FREE POLAND

A SEMI-MONTHLY

The Truth About Poland and Her People

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Anxious Moments

By CASIMIR GONSKI

THE EXPRESSION of sympathy and encouragement, the promises of liberation and future independence for Poland, not infrequently made and given by the press of Germany and Austria and by their representative men in diplomatic, military, educational and social circles, prior to the taking of Warsaw by the allied armies of the central powers, have given way to admonitory opinions voiced in the same press. At first veiled and indefinite, these opinions have become clearer and more concrete in form with every succeeding week. The "Vossische", "Coelner", "Reinisch-Westfaelische" Zeitungen in plainly understandable German admonish the Poles not to expect any radical changes; that the restoration of Poland along the lines of the former kingdom is out of question; that a restitution of any part of Poland incorporated (! ?) into Prussian territory is not to be thought of and that the tremendous sacrifices which Germany has been compelled to bring in the east, call for some territorial compensation at the expense of Russia. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg spoke at first in a manner which gave hope that Germany and Austria had agreed on a tentative plan for the restoration of Poland under an autonomous government. Later utterances were confined to the promise of furtherance of the economic interests and the protection of the patriotic impulses of the Poles with a view of softening, if not entirely removing the harshness in the relations between the Poles and the Germans. The frequent and vigorous protest for a restored, independent Poland and assurances voiced by German savants in the first year of the war have become few and fewer since the successes of the central powers on the eastern front.

In the forepart of September 1914 the headquarters of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies issued the following manifesto:

"POLES! The moment of your liberation from the Muscovite yoke is nearing. The allied armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary will soon cross the boundaries of the Kingdom of Poland. (This was the first time in a century that either Germany or Austria has spoken officially of a "Kingdom or Poland." C. G.) **Already the Muscovites are retreating. Their bloody reign oppressing you for more than a century is falling! We come to you as your friends! Confide in us!"**

"We bring you liberty and independence for which your fathers have suffered so much. Let eastern barbarism step back before western civilization, common to you and us!"

"Arise in memory of your past so great and full of glory. Unite with the allied armies. With united strength we will drive the Asiatic hordes beyond the boundaries of Poland!"

"We bring you liberty and religious freedom, respect for that religion which has been so terribly oppressed by Russia. May from the past and the present speak to you the groans from Siberia, the gory massacres of Praga and the tortures of the Unionists."

"With our standards there comes to you liberty and independence!"

"The Commanders in Chief of the Eastern Armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary."

The English translation is a literal one from the Polish as it appears in a chronological review of the war in a book edited and published in Vienna by Inlender and Perles, respectively, under the title "The Great War 1914-1915" and passed by the Austrian and German censors.

Just eight months later and immediately after the Austro-German successes at the Russian front, a memorial was submitted to chancellor Behman-Hollweg by the five greatest agrarian and idustrial associations. These organizations, representing millions of members throughout the German empire, demand as a prize for the German sacrifices the annexation of territory in the west by taking Belgium and the adjoining part of France from the river Somme to Bolfort, and in the east the annexation of "at least" a part of the Baltic provinces and the territory along the whole length of the Kingdom of Prussia, or, — expressed in dimensions and members,—about 50,000 sq. miles with 5,000,000 population. This memorial has the fervent support of a large portion of the influential German press, among which are the "Kreuz Zeitung" and "Alldeutsche Blaetter."

It is but fair to say at this place that the plan of annexation has found a great many opponents in Germany. No purpose can be served by elaborating here upon the arguments of either side. But some additional facts should be stated here. Since the occupation by the Germans of Poland under Russian domain, everything possible has been done by the German military governor of Warsaw to maintain and improve industrial and economic conditions for the furtherance of German interests only, but suppress all Polish national manifestations and impulses. He has dissolved the Polish Citizens' Committee. This body was composed of most representative men and its function was the maintenance of law and order in the Kingdom of Poland. It was neither pro-Russian nor pro-German. Its one and sole political motive was the independence of Poland, and Russia, Austria and Germany had promised that. He has suspended every Polish court in the land. He has introduced the German language in all schools. He has forbidden all political activities with a view toward Polish independence. He has forbidden the entrance of the Polish legions (who fought with the Austrians against the Russians) into Warsaw and even the presence of their officers in that city. He has

