemed so insignificant beside the ogre. He showed the leaden dumplings in token that he spoke the truth and the ogre's face grew quite mild.

"I can't tell you where the glass mountain is," he answered to the query, "but my brother of the Golden Castle will surely know. Take him my greeting. Before you

go, sit down with us to our dinner."

But the dinner consisted of silver dumplings, and excusing himself, the Prince placed three in his pocket and went on his way.

Over wooded hill, through valleys he journeyed, until weariness overcame him and he sank down under a tree. Twelve ravens flew from its top as he did so. The sight of them revived his strength and he followed in the direction they had taken.

After three days and three nights, before him shone a castle of gold so bright as to rival the sun's rays. Here Jezibaba, leaning on a golden staff, received him, and here he saw her son the ogre.

"If my brother of the silver castle has not harmed you, neither shall I harm you. What do you wish of me? Ah, the glass mountain! I know it well. Travel straight to the north and you will come to it. On its top you'll find the lemon tree with fruit so fragrant that it scents the air for miles around. If this fruit is meant for you, it'll drop into your hands of its own accord. If you need food or drink on your homeward trip, cut open a lemon and all of your needs will be satisfied. Now come and eat with us before you leave."

But the meal was all of dumplings of gold and, when the Prince saw them, he urged his haste and would only accept some for his journey.

He traveled straight to the north, and, after three days and three nights, he came to a barren spot in the center of which stood a hill of glass and on it a tree with lemons whose fragrance reached him long before he was near.

He tried to climb the slippery surface, but with every step he slid back a step.

Possibly were he lighter, he thought, he might finally succeed. So taking out a leaden dumpling he threw it away. To his delight, it stuck in the glass, making a step. He threw out another higher up and then the third, up to which he climbed. The silver dumplings followed, and then the gold, and, with their aid, he reached the mountain's top.

Sinking down on his knees under the lemon tree, he held out his hands and the lemons dropped into them one by one. As the last fell, the tree and glass mountain vanished, and how it happened he could not say, but he found himself well started toward home.

He had still a long distance to go, and hunger and thirst overcame him. Remembering the gold ogre's words, he took

a lemon from his pocket and cut it open.

As he did so, a maiden so beautiful his eyes were dazzled, leaped out and making a courtesy inquired:

"Have you food for me? Have you drink for me? Have you fine dresses for me to wear?"

"Alas," answered the Prince sadly, "I have none of these."

The maiden curtsied again and instantly vanished.

"Ah, I know now what manner of fruit this is!" thought the Prince.

He could not bring the maiden back, so he sipped the lemon and found it satisfied his hunger and thirst marvelously. He was able to walk a long way now, which was good, for he saw neither food nor drink that day. But toward evening of the next day his throat felt so dry and his stomach so empty that he reluctantly cut open the second lemon.

A maiden more dazzlingly beautiful than the first jumped out of it, and, making a courtesy, inquired as the first had done:

"Have you food for me? Have you drink for me? Have you fine clothes for me to wear?"

"Alas," the youth sadly answered, "I have none of these."

The maiden curtsied and vanished as completely as the

other had done.

He satisfied his hunger and thirst, but resolved that come what might, even though he had to crawl home for weakness, he would not cut the third lemon until he reached there.

Nor did he, for his strength lasted him until next day when he saw the walls of his city before him. Already outside he was recognized; the news spread, and the aged king sent out an escort to meet him and conduct him into his presence.

When the two had embraced, the Prince told his wondrous story. A banquet was prepared for the following day, to which many guests were invited. Costly raiment, too, was made, and brought into the palace walls.

When the guests had assembled conscious that some surprise was in store for them, the Prince cut the third and last lemon. A maiden of beauty so great that it surpassed the dazzling beauty of both of the others, leaped lightly out of it and, curtsying to the Prince, inquired: "Have you food for me? Have you drink for me? Have you fine clothing for me to wear?"

"I have all of these," said the Prince happily, presenting

her with the costly gowns.

She put on the most elegant of these, and, so much did it still further enhance her beauty, that the Prince could not take his eyes from her as he led her into the Banquet Hall.

"Will you marry me?" he whispered. And when she smilingly nodded consent, he announced the betrothal amid congratulations and cheering. Shortly after the wedding feast followed.

The young people were very happy until the old king died and the Prince, having taken his place, had to lead an army to War. Before they parted, that harm might not come to his Queen, a platform for her was erected high in the air. No one could get on it unless the Queen let down a silken cord.

Now, an ambitious gypsy maid begged the Queen so hard to let her come up to comb and braid her hair, that the Queen consented. The gypsy talked and flattered as she combed, until the Queen fell asleep, and then the girl killed her by plunging a sharp pin into her head.

As the pin sank in, a snow-white dove flew out. Nothing remained of the Queen except her beautiful clothes, which the gypsy donned and sat down on the throne.

When the King returned, he thought his wife terribly changed and would have nothing to do with her. He mourned incessantly for what she once had been.

One day, as he walked sorrowing in the garden, a snow-white dove lit on his hand. He stroked its pretty feathers and as he did so, felt a pin head on the top of its head.

"What is this!" he exclaimed, and drew it forth.

No sooner had he done so, than his wife of old stood before him just as he had first seen her in her wondrous charm and beauty. She told him all that had occurred. The wicked gypsy was put to death and nothing further ever came to mar the happiness of the heaven married pair.

CHAPTER IV

The Voice of the Wood

It was getting dusky in the woods when the little party started reluctantly for home. The birds were already chattering their good nights before preparing for sleep and a belated squirrel or two looked inquisitively down at them.

Now and then one of the children found berries that tempted even Helena to linger.

"I did not know there were so many yet," she remarked. "I must ask father to beg the forester to let me come soon again for them alone. Of course I shall take you all."

As the trees grew a little more scattered, Ruzena, who had been walking lost in thought, now raised her head.

"Old Susanna," she said, "told me once that the trees talk, but I don't believe it."

"It's not the trees," said Jozef quickly, "but the spirit of the woods who answers when you call to him."

Putting his hand to his mouth, he shouted: "O-ho! O-

ho!" And from somewhere came the answer "O-ho! O-ho!"

All the children looked back.

"Let me try," said Helena, smiling. Then she shouted: "Dobrou noc! Dobrou noc! Good night! Good night!"

"Dobrou noc! Good night!" came back as before.

"It's a mocking spirit," said Marouska, walking as close to Helena as she could.

"It's only the Echo Spirit," returned Helena, laughing.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" was returned from the woods so clearly that Marouska seized Helena by the hand.

They had reached the edge of the forest. It was still day outside and Marouska soon forgot that she had almost been really afraid.

She remembered it, however, the next day when a heavy summer shower came with lightning and thunder.

"I wonder what the spirit does when it rains," she said to herself.

She thought of the birds and squirrels that she had seen. Would the storm hurt them? She asked her father when he came home after it was all over. He smiled and said:

"I have to see Zerzan, the forester, about something. You can go with me to see if any birds are left."

How beautiful the wood looked when they reached it! Every leaf sparkled, while the birds sang far more than on the day before, Marouska thought.

"You see," said her father, "that all nature sometimes likes a bath."

"And the spirit of the wood, did he also like it?" inquired Marouska with some timidity. Then she told her father about the voice that had answered their call.

"That's the Echo," said her father, and whether it was because he could not explain it, or whether it was because the forester just then met them, he made no further explanations. Thus it came about that Marouska kept her bewildered first impressions for many a day after.

CHAPTER V

Summer

"We're off! Good-by!" cheerily called out four sturdy, red-cheeked girls, early one morning. They were walking in pairs, with bundles in their hands and their shoes slung over their backs. They belonged to some of the poor families of the village, and intended tramping it to the richer plains to work on two of the farms there, where their help would be very welcome and well paid. Each had taken food for the journey; rye bread, bacon, and a cheese called brindza, made from sheeps' milk by Slovaks in the mountains.

Everybody waved to the girls or had a pleasant word for them as they passed by. When the last house had been reached, their voices rang out sweetly in song.

In vain is not thy toil,
In vain is not thy faith;
The Lord God in the Heavens
Gathers all of labor's sweat.

And again:

Songs, songs, whence come ye?
Descended from the heavens
Or grown in the woods?

Not down from the heavens
Nor grown in the woods,
But born in the hearts
Of maidens and youths.

Then the more melancholy strain:

My lips are singing,
My eyes are smiling,
But tears stream from my heart.

Ruzena half envied them as she listened. Everybody at her house, except her baby brother and herself, had left for the hay-field to help with the mowing. She had not yet taken the geese to pasture, and as she started off, brother tried to toddle after her.

"Come, you may go with me to-day," she said good-naturedly, lifting him up in her strong arms and carrying him to the alleyway. But it is not easy herding geese that try to stray and carrying a heavy baby at the same time. Although the distance was not great, Ruzena found that it was more than she could do.

"I must leave you here," she said, panting, and put baby down by the roadside. "Now be good and play and sister will hurry back."