forbidden the display of Polish colors and the latest dispatches have brought the astounding news that the German military governor of Warsaw has deported the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Warsaw into the interior of Germany, because the Archbishop refused to issue the pastoral letter suggested by the German authorities. The multitude which came to the depot to bid Godspeed to their beloved Archbishop was dispersed by the German cavalry with the flat of their swords. Here we have another example of the terrible shortsightedness and mental limitations of Prussian officialdom in its dealings with the Poles. A century of experience has not sufficed to drive home the lesson into the parallelogrammic brain of Prussian bureaucracy and militarism, that oppression of the Poles begets Polish national impulses, but can never exterminate nor permanently suppress them.

Thus do the Germans carry out the promises made by their military commanders, no doubt, with the sanction of the emperor.

"We bring you liberty and independence".... Verily,—
"Timeo Germanos et dona ferentes".

It might be said, that the necessities of war do not permit of a different treatment of conquered territory. But Poland is not conquered territory. If German promises count for aught, it is liberated territory wrested from Russian oppression. Strange conduct of a liberator! And the liberated are becoming very apprehensive and are passing through anxious moments in the anticipation of the future.

It is not the object of the present article to describe the terrible calamity which, more than of any other nation, has become the lot of the Poles in this world conflict. With a patience and heroic endurance born of a century's sufferings the Polish nation has maintained, a dignified reserve in these days of stress when her very physical existence is threatened with engulfment. In the justified claim for the restoration of her geographical entity and political independence, that nation, with never one backward step toils forward on the "eternal road" to liberty. With never ceasing efforts that nation will pursue and must ultimately attain that object, no matter if it will be his Germanic or even his satanic majesty that will be the means to such an end. In this calamitous conflict the Poles have fulfilled the terrible duty which an enforced, threefold citizenship, or rather subjection, has put upon them: they have given themselves to their oppressors in the hope that this sublime sacrifice will gain them liberty. They have the solemn promises of Russia, Germany and Austria. Russia now cannot and Germany, apparently, will not keep them. For if Germany made the promise in good faith then, now her acts belie her word and are full or portents of ill.

The hydra of libel upon the Polish nation, that its past history proves its incapacity for self-government, has again and again shown its head during the last few months in the press abroad and here. How untruthful and unjustified such accusation is, the writer will endeavor to show in the next number of "Free Poland."

In these anxious moments the Polish nation looks to America for moral and material help. Not the tacit approval but the active endorsement by the opinion of the American nation will be the strongest peaceful plea in the court of nations on Poland's behalf.

Our Correspondence

Polish National Council of America,
Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: —

Enclosed please find One Dollar to cover my subscription for "Free Poland" for one year. This publication has just come to my attention or I would have entered my subscription earlier.

Permit me to say that it was highly gratifying to note the character and standard of the magazine. The noble purpose with which it is actuated, should receive the consideration and support of well thinking men. A reading of one of the issues has convinced me that it will do much to disseminate concerning the Polish people, their character, traits and qualities as well the role they have played in history of which this country is so sadly in need. The time is ripe to bring about a better understanding of the Poles and Slavs and when the big and unbiased minds are awakened to the true state affairs, a great deal will have been accomplished toward the unfettering of an oppressed and suffering nation. It is hoped that the publication will maintain its courageous attitude to fight for truth and justice without bias or prejudice.

Very truly yours, JOS. F. KROPIDLOWSKI,
914 Park Row Bldg.

A Christian Nation?

Editor "Free Poland",
Chicago, Ill.

There appear articles in "Free Poland" from time to time, written by the Rev. G. J. Blatter. In one of them he asks the Poles to come down to hard facts, in other words, to submit. To whom, my dear Reverend?

To the government that you are so bombastically praising? To the one that tried to Prussianize children? To the one that tried to take from them everything they held sacred—language and soil?