Juraj was always good, and although he looked a little wistful, made no complaint. Perhaps he was used to being left in that fashion. He had nothing on his little body except a short shirt; but on his head, according to custom, he had a most elaborately embroidered cap or rather hood. He sat patiently still for a while; then a big black beetle made him struggle to his feet. He reached forward to get it, turned a summersault, and by the time he had straightened himself up, the beetle had disappeared in the grass.

Juraj looked around for it and then catching sight of the brook near by, half walked, half crawled to it. There were all sorts of things to interest him here, and, without a moment's hesitation, he walked right into the middle and sat down

with something of a thump on the stony bottom. Even then he did not cry, but tried to reach the funny little water insects that scurried so fast everywhere about him.

"Juraj, Juraj, why, you're all wet!" exclaimed Ruzena, snatching him up when she returned. Then Juraj for the first time cried, just a plaintive little cry that seemed to ask why he must give up so innocent a pleasure.

He was tight asleep in his own little cradle, that had served two generations of children, when Ruzena heated some food that her mother had prepared, put it into a pail, filled a jug with fresh water, and started with these for the hay-field.

Some of the mowers were still being followed by barefoot women and girls in bright-colored skirts, who tossed the hay over their heads and shoulders. Others were already sitting and lunching in the shade of the lumbrous wagons. Large cream-colored oxen, with very long horns, stood unyoked near by.

Ruzena's mother returned home with her daughter, for neighbors had come over to help, and although she had baked all the day before, she felt anxious lest something should be lacking on the supper table.

It was just getting dusk when the sound of singing, not boisterous, but low and sweet, came from the road and announced the hay-makers. With their heads crowned with grain, they walked beside or stood in the clumsy wagons drawn by sleepy-looking oxen with poppies and corn flowers wound around their horns.

How good the things did taste after the hard work! Ruzena helped her mother wait on the guests, and as a treat, was allowed to go with them to the tavern where they danced their own national dances until the church bell rang out midnight.

CHAPTER VI

Village Incidents

"R-r-r-rub-rub-rub!" went the little drum beaten by the bailiff as he stalked through the village. Every one hurried to door or window to learn what the news might be. It would not have created much stir in a city, but it did create quite a stir in the double row of houses.

"Beran's cow, in your very next village," announced the bailiff, "stepped into a hole and broke her leg at noon to-day, so that she had to be killed. If you want fresh meat, here's your chance."

When the bailiff had gone from end to end of the street and back again shouting the news, he was surrounded by people anxious to know the particulars: just where the accident had occurred; how the cow happened to step into the hole; who first found it out; who killed her; and many other things.

Almost every one wanted some of the meat, and several

of the men set out that very evening to secure a share.

The next day Ruzena drove the geese to pasture in the hay stubble where they were always taken that no grain might be wasted, when the hay was already in the barn waiting to be threshed. When she returned, she found that a wandering tinker with mousetraps, rolls of wire and mending material slung over his back, was making his yearly visit.

The tinker's native place, like that of many another Slovak tinker, was Kysuca, near the Silesian border. It was not from there, however, that he had just come, but from Nytra, a place of twelve thousand inhabitants, once the capital of the great Moravian Kingdom under Svatopluk, of which Slovakia was an important part. There was scarcely a door at which he did not stop, not merely to do some tinkering but to deliver messages from distant friends or relatives, or to relate what was going on in the greater world. He had been as far as Bohemia in his year's travels, and had much to say of that prosperous and progressive country. His opinions, though sometimes crude, were listened to with respect.

"When I first started making my rounds twenty years

ago," he said, "I used to stop for a day or two with my wife's cousin in Praha (Prague). Then the Germans had succeeded in getting all the business into their hands; but now the Czechs have got it all back again. The banks, too, are almost all Czech. There is hardly a German sign to be seen anywhere. Every street has its own Czech name; but how the Czechs had to fight for this, and how sore the Germans are over it! The Czech believes in fighting for the right, he believes in educating his children, he is willing to make any sacrifice that will make Bohemia his own again. We're a different people; we are too ignorant to know how to go about things, and when we do know we're so mild we don't do it."

"Much good fighting would do us!" remarked Stefan the blacksmith. The other men laughed. "Come and show us how," they said.

"I don't mean fist fighting," the tinker returned half angrily. "I mean fighting with brains. Why can't we—"

"That's all right," interrupted a young man, his face all aflame, as he stepped into the ring. "But what chance have we to develop our brains when we haven't a single Higher School where the Slovak language is taught? When every

opportunity is cut off from one if he somehow manages to educate himself, unless he turns traitor to his mother tongue and swears that he is a Magyar? Don't I know? Didn't I hope to work myself up into a position where I could serve my nation? And you know my record. Imprisonment and imprisonment and imprisonment. The Czechs are helping themselves, but no progress will come for us until the world at large will awaken to its duty of preventing tyranny and exploitation."

"True!" muttered many of the men; and then slipped away one by one as some one pointed out the Notary approaching in the distance.

An old woman now engrossed the tinker's attention. She was quite a character in the village and some of the people would have agreed that she was the chief character. No one called her by her name. She was "Aunty" to everybody for miles around. In sickness and death, in birth and rejoicings, her advice was sought, even sometimes before that of the village priest. She generally carried a basket of herbs on her arm, for she was always hunting for some or ready to distribute some to others. She knew their virtues as no one else did.

Ruzena chose that moment to bring out an earthen pot to be wired. She hoped the tinker would be so busy talking to "Aunty" that he would forget to indulge in his favorite pastime of teasing.

But no sooner did she come up than he looked at her seriously to ask: "Have you caught any birds this year by sprinkling something on their tails?" And when Ruzena smilingly shook her head and said shyly, "None," he wanted to know where a dog goes when he follows his nose.

When at last he handed back her pot so skillfully mended that it was, as he claimed, as good as new, he said more seriously than before:

"His lordship in the next village has commanded me to bring him a new kind of strap, and I think that one of your braids of hair will be just the thing for it. Stand still just a moment while I find my shears."

But instead of standing Ruzena was running home, half afraid that the funny tinker might really cut off the hair. And as she ran she heard him sing the first part of a folk song that he had just learned from some peasants in the neighboring brother land of Moravia:

"M—m, m—m, two mosquitoes married to-day;

M—m, m—m, not a drop of wine have they."

"Does the tinker go all over the world?" Ruzena asked her mother, humming the tune that her quick ear had caught.

"M-mm, yes," her mother answered rather absent-mindedly. She was busy preparing the supper which the tinker was to eat with them.

"He does his wiring well," she said as she put down the pot he had fixed. "He's somewhat rattle-brained, I think sometimes, but he learns a lot more going around than if he stayed here. He hasn't come from any distant country to us. Only from Nytra. You might ask him about that place. If we don't get him started on something else he will bring up the Czechs again and what they're doing and what we're not. Since we can't do anything, it's no use repeating all that."

Ruzena remembered when all were seated at the table, and asked the tinker if he would tell them something about Nytra.

"I learned in school," she concluded proudly, "that it was the capital of the great Moravian Kingdom."

The tinker looked pleased. "Yes, under Svatopluk," he said. "Then we had nothing of which to be ashamed. But do you know anything about that Svatopluk?"

Ruzena shook her head.

"Never mind," said the tinker kindly. "There's some grown people in this village that don't know any more. Do you know?" and he turned to Jozef.

Jozef hurried to swallow the food in his mouth.

"I know the kingdom all went to smash after he died," he shouted more loudly than he intended.

His father and mother exchanged pleased looks.

"Do you know why?" asked the tinker. "You don't? Well, I'll tell you as I heard a priest tell it to some boys.

"When Svatopluk knew he must die, he called his three sons to him. He selected the eldest to rule after him. The two younger to whom he left large estates, he bade be loyal to their brother.

"At his orders, a servant brought in three stout twigs fastened tightly together. 'Break this,' he said, handing the twigs to his oldest son. But the Prince found it impossible. Then he handed it to the second son and then to the third, but the twigs remained unbroken.

"'Cut the cord,' he ordered the servant.

"This was done and Svatopluk handed a twig apiece to each of the princes.

"'Now break it,' he commanded. This each one easily did.

"'Here you see,' he said, 'that when three stick closely together nothing can injure them, but when they fall apart it is easy to destroy them entirely. So will it be with you. Remain united, working in harmony and forgiving one another, and your enemies will find it impossible to overcome you. But live divided, and you will not only fight among yourselves but your neighbors will master each of you.'

"Alas, what he foretold would come with dissensions, did come. Foolish, selfish ambition destroyed the foundations of this mighty kingdom which included Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Silesia, northern Bohemia, and a large part of northern Germany."

CHAPTER VII

An Adventure

It was Saturday and Ruzena had just returned to the village from some distance outside of it. She brought back some of the red sand that was prized highly for sprinkling over the hard earthen floors of the house. She spread it carefully and then went into the kitchen to help her mother with the baking for the morrow.

Sunday was a blessed day in more ways than one for the villagers. No matter how hard the work of the week had been, the Sabbath afforded relaxation. Everybody who could went to church, and exceedingly attractive did they look when they trooped out in twos and threes after the service. The women especially looked like a bevy of bright flowers in their gay attire.