You claim the Poles "exaggerate charges against a Christian nation." Does the truth hurt so that even a Reverend must hasten to defend the Gospel of the Mailed Fist? If Prussia is a Christian nation, it should treat the lesser nationalities in a Christian way. Otherwise, if Christians fight, non-Christians reap the profit.

Truly Yours,

THOS. L. STACHOWIAK,
Wood River, Ill.

Germany Defended

Free Poland wishes it understood that it does not necessarily commit itself to an indorsement of the Rev. G. J. Blatter's line of reasoning or his conclusions. These may or may not commend themselves to acceptance by the readers. And the author, the Rev. G. J. Blatter, perhaps himself a "panick-stricken skirmisher", will do well to read Mr. Casimir Gonski's article entitled "Anxious Moments.".

Mr. Gonski does not, to use the Rev. Blatter's imagery, "storm impregnable fortresses with bare fists", but delivers a telling blow by the objectivity of his arguments. Of course, these again may or may not commend themselves "to the orderly intellect" of our German friend, the enemy. — **The Editor.**

* * *

When the swift-moving hosts of light horse and infantry rush on impetuously from all sides, hiding the fortified and intrenched foes from view and drowning the deep roar of his heavy artillery by their shouts and fusillades, the superficial observer is often deceived into the belief, that the on rushing hosts have swallowed up the devoted phalanx and will soon issue from the smoke of battle with the spoils of victory. But instead he soon hears the boom of the hostile artillery above the shouts of combat and the fusillades of small arms, he sees the fields around sown thicker and thicker with the dead, and sees scattering bands of combatants pursued by the foes, who now leap from their trenches and spread death and destruction among the panic-stricken skirmishers. Of such a skirmishing kind have been most of the arguments advanced against the position maintained by me in "Free Poland". The "Convincing Reply" is a most notable instance of such an onrush and was made by a most valiant and efficient skirmisher.

The past history of the Poles as well as their activity in this country at present depicts them a highly intelligent and sentimental race: but such also are the Germans only in a quite different way. The intelligence of the Pole is of the quick and flashing kind, partaking a good deal of intuition; the intelligence of the German is of the slow, deep and extensive kind, ranging by orderly steps from height to depth, from end to end of creation. The intelligence of the Pole moreover is clothed and domiciled, and therefore very much dependent upon his sentiments and feelings, whereas the intelligence of the German will tend to follow its own consequential way, irrespective of and very often contrary to his feelings and sentiments. The Pole is also apt to be carried away from the pursuit of practical things into the maze of the ideal and impossible, whereas the German mind is kept nearer to the practical and the useful, not only because of his more sedate and orderly working of his intellect, but also because he will not, (not so easily at least), let his sentiments dictate to his understanding and intuition.

In this very condition of minds we have the explanation of much of the past history of the two races and especially at the present position, and aspirations of the Poles in regard to a Free Poland. And it is also the foundation upon which was based any prospect of an autonomous Poland established by victorious Germany. In spite of the talk about the "almighty dollar" the mind will always be the supreme power in the world of intelligent beings, and it is the Polish mind which after all is going to bring weal or woe, freedom or continued subjection to the Polish nation. If it will prove itself stable enough and free enough from the vagaries of Polish sentimentality to size up the situation and with united efforts bring all their influence to bear upon a practical method of making known their aspirations to the world, then even Prussian supremacy must yield, though it be ten times more autocratic than our Polish friends like to represent.

The justice of the Polish cause appeals to the orderly intellect of the German and not less to their kind of sentimentality. Poland as a buffer state, and as a grateful and faithful ally and neighbor, is a prospect that clinches these two motives with the element of usefulness, thus making the project practical. Autonomous Poland, destined to become a ruling power by the gradual decay of Russia, is surely within easy reach and it will depend mainly upon the Poles themselves in the next six months, whether there shall be a Prussian-ridden greater Poland or the beginning of a Polish republic as great perhaps as the United States.

Poles that let their sentiments run away with their common sense in shouting for all of Poland in its glory or nothing, Poles that will persist in raving about Prussian tyranny while bemantling the Russian, Poles that talk of a Prussianized Germany while shutting their eyes to the evident uprising of all Germany as the Teuton race, Poles that imagine that the German race will be dismantled after 2000 years of supremacy in Europe, Poles that wish such a thing, even without saying a word about it, Poles that imagine their fatherland can be re-established in autonomy in any other way than principally by the good will in the modern diplomatic course at the approaching treaty of peace, Poles that know nothing more practical than to complain and inveigh against the monstrous injustice of the division of Poland over a hundred years ago, ———, they are Poles, indeed, Poles to their inmost fibre, yes, but they are of those who insisted upon the "Nie Pozwalam", who would rather storm impregnable fortresses with bare fists than slowly draw up their cannon, undermine the rock and wait for a breach in the wall before storming; in other words, they are Poles who allow their sentiments to swallow up their intelligence and their common sense. Let such Poles begin to show Germany that they will be true friends, good neighbors, dependable allies in spite of their Slavic blood, and Poland will enter a compeer among the galaxy of European states.

I could add many other reflections pointing to the important bearings upon a Free Poland on the score of religion, philosophy and the practical workings of diplomacy and European conditions in answer to the gentleman from Neceda, Wisconsin, but I fear that even the above will be too much of a strain on your patience.

REV. GEO. J. BLATTER,
So. Chicago, Ill.

Psychology of the Slavic People

By PANE R. RADOSAVLJEVICH, Ph. D. Pd. D., Professor at New York University

(Continued from FREE POLAND, Vol. II. No. 3)

f. Slavic Paradoxes and Inclination toward Extremes.

ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTIC traits of the Slavs is their inclination to have their fling. Sienkiewicz is almost true when he says: "We Slavs have too much of that restless Aryan spirit in consequence of which neither our mind no our heart has ever been perfect, has ever been balanced..... And what strange peculiar natures! The German students, for instance, drink and this is not in any shape or form detrimental to their work, nor does it prevent them from becoming sober, practical men. But let a Slav acquire that habit, and he will drink himself into an early grave. A German will be a pessimist, will write volumes on the subject whether life is or is not mere despair, and will continue to drink on, hoard money, bring up children, water flowers and sleep under thick covers, under similar circumstances the Slav will hang himself, or throw himself to the dogs leading a life of wild dissipation and license, and perish and choke in the mire into which he voluntarily sank. Indeed ours are strange natures—sincere, sensitive, sympathetic and at the same time, fraudulent and actor-like."

This strange nature is shown in the conception of Slavic heroes. **Dostoyevsky's** Prince Mwyshkin is a hero called "idiot" a "poor fool" only with this difference that he is not a fool. The weapons and vices of the world fall powerless off this disinterestedness; his ingenuousness sees through the stratagems of the crafty and the deceits of the cunning; his love is stronger than the hatred of his fellow-creatures; his sympathy more effective than their spite; he is an oasis in and arid world; he is simple, sensible and acute, and these qualities are the branches of a plant which is rooted in goodness. **Goncharov's** Oblomov is slack, tired, indolent, disinclined to activity, losing his dignity, self-respect, sweetheart and fortune, from pure unsurmountable indifference. **Gogol's** hero in "Government Ispector", Khlestakov is "about twenty-three, thin small rather silly with, as they say, no Tzar in his head; one of those men who in the public offices are called "utterly null". He talks and acts with the utmost irrelevance; without the slightest forethought or consecutiveness. He is incapable of fixing and concentrating his attention on any idea whatsoever." Another type of Slavic hero is the one who, without complaint knows how to endure, to suffer and to die. According to the popular view expressed in **Dostoyevsky's** "Recollections of a Dead House in Siberia" he who endures the lash and the knout without asking for mercy is the object of veneration, and not the one who is daring, defiant or a leader. **Gorki** says that the "Slavic hero is always silly stupid, he is always sick of something; always thinking of something that cannot be understood, and is himself so miserable... He will think, think, rather than talk, and after that he will go and make a declaration of love, and after that he thinks and thinks again until he marries... And when he is married he talks all sorts of nonsense to his wife, and then abandons her." A similar Slavic type is exemplified also in **Artzibashev's** character or Yurii, who finally commits suicide because he cannot find a working theory of life. Count Tolstoy also tried to kill himself for the same reason, but when he finally made up his mind that the Christian system of ethics was correct, he had no peace until he had attempted to live in every respect in accordance with those teachings.