There is no one national costume in Slovakia. It varies from district to district. Here the women wore a snowy chemise with short puffed sleeves ending in a wide ruffle.

Above this ruffle was a pretty band of hand embroidery in orange-colored silk. Over this chemise was a bodice. The heavily starched skirt was full of tiny carefully arranged pleats with another skirt of transparent flowery material, also pleated, worn over, each pleat in this upper skirt being fitted into that of the skirt beneath.

The men were quite as picturesque in high boots, and close-fitting trousers of black cloth embroidered in black and yellow. Over the shirt, a short sleeveless waistcoat was worn, fastened with one button. The two rooster feathers at the back of the men's hats gave them something of a dashing air.

The young men and boys always took their seats near the door. The older men sat at the right of the aisle, the older women at the left. The finery of the young married women and of the girls did not allow them to be seated. The former stood in the aisle, the latter in rows near the altar. When they knelt down their skirts stood out so far on every side that no one could come near.

In the afternoon the young people paired for a dance at the pavilion in the tavern grounds; the children wandered off for play, while the older folks visited at one another's

houses or met in the tavern to talk over the little happenings of the week.

Wherever Ruzena was, Etelka and Marouska were also apt to be. On this particular Sunday the three had an adventure that gave them all, but especially Etelka, who was the most imaginative, quite a little thrill.

It was all because Jozef and one of his friends, Janik, had insisted on following the little girls about, twitching their long hair and playing all sorts of tricks on them. When something called the boys away for awhile, Ruzena exclaimed:

"I wish we could hide from them!"

"I'll tell you a good place," suggested Etelka; "let's go into our storeroom. Father put a lantern down there and we can light it and wait until the boys give us up."

Marouska and Ruzena thought this just the thing, and away the three hurried to the underground cellars. Every one was busy with his own affairs, so no attention was paid to them, and they climbed down the ladder into the dugout belonging to Etelka's parents, without being seen. Etelka lit the lantern and then propped up the door slightly as she had seen her mother do. The girls stood waiting and listening.

At last they heard boys' voices. "It's Jozef and Janik," whispered Ruzena. Whether it was or not, the voices grew fainter and soon could not be heard.

"They've passed, but if we go out they'll find us," said Marouska in her quiet, sad little voice.

Her two friends agreed. "But," asked Ruzena, "what can we do here?"

Etelka's eyes sparkled. A bold plan had occurred to her.

"Let's explore the secret passages," she exclaimed.

"Let's!" echoed her companions delightedly yet fearfully.

"We won't go far," continued Etelka, knowing that such explorations were considered dangerous and forbidden. "Just a little ways."

"Just a little ways!" Ruzena and Marouska again echoed breathlessly.

These so-called secret passages were very old and no one seemed to know for certain why they had been built. The story generally accepted was that they belonged to the time immediately following the Hussite Wars, when many Czechs were forced to emigrate to Slovakia. While they were allowed to come, meetings to study the Bible had to be held in secret. These passages, connected with several of the

cellars, made such meetings possible. Although the Slovaks in the village were now Catholics, they had not forgotten stories of martyrdom and courage handed down from those times. They told how a pastor had traveled from village to village hidden in a load of hay; of how a Bible was once saved by being thrown down into a well, and many other tales.

Taking the lantern, Etelka led the way into a little opening. It did not go far, for the earth had fallen down from the side walls, partially blocking it.

The girls looked at one another.

"I know what we can do," suggested Ruzena. "I saw an old board in the cellar. We can dig some of the earth away with that," and she ran to get it. She also brought back a big wooden ladle, and with these unusual implements, Marouska and Ruzena dug, while Etelka held the lantern, until the obstruction could be passed. There was comparative freedom after that for quite a distance. At one point the passage divided into three parts. The girls chose to go into the broadest, but scarcely had they gone twenty steps when the light in the lantern went suddenly out.

"Oh, dear, now we're in for it," burst from Ruzena, as she felt Marouska catch tight hold of her sleeve.

"Let's keep hold of one another and go back," suggested Etelka, her voice trembling slightly.

It was not easy, for they had to feel their way along the wall. They became conscious, too, that the air was bad. Once quite a bit of earth fell down before them, but, fortunately, not enough to hurt or stop them. It seemed to them that they had been walking very, very long, when Ruzena broke the silence that had fallen, by volunteering:

"We must have come to where the passage divides."

"Yes, and I wonder—" Etelka did not finish, for Marouska clutched her wildly by the arm.

"Oh, look back," she whispered fearfully.

The girls turned. Coming behind them but from another direction were two red lights evidently carried by some person or persons.

The girls huddled together, too much frightened to move.

Suddenly Ruzena gave a funny, relieved, nervous laugh. "Why, if it isn't Jozef and Janik!" she exclaimed aloud and then ran forward and threw her arms about the astonished boys.

"Oh, you dears, how did you know that we were lost?"



“The girls huddled together, too much frightened to move”

Jozef and Janik were surprised. They had had no idea that the girls were in the cellar. They had gone into Janik's storeroom for some raw sour-kraut, and Janik had related how his big brother had ventured quite a distance into one of the passage-ways the week before. "Let's go, too," had suggested Jozef. Both boys had run home for some lanterns, never dreaming that they should meet the girls.

"Huh," grunted Jozef, after Ruzena's embrace, not yet comprehending. And when the boys did comprehend, well—it was rather nice to be treated like heroes! They listened to the girls, but although they glanced sideways now and then at each other, offered no explanations.

Then Jozef and Janik quarreled and while waiting to make up, Jozef had an inspiration.

"The girls won't try this again," he communed with himself, "and sometime I'll give Janik a scare by going through our passage to his. Perhaps I'd better store a little food in it, for I might ask some of the other boys to come in with me, and it'd be nicer to have some food and play we're those old Hussites."

So, little by little, Jozef smuggled in food of all kinds; some sugar, more wheat than several boys could eat,

sunflower and pumpkin seeds—the latter considered a particular delicacy—a small bag of raisins and nuts, a handful of dried mixed fruit in a preserve jar, and various other things.

CHAPTER VIII

A Visit to "Matthew's Land"

Other things occurred so unexpectedly and rapidly that boy-like, Jozef forgot all about his store of hidden food. Late in the Fall, most of the children under twelve were back in school.

Their home chores now had to be done on Wednesdays, which, instead of Saturdays, were their holidays, or before or after school hours. Ruzena's favorite studies were embroidery, drawing and painting, for, like most of the peasants, she had inherited a decided art instinct. Even her mother, who had never had any lessons, had painted without patterns pretty borders around the guest and living rooms; while her father, also untaught, had made and carved the two pretty chairs in the latter, and also the long shelf on which stood a fine array of village pottery. Besides the work at school, Ruzena also had crocheting, knitting, and embroidery at home. It was mostly for herself, for her

mother had her follow the local custom of beginning in childhood to work on her trousseau.

There were other holidays from school work besides the Sundays and Wednesdays, such as Dusickovy Vecer, which comes in November, the Slovak Memorial Day.

It was frosty and cold on this particular memorial day; there were even some icicles hanging from trees and bushes. A few flowers, from indoor window gardens, and hundreds of candles, had been placed and lit on the rude graves. In their dim light, figures could be seen kneeling and praying. Here the light fell on an old man with a patient, gentle face, and there on a young girl, her red skirts adding color to the scene. Children were about, too, most of them in fur coats, and none of them quiet for long. In the middle of the cemetery a group of men and women were gathered around a cross, while some one prayed. It was an impressive occasion, and as the villagers strolled homeward there was no loud singing nor even talking.

After Dusickovy Vecer, Jozef and Ruzena were taken by Jozef's godfather to a little village far up in the beautiful Tatras, where life was much more primitive and much harder than in their own little rude village, the Magyar

Government showing no concern whatever in the people's welfare.

On the way to this village, they crossed a part of what the people around call "Matthew's Land," because over it once ruled one of the great figures of their history, Matthew Csak, Lord of the Vah and Tatras, as he called himself.

There are many castles in the mountains, but the most interesting was that actually inhabited by Matthew in the early part of the fourteenth century.

Matthew's career was brief but remarkable. He was a Palatine, holding the highest office in the power of the King to bestow. He ruled over what is now the greater part of Slovakia, possessing enormous wealth, of which thirty fortified castles were a small part. In these castles he held court on a scale that rivaled that of the King himself.

When the male line of the Arpad Kings of Hungary became extinct, it was largely through his influence that a Czech King, Vaclav II, was called to the throne. Unfortunately, instead of coming himself, Vaclav sent his son, then a lad of thirteen.

To this the Pope, who had much to say in politics in those days, objected, and the King of Anjou, taking

advantage of being preferred, seized the throne.

Powerful nobles rose up in arms against him, but the one he feared most was Matthew. He tried his best to gain his favor, but in vain. Then the Pope excommunicated Matthew, who retaliated by burning a bishop's stronghold. From everywhere nobles, zemans, and peasants flocked to his standards.

The Anjou King now made peace with all the other nobles, and resolved to direct his efforts to crushing the chief rebel. Near the little River Torysa, the armies of the two met. The King's was enormous, and although the Slovaks under Matthew fought bravely, they were so greatly outnumbered that they were defeated.