Yes, the Slavs do not know a middle course and bring resolution to a **reductio ad absurdum.** But beneath all this is still the true heart, Slavic sincerity, and impartiality. Prof. Phelps says that the Slavic mind is "like a sensitive plate; it responds faithfully. It has no more partiality, no more prejudice than a common film, it reflects everything that reaches its surface. A Russian novelist with a pen in his hand is the most truthful being on earth." Renan says: "Turgenyev received, by that mysterious decree which makes human avocations, the noblest gift of all; he was born essentially impersonal. His consciousness was not that of an individual more or less finely endowed by nature; he was in some sort the consciousness of a people. Before his birth he had lived thousands of years an infinite series of visions were concentrated in the depths of his heart. No man has been to such a degree the incarnation of an entire race. A world lived in him, spoke through his lips; generations of ancestors lost in the sleep of ages without voices through him came to life and to speech."

Renan rightly says that Turgenyev is "as sensitive as a woman and as impassive as a surgeon, as free from illusions as a philosopher and as tender as a child." He adds, "Happy the race, which, at its beginning a life or reflection, can be represented by such images, simple-hearted as well as learned, at once real and mystical." He calls Turgenyev the silent genius of Slavic collective masses. Such a genius "is the source of all great things. But the masses have no voice. They can only feel and stammer. They need an interpreter, a prophet to speak for them. Who shall be this prophet? Who shall tell their sufferings denied by those who are interested in not seeing them, their secret aspirations which upset the sanctimonious optimism of the contented? The great man, gentleman, when he is at once a man of genius and a man of heart. That is why the great man is least free of all men. He does not do, he does not say what he wishes. A God speaks in him, ten centuries of suffering and of hope posses him and rule him. Sometimes it happens to him as to the seer in the ancient stories of the Bible that when called upon to curse he blesses; according to the spirit which moves his tongue refuses to obey."

To understand the paradoxical nature of the Slavic character means to understand its great genius Turgenyev—"interpreter of one of the greatest families of humanity". Renan rightly hays that the mission of Turgenyev was "wholly that of the peace-maker. He was like the God of the book of Job, who makes peace upon the heights! What everywhere else caused discord with him became a principle of harmony. In his great bosom contradictions were united."

The Slavic bent to have their swing is, according to

Brandes, "not simply the inclination toward extremes. But it is this: when a Russian has got hold of a thought, a fundamental idea, a principle, a purpose without regard to its origin, whether originated by himself or borrowed from European culture, he does not rest until he has followed it out to the last results. Therefore the Russians are the most arbitrary oppressors in the world and the most reckless liberators, blindly orthodox, following sectarian religions to self-destruction, free-thinking to Nihilism, seditious to attempts at murder, and dynamite assaults. If they believe in the idea of authority, they bow down till the forehead touches the earth before it (chelobitie). If they hate the idea of authority, that hate forces persecution and bombs into their hands. They are radicals in everything in faith and infidelity, in love and hate, in submission and rebellion." There is a Russian proverb versified by Nekrasov: "The muzhik (Russian peasant) has a head like a bull; when a folly finds lodgement there, it is impossible to drive it out even with heavy blows of the goad." Turgenyev dared to show not only his pity but his affection for the muzhik, often narrow-minded, ignorant or brutal, but good at heart. He undertook to reveal to the Russian their peasant which they scarcely knew; but he also depicts the false sentimentality of the Russian nobles, their detestable selfishness their absurdities, their cruelty, their hypocrisy, which they get from their "Kulturtraeger". So for example Turgenyev's young Rudin (aristocrat) is a Titan in word and a pygmy in deed; he is eloquent as a young Demosthenes, an irresistible debater, carrying all before him the moment he appears, but he fails ignominiously when put to test of action.