Although Matthew was defeated, he was not reduced in rank. He retired for a time to one of his castles, and then gradually assumed his old powers, which he exercised to the day of his death.

"Had Matthew succeeded in this rebellion," Jozef's godfather concluded in telling the story, "he might have laid the foundations of a successful Slovak state, for the Slovaks at that time still had in mind the part they had played in the big Moravian Kingdom of Svatopluk."

CHAPTER IX

Jozef Goes to School

A wonderful opportunity now came for Jozef. He was only twelve and had just completed the course in the primary school.

"Jozef is bright. He is above the average in his studies," the teacher told his parents. "He ought to continue school work."

"I'd let him go on if we had schools of our own, but I won't have him go to a Magyar school to forget his language and learn to despise his own kin like Shlachta's boy," his father declared with emphasis.

"Better have him ignorant than false to his birthright," his mother agreed.

The teacher nodded. He understood.

"If you could only send him to Bohemia," he suggested.

"If," repeated the father grimly.

"What is this about Bohemia?" asked Jozef's godfather,

who had just come up. He was a tall, thin, muscular man, whose hair hung down his back in two tiny braids. He was known for his liberal and somewhat "heretical" opinions. "I am going there after the holidays. Do you want to send some message?"

The teacher explained to him how things stood. "If we don't educate our children," he pleaded, "the Magyars will take greater and greater advantage of our ignorance."

Jozef's godfather stood a few moments in thought. Then he nodded good-by and left. The teacher was not put out. He was glad that he was going to think it over.

The next morning the godfather was over at Jozef's house bright and early.

"I've decided," he said, "that the teacher is right. In Bohemia, Jozef will learn more about his own country than we can ever teach him here and he'll learn to fight. I'll take him with me and somehow we'll find means to pay for his schooling there."

So, one day, Jozef found himself whirled away on a train over the fertile farm lands of Moravia, in parts of which there are many Slovak villages, through Nivnitz, where the great Moravian educator, John Amos Comenius was born,

through towns and hamlets until they came to Brno, Moravia's capital. They changed trains here, and Jozef had time to see the Spielberg, crowned by a citadel long used as a Government prison, with its horrible torture cells, which throw some light on the conception of humanity of the Hapsburg Monarchy.

And then away again but not to Praha, Bohemia's capital. Instead, Jozef's godfather was bound for Tabor, one of the most interesting towns of Bohemia, having been founded by one of the great religious reform parties at the outbreak of the Hussite Wars. This was the town of Jan Zizka, the redoubtable military hero of the times.

Jozef was full of questions regarding this patriot and military genius—the greatest one of his age. He learned that he is regarded by many as the inventor of modern tactics, that he organized peasants and mechanics so wonderfully that they beat back and drove into despair the best trained arm-clad knights of Europe; that he never lost a battle; and that he probably was the composer of a splendid hymn, "All Ye Warriors of God," which seemed to inspire his men with wonderful power as they sang it marching to battle. At the battle of Domazlice (Taus), which took place after Zizka's

death, 130,000 crusaders entered Bohemia, proclaiming that they would not let a single heretic live. They proceeded with plunder and slaughter until they reached Domazlice, where they pitched their camp. Some days after, the report spread among them that the Hussites, now under the command of Zizka's splendid successor, Prokop the Great, were on their way and that a battle was imminent.

While the Hussites were still four miles distant, the crusaders heard the rattle of their famous wagons and the mighty tones of the hymn sung by the whole Hussite army. It made such a terrible impression that the fanatical soldiers fled before the song, even the curses of the Cardinal failing to stop them.

Not knowing the passages of the gray Bohemian mountain forest they were overtaken by the Hussite vanguards; many thousands were killed and many more taken prisoners. Their camp with all the ammunition and provisions fell into the hands of their captors. Thus a song proved more mighty than the sword.

"Fear not those, the Lord hath said,
Who would your body harm.

For love of your fellowmen,
He hath ordered you to die,
Hence take courage manfully."

This great victory for a time put an end to all efforts to make Bohemia betray her conscience.

Before Jozef's godfather left for home, he told the boy another and beautiful story about Prokop.

"Not only did Prokop repulse the enemy when they invaded Bohemia, but he himself made incursions into neighboring lands. Once he led his army to the walls of Naumburg, in German Saxony. The inhabitants were seized with great terror for all counted on the town being entirely destroyed.

"In the midst of the dismay, some one advised the townspeople to send the children of the town to the enemy's camp. 'It is possible,' he said, 'that they may soften the leader's heart.'

"The people took the advice and the next day four hundred and fifty children, gowned in white, assembled before the Town Hall. Two hundred armed citizens accompanied them to the gate.

"When the children reached Prokop's camp, they fell down on their knees before him and begged him to spare the town.

"Prokop was deeply affected. He detained the children until evening, treating them to all the peas and cherries that they could eat. When it began to grow dark he sent them home. 'Tell your parents,' he said to them, 'that I will spare the town. But see that when you reach the gate you shout: "Victory to the Hussites!"'

"The next day the Hussites left the vicinity without having harmed a single living thing.

"In memory of the event, the people of Naumburg hold an annual festival in which the children march to the spot where once stood the Hussite camp. Here they are treated to peas and cherries. The occasion is called the Hussite Cherry Festival."

CHAPTER X

School Days in Bohemia

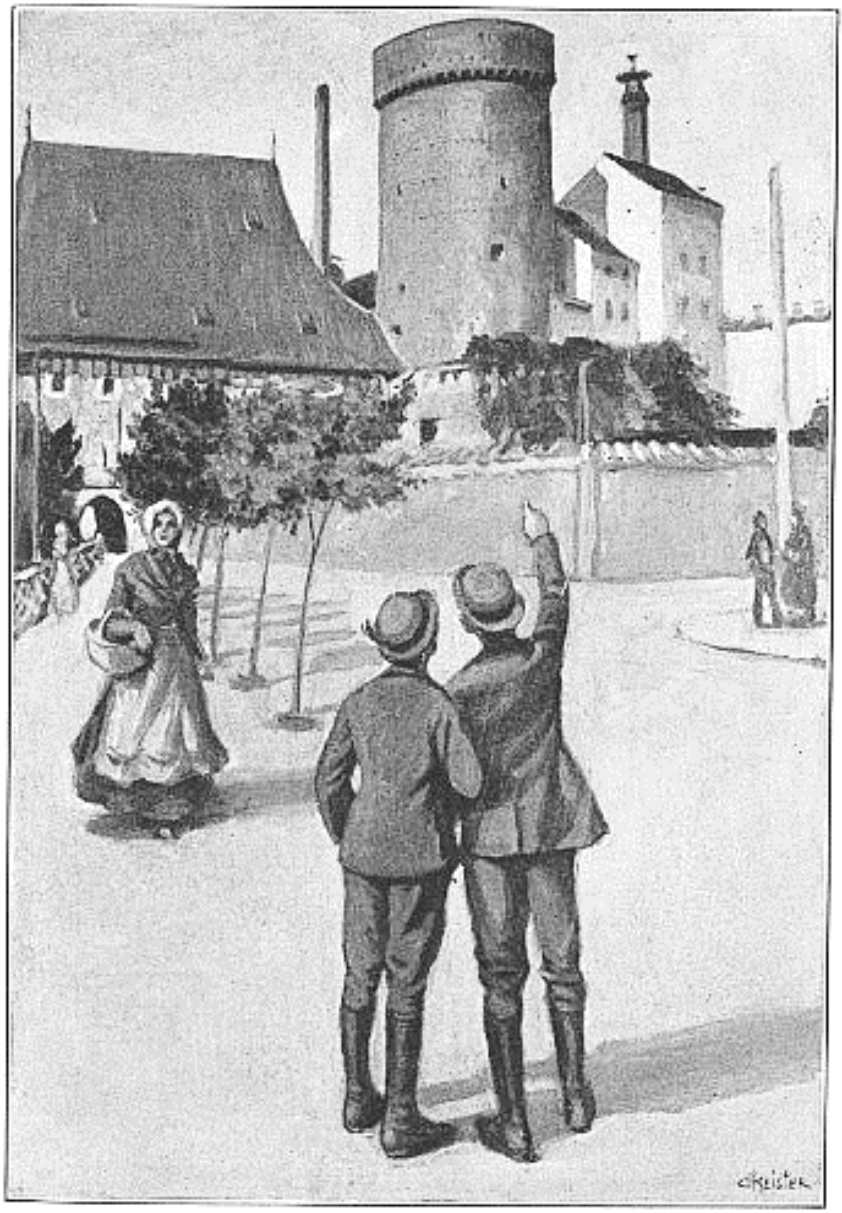
After arrangements had been made for Jozef to live with some distant relatives, his godfather bade him good-by.

"Learn all you can, the better to help your native land," he said to him in parting.

It was not long before Jozef felt quite at home. The boys at first teased him about his dialect, but it was such good-natured teasing that he did not mind it. Once when the teacher overheard them, he said:

"Do not care. Your language may not be as literary as ours, but it is softer and more musical, and hence much more pleasing."

Jozef became very fond of the city. With a "heretic" friend, he used to wander over the curiously arranged, toothed old streets, to the fortifications that still stand, or to the river that surrounds the city on three sides. Or they would stand and stare and discuss the statues of Jan Hus,



“He used to wander . . . to the fortifications”

the religious martyr, of his marvelously eloquent friend, Jerome of Prague, of Jan Zizka, and of Prokop the Great. These and many historic relics were in the odd, triple-gabled Town Hall, finished in 1521, in the big market square.

The statue of Zizka had an especial fascination for them. They could see him walking right there in the Square, surrounded by armed warriors, looking just as here represented, with expressive bent head, long mustache, and heavy fur coat over his shirt of mail. In one hand he held a sword, in the other, that terrible weapon that they knew was once called by the fanciful name of the morning star.

Besides the Town Hall there were other interesting irregularly built buildings, with peculiar ornamentation, in the Square. Before one of them still stood one of the stone tables on which the Taborites took communion in the open air.

How very different Bohemia seemed to him from Slovakia! Here every one was proud of his nationality, which despite heavy taxes and many other oppressions, the people had retained through the efforts of great unselfish leaders who ceaselessly battled for their rights. He forgot the humility that he used to feel when meeting a contemptuous

Magyar. Soon he held his head as high as the Czech boys did when they came face to face with Germans who through wrong training, in their wicked conceit, looked upon every nationality not their own, as far below them. In Tabor this was not at all hard with all the voiceless eloquent teachers around that reminded of past greatness and resistance to injustice.

Jozef soon felt one of the family in the excellent home in which he boarded. Nothing pleased the good-hearted house mother more than his usually hearty appetite, and she seldom failed to applaud it by some quaint folk saying, as "A hearty eater is a hearty worker." She had no patience with fussiness about selection of food, and if she saw any would exclaim: "He who is fussy about his food, may learn to think any cheese would be good."

In the first days of his stay, Jozef accompanied her once to a market day in the Square. The farmers seemed to him to have brought a little of every kind of food that one could wish for. There was sweet home-churned butter, cottage and other cheese, eggs, poultry, vegetables, fruit, honey, mushrooms, poppy seed for cakes, and grain of all kinds.

In school Jozef was now in what was called the Lower

Gymnasium. He had to be in the school building, which was not far from his boarding place, at a quarter to eight in the morning. Sundays and Thursdays were holidays. The school exercises began by all the pupils repeating the Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria. After that the time was devoted to the regular studies. The classes were named by Latin numerals, prima, secunda, etc. to octava.

At ten o'clock came a short recess, in which the children of the Lower Gymnasium played ball; those of the upper thought it below their dignity to do so. Sometimes instead, the pupils indulged in a little lunch by buying buttered bread, cheese, or fruit from the janitor.

Whenever a Professor entered the room or left it, all the children stood up as a sign of respect.

Jozef soon came to share the devotion of the children to the teacher, a man of delicate health but great spiritual vision, who constantly called the attention of the pupils to the idealism found in Bohemian (Czech) history. Through him the pupils learned, too, that Austria was largely parasite, living on Czech wealth; that the Czechs paid sixty-two per cent of all the taxes in Austria to support passive non-Slav lands; that eighty-three per cent of Austrian coal was mined

in Bohemia; that sixty per cent of the iron was found there; that ninety per cent of beet sugar factories were located there; that textile and other industries were important. They also learned that the renowned Bohemian glass employs over fifty thousand workers; that there are excellent highways, extending to ten thousand miles, and several important railroad lines; that one-third of all the gold and silver mined in Hungary is mined in neglected Slovakia. Jozef was particularly impressed by the fact that despite all the discrimination of the Government against the Czech schools, the Czechs were by far the most literate people of the monarchy.

History came to be Jozef's favorite study. He devoted much time particularly to the glorious reign of Charles I, known also as Emperor Charles IV, who probably did more for Bohemia than any other monarch.

One of the teacher's favorites was King George (Jiri) of Podebrad, sometimes called the "Heretic King of Bohemia." Jozef did not appreciate his full significance and was more interested in the stories told of his jester, whose name was Palecek.

Palecek was no ordinary jester. He was an educated man

of noble birth, who by playing the fool could often tell truths other courtiers dared not utter. Because he addressed every one, even the King with his permission, as "Brother," he himself came to be known as "Brother Palecek." One thing Brother Palecek felt as a particular duty was to keep the King in lively humor, for the cares of state were very heavy at the time.

Once the King gave a large dinner. At his table sat the Queen, princes and princesses, and the highest nobles of the realm. The younger nobles and others who served the King sat at a table apart. When Brother Palecek arrived, he was not very well pleased at being placed at this lower table. Soon he had another grievance; big fish were being passed to the King and those around him, while only little fish with many bones, came to the table at which he sat.

Gaining the attention of those about him, he took up one of the fish and held it to his ear and asked it: "Little fish, do you know anything about my brother?" and then placed it down again.

Then he took a second fish and asked: "Little fish, do you know anything about my brother?" Again he laid it down and took up a third.

The young people about him burst into laughter, so funny did Palecek look while doing this. The King asked what was amusing them.

"If it please Your Majesty," one of them answered, "Brother Palecek is conversing with the fish."

"Brother Palecek," said the King, "what are you doing?"

"Brother King," replied Palecek, "I'll tell you. I had a brother fisherman who was drowned in the river. So I am asking these little fish if they know anything about him."

"And what do they tell you?" asked the King.

"They tell me," returned Palecek, "that they're still too young and small to know anything about it, but that I'd better ask those bigger, older fish that are on your table."

The King laughed and ordered the largest fish of all to be placed on a dish and given to Palecek. These the jester accepted gracefully and shared, amid general good cheer, with all at his table.

There were various boys' associations, which Jozef was soon invited to attend or was asked to join. One was a boys' orchestra. In this land of music, it was very natural that all who formed a part of it should have been enthusiasts. As an encouragement to its members, the orchestra received free

tickets to all the purely national concerts given in the city. Thus Jozef came to know better the works of the great Czech composers, Antonin Dvorak, Bedrich Smetana, and Zdenko Fibich. He thus also had an opportunity to hear Jan Kubelik, the renowned violinist, and Emmy Destinn, the prima donna.

Now and then the school children were taken to a national art exhibit. One of Vaclav Brozik, whose "Columbus at the Court of Queen Isabella" is known to all American children, and one of Alfons Mucha, known also in America for his poster work, but renowned in his own country in other lines as well, were followed by one of Joza Uprka, the Moravian Slovak, whose paintings of his beloved country folks, with their riot of color, and his passionate portrayal of the action and joy of life, made Jozef for a time quite homesick for the simpler, more picturesque life of his mother's home.

CHAPTER XI

War

The world rang with the assassination of the Austrian Archduke, Francis Ferdinand, and his wife, at Sarajevo, in a province of Austria-Hungary, but quite outside the Czech and Slovak lands. It was a terrible deed with which no law-loving people were in sympathy. But when Austria, backed by Germany, seized the killing as a pretext for declaring war on little Serbia, both Czechs and Slovaks felt the grave injustice, and despite all efforts made by the Government, very few of them could be induced to make any demonstration in favor of the action. When Germany mobilized, there was no doubt in the minds of any but that the War was simply one against all the Slavs, who opposed German possession of Middle Europe and German and Magyar ideas of superiority and power.

It was a hard time through which all the Slavic people of Austria-Hungary had to pass. It was hardest on those who,

like the Czechs and Slovaks, were forced to fight on a side that they detested, against their own interests. In the face of the terrorist methods employed, their resistance and sacrifices are remarkable.

The Government feared them. No sooner was war declared than Czech and Slovak troops were sent from their home lands into the Austro-Hungarian province farthest from them, Transylvania, and foreign soldiers took their places. German soldiers are said to have patrolled Bohemia's borders.

It was during the first days that Prof. T. G. Masaryk, on the advice of his colleagues who understood how the War menaced the Czech and Slovak lands, was fortunate enough to escape from the country with one of his daughters. From then on until Czecho-Slovakia was recognized, he worked incessantly for Czecho-Slovak independence.

When Austria declared war, it did what no other country taking part in the War did: it declared war without first gaining the consent of Parliament. It was a high-handed act which the Czechs, in particular, resented. Great gloom prevailed. In sympathy with the principles of the Allies, knowing intimately the world menace of Germany as few

outsiders knew it, the leaders were seeking means of protest when one after another was thrown into prison. Newspaper and magazine editors followed in quick succession. But the people, like the Hussites of old, stood firm in their faith and determination to sacrifice all for the right and to quietly resist in every way that promised to be effectual.

Jozef saw the soldiers march off from Tabor with a look of peculiar resolve in their eyes, and heard mothers and fathers whisper with their good-byes:

"You know your duty to your native land." When later he heard of patriotic soldiers shot because refusing to go forward; of Czech and Slovak soldiers branded as traitors because they deserted to the Allies and, reforming in their ranks, fought their real enemies, the Germans of Germany, the Germans of Austria, and the Magyars of Hungary, he understood better what a big and splendid thing this duty was.