The paradoxical character of the Slavs in which, for instance, a warm impulsive frankness links arms with an ever present suspicion and mutual distrust of the Russians, ought not to be condemned or praised but understood, because suspicion and mutual distrust are (1) the legitimate legacy that any autocratic government, which has to be suspicious in order to exist, transmits to its good-natured people, a nation whose ideals are not Oblomovs and Khlestakovs, but Turgenyevs, Dostoyevskys, Gogols and Tolstoys. Even Mr. Stevens admits that the "Russian is by nature a good fellow; and it is agreeable to believe that by and by, when he is allowed to read newspapers, educate himself properly, and develop politically and religiously — in short to be a man and take charge of himself instead of a child in the crib of a paternal government — he will in time develop the sturdy virtues of manhood's estate, and take the place he ought to occupy in the brotherhood of civilized men." If Mr. Stevens says that the Slavs are characterized by suspicion toward the foreigner and to all new things in our civilization, I should say (2) that it is a most hopeful sympton pointing to a favorable prognosis. Suspicion means nothing more than a doubt, and to doubt means to think; to think is to investigate; to investigate is to look for the truth, and — "the Truth shall make you free." Dostoyevsky is perhaps right when he says this about the Russian people: "There is no denying that the people are morally ill, with a grave altho not a mortal malady, one to which it is difficult to assign a name. May we call it 'An unsatisfied thirst for Truth?' The people are seeking eagerly and untiringly for truth and for the ways that lead to it, but hitherto they have failed in their search. After the liberation of the serfs, this great longing for truth appeared among the people—for truth perfect and entire, and with it the resurrection of civil life. There was a clamoring for a 'new Gospel;' new ideas and feelings became manifest; and a great hope rose up among the people believing that these great changes were precursors of a state of things which never came to pass". If this "unsatisfied thirst for truth" is the relative of humanity, then we might agree with Vogue, who says that the Slavs (and Anglo-Saxons) have their genius for the relative, and the Latins have theirs for the absolute, else it will be a paradox. Plato was right in saying that "he who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied, may be justly termed a philosopher." The same may be said about a nation.

J. J. Rousseau in his "Contrat Sociale", says, "The Russian Empire desires to conquer Europe, but will itself be humbled. Her subjects or neighbors the Tartars, will become her masters and ours also. This event appears to me inevitable." Segur said: "The Russians are still what they have been made. Someday becoming free they will know themselves." Baroness Stael-Holstein also expressed similar superficial statements about the Slavs: "The civilization of the Slavic tribes having been of much later date and of more rapid growth than that of the other people, there has been hitherto seen among them more of an imitation than of originality. All that they possess of European growth is French; what they have derived from Asia is not yet sufficiently developed to enable their writings to display their true character which would be natural to them." If Slavs are mere imitations why are the intellectual leaders of Europe and other civilized countries charmed with the "unexpected combination of their native simplicity and their mode of psychological analysis?" Is this not a sign of originality? Is this "a lack of personality?"

Bramont and other students of Russians and Slavs admit the failure of the modern world to see a great original trait of Slavs—"to perceive their rare synthetic power", the faculty of their mind" to read the aspirations of the whole of human kind." Dostoyevsky, the great dissector of the human soul, said once: "The Russian nation is a new and wonderful phenomenon in the history of mankind." The character of the people differ to such a degree from that of the European that their neighbors find it impossible to diagnose them". Among his own Slavic people, Dostoyevsky avowed, we would find none of the imperviousness, the intolerance of the average European. He says that the Slavs adapt themselves with ease to the play of contemporary tought and have no difficulty in assimilating any new idea. They see where it will help their fellow-creatures and where it fails to be of value; they divine the process by which ideas even the most divergent, the most hostile to one another may meet and blend. Is this not originality? The author of the "Undiscovered Russia" said rightly that "the Russian and Englishman are more unknown to one another than man and woman". In the words of the great Slavic poet Merechkovsky, speaking of the rest of Europe, "We resemble you as the left hand resembles the right; the right hand does not lie parallel with the left, it is necessary to turn it round. What you have we also have, but in reverse order; we are your underside. Speaking in the language of Kant, your power is phenomenal—ours transcendental. Speaking in the language of Nietzsche, you are Apollonian—we Dionysian. Your genius is of the definite, ours of the infinite. You know how to shape yourselves in time, to find a way around walls or to return; we rush onward and break our heads. It is difficult to shape us. We do not go; we run. We do not run; we fly. We do not fly; we fall.