For a while, work in the school continued, but everything seemed different. Patriotic songs with their beautiful melodies were no longer allowed to be sung; the old school books with their brilliant, romantic, yet true recitals of Bohemia's wonderful, heroic past, were replaced entirely by

newly written books full of praise of the Hapsburg rulers and of Germany. Jozef and the other pupils rejoiced in one thing: they still had the same teacher. But this rejoicing did not continue long. One day they found the school doors closed and learned that the teacher had been taken to prison accused of disloyalty because he had allowed a ten-year-old pupil to walk home humming the national air, "Kde domov muj" (Where is my home?).

"Where is my home,
Where is my home?
Waters through its meads are streaming,
Mounts with rustling woods are teeming,
Vales are bright with flow'rets rare,
Oh, Earth's Eden, thou art fair!
Thou art my home, my fatherland,
Thou art my home, my fatherland!"

News of still more imprisonments and executions followed daily. The older daughter of Prof. Masaryk was imprisoned, mainly as a punishment to her father, who was working so hard against the Central Powers abroad. Machar,

one of the greatest poets of Bohemia, shared the same fate because of a poem published in the United States, without the poet's consent—a poem passed many years before by the Austrian censor!

Strange rumors spread. Once Jozef and his particular friend, Jaroslav, walked out of the city in the direction of Blanik, a mountain around which are clustered many traditions. They were overtaken and offered a ride by a very old man.

"Who are you and where are you going?" he asked.

"We're students in the Lower Gymnasium," Jaroslav answered. "We're only out for a walk, for there is no school. We're going toward Blanik, but don't expect to get so far."

"Better not," said the old man sternly. "Who knows but the old tale may be true that the Taborites never died but are hidden, as is said, in a cave there. They were to reappear at the time of Bohemia's greatest peril, you know. This may be it. There're lights in that mountain, I tell you; don't breathe a word of it; but also don't go there."

Here he let the boys alight, and they walked on speculating on the tradition and as to just what the man meant by his last words.

"Do you think that some of the Czechs go there to discuss things?" asked Jozef. Jaroslav did not know what to think. Both boys wondered and wondered whether some great help might not come to Bohemia from the mountain.

School did not reopen, and food became very scarce. It seemed best that Jozef be sent back to his home in Slovakia in any makeshift way possible. This was done, and after a week's hard and varied travel, he reached home, almost starved. In Slovakia he found the same persecution of all suspected of lack of sympathy with the plans and purposes of the Central Powers.

Four of his relatives had been taken to fight; of these two cousins had been killed, and one was reported to have been shot with an entire company that refused to advance against the Serbians. No one knew where the fourth relative, an uncle after whom Jozef had been named, was to be found, until Austria-Hungary was broken up and he returned home wounded. He had a story full of exciting incidents to tell and the villagers never tired of hearing it.

One day a load of miserable looking prisoners passed in cars through the village. It was terrible to see them as they lay listlessly against each other. It was plain that it had been

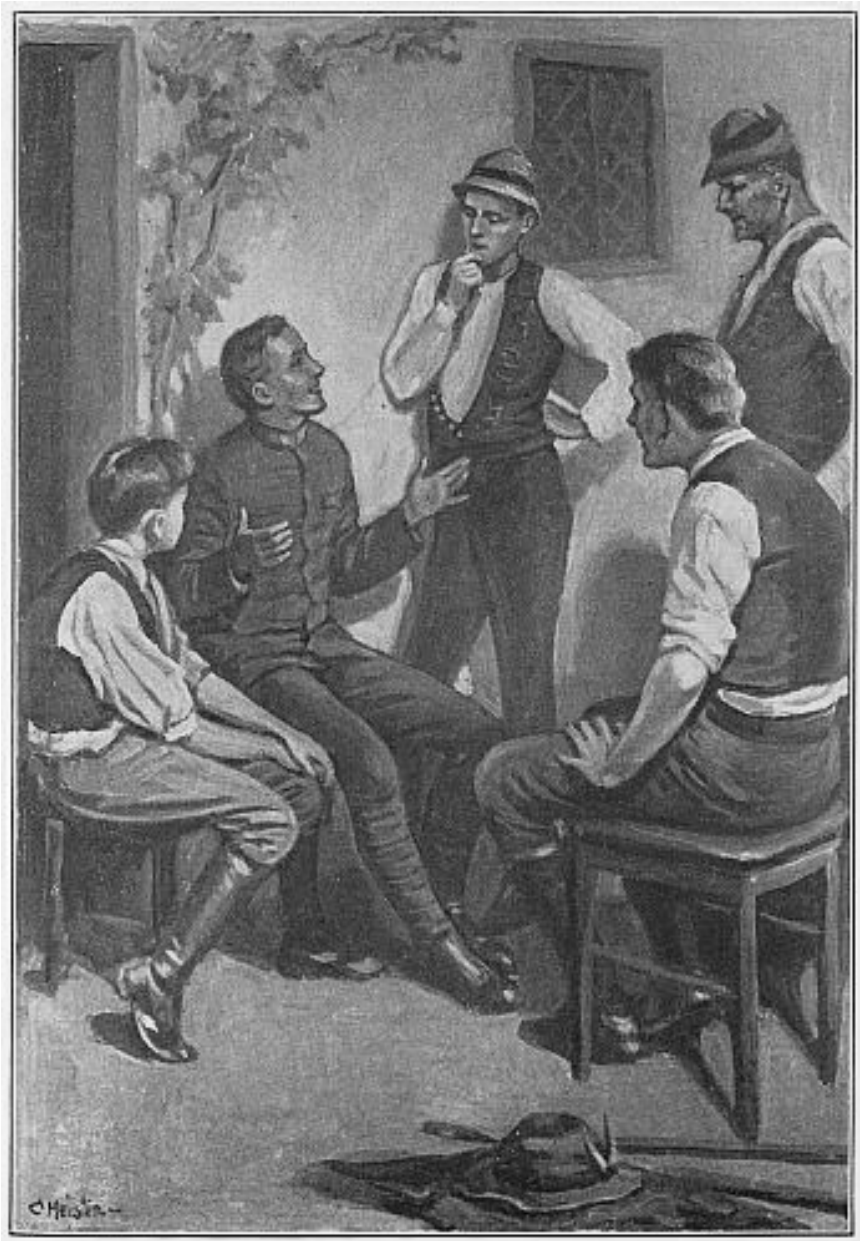
long since they had had anything to eat or drink.

The villagers were forbidden to give them food or to satisfy their thirst, but the kind-hearted Slovak maidens found a way to help nevertheless. How the idea spread not many of the girls knew, but there was a sudden interchange of knitting material. It must have contained a message, for the girls, far thinner than they had been before the War, met before the Church and proceeded past the cars in a body, as if to view the horrible sight. But most of them raised their eyes only for a moment. It was when each threw some crusts of bread soaked in wine in to the famishing prisoners—bread that each had denied herself from her own scanty allowance.

The prettiest girl of all blocked the way as long as she could to a Magyar officer, while the prisoners, weak as they were, fell like beasts on the unexpected treat.

"We want to see bad men. We show them we think them bad," the girl said to the officer in broken Hungarian, smiling sweetly.

He smiled in return and, nodding his approval of the sentiment, let the girls stay long enough for all evidences of what they had done, except the brighter looks of the prisoners, to have vanished.



“The villagers never tired of hearing it”

Even harder to bear than the thought of what their loved ones might be suffering in battle, was to see the younger children sicken because of lack of proper food. Ruzena was one of these. She became so ill that the family were seriously alarmed. She refused to eat the coarse food which was the village's daily ration and piteously begged for something different. There was nothing else to offer.

"Do go to Janik's," the mother one day bade Jozef, quite in despair, "and see if they haven't some little bit of a thing they could let us have to tempt her."

Janik's mother was full of sympathy but vainly searched her cupboards. At last she sent Janik with Jozef to see if there might not be some winter vegetable rolled in some corner of the cellar.

The boys searched but found nothing. As they were leaving there suddenly flashed upon Jozef a recollection of how he had hidden a private store some distance in the secret passages. Hastily leaving Janik without any explanation, he ran excitedly to his mother.

"Give me the key to our cellar quick, quick, mother!" he panted.

His mother stared. "What has happened?"



“He . . . dropped his treasure at Ruzena’s bedside”

But Jozef grasped the key without answering and ran. Trembling, he lit the lantern and made his way into the passage opening, to find that the earth had fallen, barring the way.

Running out again, he leaped into the courtyard, and seized a shovel, not glancing at his mother, although conscious that she stood close to the window gazing out, her face full of alarm.

Again he went into the cellar. Little by little the hardened earth was shoveled away under his feeble grasp, until he was able to crawl into the opening. The air smelled close and moldy. "One—two—three—" Jozef counted the ten steps which he remembered having taken and looked around. No food was to be seen. He searched for the shelves—but they also had vanished.

Dumbfounded and sadly disappointed, he retraced his steps.

But instead of getting back to the opening, he unexpectedly found himself in another passage, and there, oh, joy! his food!

Loading his arms, he staggered out. Without locking the cellar door, he made his way dizzily across the street.

"Thanks be to the blessed Virgin!" exclaimed his mother in the midst of her amazement as he sank on his knees and dropped his treasure at Ruzena's bedside.

CHAPTER XII

Uncle Jozef's Story

I was drafted in July, 1915, and sent with others to a Hungarian training camp. We were not there long before we heard that we were to go to the front. On the day of departure, Anka, to whom I am engaged, came to the station with my mother. There were, of course, many other women, all with flowers in their arms and all with eyes red from weeping. For they did not want us to go to fight those who had done us no harm. My father, who had always been a great patriot, could not come, but he sent me these words which he had painstakingly copied from our greatest poet:

"It is shameful when in misery to moan over our fate; he who by his deeds appeases the wrath of Heaven, acts better. Not from a tearful eye but from a diligent hand fresh hope will blossom. Thus even evil may yet be changed to good."

Later this fell into the hands of a German, but he did not understand it. I did.

It was hard to part. My mother, in the midst of her uncontrollable sobs, whispered:

"Jozef, when the time comes, you know what you must do."

It was hard to part. At the end, Anka gave me some red and white ribbon, the Czech and Slovak colors, which I tied around my rifle. It did not remain there long, for when the Magyar captain in charge of our battalion saw it, he swore savagely, and taking his saber, cut it off and stamped it under his heels. Not satisfied, he deliberately hit me a blow from which I suffered for many days. At the same time he muttered: "Take care what you are about, you Slovak dog!"

My companions were as indignant as myself at the insult to our colors to which we have every right. "If a time comes when we can revenge ourselves, we'll not forget," we promised one another.

By this time we had all heard, somehow, of Czechs and Slovaks who refused to fight against the Allies, declaring that they had not voted for the War, and ought not to be compelled to fight; and of many Czech and Slovak desertions. Just before we left, there was fiendish rejoicing among the Austrian Germans and Magyars, because a Czech

regiment, intending to desert to the Russians, had been trapped, and all the officers and every tenth private shot. The story did not frighten us or make us less determined to surrender if opportunity offered. Better to be shot, we told ourselves, than to serve those who in victory would treat our people still worse than they had already done.

We got to the front at Rovno and all that day were kept working without a morsel to eat. We had just finished entrenching ourselves, when Russian shrapnel blew over us.

Towards morning, I heard shouting. Soon after I saw a bearded Russian with a long bayonet, standing over me. I tried to tell him I was a friend, but he had no time to listen, for Austrian machine gun shot began to come from the rear, and, with others, I was taken to a wood not far away.

It was already full of prisoners. As soon as we came, the Austrian and Magyar prisoners pitched into us, claiming that what had happened was the fault of those "Czech and Slovak cowards." Even here, the Germans and Austrians blustered and tried to order us about.

We were very hungry, but nothing was given us to eat until we reached Rovno. Here we received a little, several of us sharing one bowl. After that we were marched to Kiev, a

distance between two hundred and three hundred miles. We still had very little to eat, for Magyars and Austrian Germans had not yet got over their notion of being superior people and so entitled to more than we. When we complained, they even beat us. One poor fellow who had grabbed a loaf of bread from a Magyar who had two, was found next morning with his throat cut.

Our prison camp was at Darnica, near the city. It was just a big field with some trees, surrounded by barb wire. I remained here about two weeks when, because workmen were needed and because of Czecho-Slovak efforts in Petrograd, we were allowed to volunteer for work on farms or in ammunition factories.

I chose the latter and came to Kiev. I had not been in the city long, before I heard that Czech and Slovak prisoners were being organized to join a so-called Hussite legion which was made up of Czech and Slovak residents of Russia, who had already rendered valuable assistance to the Russians as scouts. The Russian authorities had been opposed to the plan at first, not caring to encourage revolutionaries, even though not Russian revolutionaries. However, in the end, a grudging consent was given. I wished to join, but was not

permitted to leave my work.

Then the Revolution came, and, as the prisoners were freed, the Czechs and Slovaks flocked to their own colors, and I with them. If I live forever I shall never forget how I felt when I found myself among my own people, our red and white flag waving over us, and heard the band play our "Kde domov muj."

When we had to swear our oath of loyalty to Francis Joseph before leaving Austria-Hungary, all Czech and Slovak soldiers mumbled the words. When we swore the oath of obedience to Prof. Masaryk, "the little father," as we called him, who had come to Russia, we shouted it so joyously and loudly that the people from around came to see what all the noise was about.

CHAPTER XIII

Uncle Jozef's Story Continued

I was so happy now. Every morning I awakened with a smile on my lips and a song in my heart. For were we not going to free our dear, our native land, of the usurper? We again sang our native songs, which we had not been allowed to sing in the land of our birth; sang them so often that we came to be known as "The Singing Czecho-Slovaks." Whatever state we came from, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, or Slovakia, we were quite united now, and had only one word for each other and that word was "Brother."

And in the spirit in which we sang, we also fought. No longer did the Germans and Magyars call us cowards. They now called us "red and white devils," because of the colors on our hats. At the famous charge at Zborov, there was almost a religious exaltation as we marched to the field singing the glorious hymn of the Hussites: "All Ye Warriors of God." Here we captured sixty-two officers, and three

thousand one hundred and fifty soldiers, fifteen guns and many machine guns, turning most of the latter against the enemy.

But our bravery did little good, the Russians were deserting the army so fast.

In 1917, I was slightly wounded. This prevented my taking part in the terrible battle at Tarnapol, in Galicia, where our men were entirely abandoned by the Russian troops. It was a wonderful charge they made, the men rushing in where danger was thickest and resisting to the last, and the officers blowing out their brains rather than surrender.

When the Germans invaded Bessarabia, before preparing to resist them, we bound ourselves by a most sacred oath:

"In the name of our national honor, in the name of all that is most dear to us as men and as Czecho-Slovaks, with full realization of this step, we swear to fight alongside of our allies to the last drop of our blood, against all of our enemies, until we have obtained complete liberation of our Czecho-Slovak nation, until the Czech and Slovak lands are reunited into a free and independent Czecho-Slovak state,

until our nation is absolutely mistress of her destinies.

"We solemnly promise, whatever may be the danger and whatever may be the circumstances, without fear and hesitation, never to abandon the sacred goal of our fight.

"As faithful and honorable soldiers, heirs of our noble history, cherishing the heroic deeds of our immortal chiefs and martyrs, Jan Hus and Jan Zizka of Trocnov, we promise to remain worthy of them, never to flee from battle, to shirk no danger, to obey the orders of our officers, to venerate our flags and standards, never and under no circumstances beg for our lives from our enemy and never to surrender with weapons in our hands, to love our companions as brothers and to give them aid in danger, to have no fear of death, to sacrifice all, even our lives, for the freedom of our fatherland.

"So freely, without pressure of any sort, we pledge ourselves to act, and so shall we act. Such is the duty imposed upon us by honor and fidelity toward our people and our country."

After the Bolsheviks gained complete control of the government, the Czecho-Slovak army numbered sixty thousand. We waited hoping that things would change for

the better, until the disgusting Peace of Brest-Litovsk, in February, 1918. Then we could not but see that our only chance of continuing the fight for freedom was to get to France. Through Professor Masaryk, free passage to Vladivostok was granted us by the Bolsheviks.

It was no little thing that we undertook to do. It would have been a big enough enterprise, even under the most favorable conditions. There was a journey of over five thousand miles across Eastern Russia and Asia, and then across the Pacific, across Canada or the United States, and finally across the Atlantic. In other words, we were willing to undertake a trip around the world in order to fight for freedom. In the Russian part, we had to procure our trains and provisions, and negotiate with practically independent Soviets in every district.

Since concentration at stations was prohibited, we started for the Pacific in small detachments. Everywhere we were urged to join the Red Guard with promises of high pay and good living. But although we had little to eat, we refused the bribe. We were in demand, for afterwards, Gen. Kornilov, and Kaledines, the Cossack hetman, each tried to gain our help. Again we refused, unwilling to interfere in

Russian internal affairs.

When we reached Penza, we had a disagreeable surprise. Being the last to leave the front, we were well armed and had many cannon, machine guns and other equipment worth hundreds of millions of dollars, that would otherwise have fallen into the hands of the Germans. These we were asked to surrender on orders from headquarters, retaining only a few rifles and a few hand grenades to each train. So anxious were we to leave Russia without a fight, that we obeyed the order.

Later we heard that about this same time in Irkutsk, a train division of our men was surrounded by three thousand of the Red Guard, mainly former German and Magyar prisoners, and under German officers, all well armed and with many machine guns. Our men had only one gun to every ten men, but when the German officer gave the command to shoot, the Czechs rushed barehanded at them, captured their guns, and in half an hour had control of the station.

Even then the Moscow authorities were begged by Masaryk, and by the French, British, and American consuls that our troops be allowed to proceed in peace. Instead,

Trotsky ordered every Czecho-Slovak soldier caught with arms to be shot at sight.

At Vertunovka we had a long wait. We employed it in decorating the box cars in which we traveled, in ways to remind us of the old brave days of Jan Hus and Jan Zizka, when the Czechs of Bohemia held all of astonished Europe at bay for almost a quarter of a century. As we worked, we each resolved to prove ourselves worthy of these ancestors.