(To be continued)

FREE POLAND

A SEMI-MONTHLY

The Truth About Poland and Her People

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Remember

Poland asks to be reconstituted along the lines of justice and fair play to all.

Poland demands peace with freedom.

Poland, as a buffer State, will be one of the greatest guardians for the future peace of Europe.

In fact, Poland "asks nothing for herself but what she has a right to ask for humanity itself."

Convention and Concert

The second Convention of the Polish National Council concluded its two day sessions, (Nov. 26th and 27th) with the following change in office:

Stanislaus Adamkiewicz — President.
Felix Górski — Vice-president.
S. Zahajkiewicz — Secretary.
Theo. Jaszkowski — Treasurer.

Board of Directors:

Rev. F. Wojtalewicz, P. Zdanowska and A. Klawitter.

* * *

The results of the convention are highly gratifying. Among the many Polish organizations of America the Polish National Council occupies a position peculiarly its own.

Besides its great humanitarian work in behalf of the unfortunate sufferers of Poland, it has aimed to meet the various interesting problems that have confronted the Polish immigrant in America.

Though it has experienced some rough sledding and struck many a snag, the Polish National Council has become the pulmotor of Polish-American sentiment. It has never signed quitclaim to such lofty ideals as telling the "truth about Poland and her people", Scouting, Naturalization Schools, Social Work, and others.

Many other committees are simply relief agencies for the war sufferers of Europe. The Polish National Council, however, is not a temporary contraption, but has struck solid roots in this adopted country of America.

Despite the various difficulties the Polish National Council has been a potent factor for good and its work has been highly compelling.

* * *

The Delegates to the Second Convention of the Polish National Council met not to truck and higgle for a private good, but to do something for the social, political and economical welfare of their brethren.

They were strong enough to rally under depressing circumstances, and it appears that the Council has discovered its real strength now when it meets with keen opposition and seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

But against the portending wreckage of her plans and ideals it has struck out with a new hope and takes heart with every stroke.

Cheer up! The Polish National Council will overcome the obstacles in its path. In its struggle upward it will develop marvelous qualities and make wonderful achievements in the fight to redeem itself from its financial straits.

Cheer up! By the Second Convention the Polish National Council has only intensified its strength of purpose, concentration of mind and effectiveness of execution. And glowing with hope and radiant with energy, it bids fair to do much towards the amelioration of the condition of Poles and the advancement of their interests, political, religious, or economic.

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After a year of struggle it is still an outstanding fact that there is no land so miserable as the provinces of dismembered Poland. Everything that is done to alleviate the general suffering is highly commendable and should be unanimously supported.

To wind up the sessions in a creditable manner, therefore, the Polish National Council arranged Nov. 30 at the Polish Roman Catholic Union Hall a concert for the benefit of the war sufferers of Poland.

Adam Didur, basso, member of the Boston Opera Co., his daughter Eva, soprano, Mrs. Krenz-Knoch, violiniste, Mr. B. Rybowiak and Prof. A. Karczyński, musical directors, contributed to the success of the evening.

Aristocratic Poland

MANY WRITERS about Poland call it an aristocratic country, mainly relying upon the fact that Poland when an independent kingdom was governed by the nobility, as only nobles had the right to vote.

That is unquestionably true, only the said writers forgot to inform about the number of said voters, their financial standing and commercial numbers compared with the total population of the Kingdom of Poland.