Some of the boys added inscriptions to the decorations, such as, "Long live Little Father Masaryk and the Allies," and put Czech and Slovak flags about so that our cars really looked very nice, each platoon striving to have theirs the best.

As we made our way, by fair means when we could, by force when necessary, we found Magyar and Germans in control everywhere. Our very own first conflict came when a Magyar in a train of prisoners hit one of our men with a piece of iron, injuring him very seriously. We thought him killed and rushed to the train and demanded the surrender of the murderer. This led to more trouble. We had few arms, but took up rocks and followed the train into the city, singing as we marched. The Soviet buildings were deserted

when we reached them, and evidently in a hurry, for we found some rifles which we seized with thanksgiving.

After this delay we resolved to pay no more attention to delays ordered by the Bolsheviki, but to push on as quickly as possible to Vladivostok. Fighting now began in earnest. Everywhere success was with us. Our spirit would allow of no defeat. When we were menaced, we took the enemy by surprise; we had set out to get to France and we intended getting to France, no matter what difficulties we had to meet and conquer. We seized trains; we took city after city. While the Bolshevik propaganda failed to appeal to us, it was not it so much we fought as the objection of its supporters to, and lack of comprehension of our love of country. We knew that the Magyars and the Germans who were with the Russian Bolsheviks, fought us not so much because of our lack of sympathy with the doctrines they professed, as because of our nationality.

In the meantime, our forces constantly grew by means of new recruits. Our fame grew also as we advanced. Sometimes the mere rumor that the Czecho-Slovaks were coming, caused the enemy to flee. And all through Siberia, we were welcomed by the real inhabitants as deliverers. By

the end of two weeks, three thousand miles of railroad were in our hands.

Then, when finally we reached Vladivostok, on the Pacific, we found that we were not to go to France after all, that the Allies thought we had a more important work to do where we were, especially in keeping the railroad, and hence the wealth of Siberian grain and mineral, from reaching the Central Powers. This was also fighting for liberty, and, without a murmur, we accepted our new duty.

CHAPTER XIV

The Czecho-Slovak Republic

It was October, and Jozef's godfather had gone again to Bohemia, this time as a delegate representing the Slovak National Council. The Czecho-Slovak National Alliance and its army had been recognized formally some time before as an ally by the great powers and greater events were scheduled to follow.

When he reached beautiful "hundred-towered" Praha, the capital, he found the streets and coffee houses jammed with people. Every face had an expectant look in which anxiety and confidence were blended. Toward the end of the month their expectations were realized. The National Council took over the government of the Czecho-Slovak countries, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia, all of them formerly belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

It was a bloodless revolution, for the Austrian

Government realized the hopelessness of its position.

All the great sufferings through which they had passed—the hunger, the fear, the grief—were forgotten by the people in the great joy of their liberation. Old men embraced each other; old women wept in each other's arms with happiness that they had lived to see the day. People from all the states, with their slight variations of dialect, were there; Czechs, Moravians, Czecho-Silesians, and Slovaks. The ties of close kinship were felt as never before.

Crowds stood on the big St. Vaclav Square listening to the Proclamation of Independence from the steps of the splendid National Museum. When the reading came to an end, the people, with one voice, sang the ancient Czech choral to St. Vaclav, Bohemia's patron saint.

Almost every hour a new report came: now that the Emperor's Governor had fled; now that the Magyar soldiers, who had been stationed in the city, cared for nothing except to be allowed to return to Hungary; now that the commanders of the local garrison had put themselves at the disposal of the Czecho-Slovak government.

Similar scenes took place in the historical Old Town Square, around the splendid monument of John Hus, that

three years before had had to be unveiled by stealth. Men, women, and children felt that the noble past of which Czechs have always been so proud, was come again. Pride swelled their hearts, too, that all that they were gaining had come to them through efforts and sacrifices of their own, so great that the world had been forced to recognize and admire.

On the following day the Slovak delegates were received officially, thus uniting the two branches of the Czecho-Slovak nation.

The first act of the new state was to declare a republican form of Government with Thomas Garigue Masaryk as President.

President Masaryk was to take up his official residence in the immense royal palace so long deserted. Carpenters and others were busy modernizing it.

This palace had lived through unusual vicissitudes of fortune. Already in the tenth century, a stone fortified palace stood there, but it was not until the reign of Bohemia's beloved King Charles I that it assumed something of its present form, being modeled by him after the Louvre of Paris. It was enlarged by King Vladislav, the

principal hall being named after him. In Rudolph's time other Halls were added.

After the defeat of the White Mountain, when Bohemia lost her independence, it no longer served as a royal residence, and was practically deserted. In 1757, it was bombarded, to be rebuilt and enlarged by Empress Maria Theresa.

And now the greatest change of all: it was to be the home of the President of a thoroughly democratic state.

Many days following were festal days. People flocked to the churches, particularly to the Cathedral of St. Vitus, which is one of the great works of King Charles.

While the young people looked forward to the future, the old recalled the past.

"Ah, how King Charles in his heavenly home will rejoice," one bent old woman, supported on crutches, murmured.

"And saintly Vaclav, too," scarcely breathed another so emaciated that she looked like a moving shadow. "He'll be proud now that Bohemia is called after him the Realm of St. Vaclav. Ah, I must see once more those precious relics we have kept of him."

With difficulty she made her way to the Cathedral where St. Vaclav's helmet, sword, and coat of mail have been religiously preserved.

Jozef's godfather sent him several picture postcards reminding him of Jozef's hero, King Charles. One represented the historic stone bridge, which Charles had had built with such care that he did not live to see it finished. On this card he wrote:

"All the statues on the bridge have a dazed expression. I wonder what they think of the change."

Another card was of the old walls of Praha, working on which through the King's care saved a thousand men from starving in a time of famine.

"I walked past these fortifications early one morning," was the message, "and hundreds of birds were among the ruins, all singing the news of our glorious resurrection."

The third card showed Karluv Tyn, built by Charles for the protection of the crown jewels and the charters of Bohemia. This beautiful castle stands not far from Praha, on a rock of jasper a thousand feet above the River Mze. To it the King-Emperor sometimes retired for the meditative devotion which he found so helpful. On this card the

message was the longest:

"Charles did more than build beautiful castles and splendid cathedrals. He welcomed men of learning and made higher education possible even for the poor by founding the University of Praha, the first university in all of Central Europe. He freed the land of robbers; he secured justice to the peasants by making it possible for them to appeal to the King from the decision of their own feudal lords. His name has come down to us revered and beloved, because of the many evidences of his unselfish, constant thought for the people's welfare."

By a strange coincidence, on the very day that the last postcard came to Jozef in Slovakia, another reached him from his friend, Jaroslav. It was dated from the famous watering place, Carlsbad, in northern Bohemia, where Jaroslav had accompanied his father, who had some business there.

"The Germans here, who have largely control of things," it stated, "are angry at the turn affairs have taken. They clamor about the rights of the minority, they who never considered the rights of the Slavic majority. But I think they are calming down, for they see that they're going to get

justice. The Czechs are not revengeful. If we treated them as they treated us—whew!" He said no more of the Germans, but humorously described some of the patients he had seen; some very fat, some very thin, all expecting cure from digestive disturbances.

A few days before he left, Jozef's godfather took one more walk across the sixteen-arched statue decorated Charles Bridge (Karluv most), through the picturesque Little Side, with its quaint old-time palaces of nobles, up a steep and winding street to the Hradcany, as the group of buildings around the royal palace together with it, is called.

From these heights, Praha is seen in all its wondrous beauty lying on both sides of the River Vltava (Moldau). It seems an endless succession of parks, gardens, queer roofs that are the delight of every artist that sees them, and innumerable towers and steeples. Across the river he could see the rocky Vysehrad, the seat of the early rulers. It was there that Libusa, the reputed founder of Praha, made her famous prophecy: "Lo, before me I see a city whose glory reaches to the skies!"

He mused at the great richness not only in Bohemia's real historic past but in her legendary lore; how everything

about the city has its story. On the hills towards which he was turned, Vlasta, the leader of an Amazon band, made her stand in the early days against Prince Premysl; near him was the tower of Daliborka, where a noble was once imprisoned and said to have found solace in a violin. Since then ghostly music is said to haunt the place. Of the alchemists who lived near by in the Street of Gold, a street of the tiniest, most brightly-hued houses imaginable, he recalled the strange tales told. In the very courts of the palace, legends mingled with history.

A peculiar feeling that he had never experienced before came over him. To live in Praha, he felt, was not the prosaic, everyday life he had always known; it was living a brightly colored romance too disturbing for him to get used to now. His own dear Slovakia, with its quiet, simple life, was better for him.

The next day the new President arrived from abroad, and was installed in office. That was the greatest day of all in Praha. The feeling of the multitude was expressed by one old man who said, "I shall weep no more for my dead, since they helped make the fairy tale come true that brutal force no longer rules, that a proud, deserving nation is freed at

last from a bondage to which so long the world was indifferent."

THE END