According to Histoire Generale Lavisse et Rambaud vol. VII p. 458-459, the ruling caste of Poland, that is the nobility, consisted of: (1) 45 magnate families; (2) a dozen of less rich magnates; (3) 200 to 300 families with large estates; (4) 20 to 30,000 families with one or two estates; (5) and about 1,300,000 mostly nobles, possessed of only a slice of land." In that time that is about 1790 Poland's total population was approximately 10 million inhabitants—that means that 13% of the total population were nobles with the right of vote. The Polish historian Starczewski in his work "Europe et la Pologne" estimates the population at that time as over nine millions with 800,000 nobles — that is nearly 9% of voters.

In no other country of the world was ever such a large number of nobility. France during the revolution out of a population of about 25 millions had only 1%, that is 250,000 nobles.

But the name of nobles in Poland applied to every one obliged to do military service; therefore, in the past nobility especially during incessant war periods was easily granted. When the Union of Poland and Lithuania was ratified at Lublin in 1569 King Sigmund August ennobled whole Lithuanian and Ruthenian villages. After the battle of Kluszyn in 1610, 40 peasants who distinguished themselves in that battle were made nobles. During the Cossack rebellion many thousands of peasants in the Ukraine, who remained faithful to Poland,. were made nobles.

It is impossible to call the Polish nation aristocratic as the majority of the nobles in no way differed from the peasants, only they had the privilege to vote.

The title of nobles in Poland mainly expressed that which is meant by the Turkish Spahis or Merovingi in France — simply a class of men whose duty was to respond to every call of arms — and who as defenders of the country had the privilege, denied to other people of the country, to vote and own land.

In the United States the right of vote is regarded not as a right acquired by a citizen by right of birth, but only as a gift of the State which can be granted to one and denied to others. So in certain States all male citizen of age except lunatics and criminals in prison have the right to vote, in some Southern States that privilege is granted only to those who can write or read, in other states that privilege is extended also to women. But if some one for the reason that in a certain state that privilege was denied to certain class of men or to women called such a state "governed by aristocracy" — he would be regarded as foolish and no one would take the author seriously. But the same people speaking of Poland will call "that cradle of world democracy" — an aristocratic country because the right to vote was restricted to one caste notwithstanding the fact that the name of that caste covered the most heterogeneous mixture of people, who had in common only the duty to defend the country, failure to fulfill that duty being sufficient to lose the privilege not only to vote but even to own land. This law was so strictly enforced that as Vigenere says in "Description de la Pologne" on page 61, "those who failed to supply armed men were dispossessed of their estates. The sick, minors and widows were put in their place. According to the law passed during the reign of King John Albert a person avoiding military service not only was deprived of all landed property and privileges, but could not even in the future acquire landed estates or even inherit them.

Possession of land was the special privilege of those who served in the army and who were obliged to be ready to defend their country—that is, of the nobles. It was a misleading aristocratic title applied mostly to people who were far from being aristocratic.

The laws of Poland from the earliest times were the most liberal and democratic in Europe — the number of those who had the privilege to vote the largest that any country in Europe had until well in the nineteenth century. Poland had always between 8-10% of voters among her population — France hardly had as many in 1848 and cultural Germany only later on.

The name of Polish nobles was mixed with that of "gentlemen", a surname which could be justly applied to some 20 or 30,000 Polish noble families, who held offices, were owners of one or more estates, well-bred and educated, and who in Poland were called "bene nati et possessionati", to be distinguished from the proletariat of that nobility who were numerous but mostly very poor, with little or no education, and who differed only from the common peasant in that they were swordsmen and had the right to vote, but were no more than what they call in France or this country citizens. — So every one had the right to call himself knight "eques"—or even "comes", companion, as nearly all belonged to a company of armed cavalry. From the word "comes", meaning only a soldier in a local militia company, after the partition of Poland arose a large number of "counts", a title non-existent in the kingdom of Poland, where the use of titles was prohibited by law.

The head of the first dynasty of kings of Poland — the Piast — who ruled over Poland for more than five centuries was a peasant.

To-day one of the theories advanced by the Socialist is that the soil is the property of the Nation — such theories were recognized for ages in the so-called aristocratic Poland and the nobles regarded themselves as temporary users on fulfillment of certain obligations accepted, as payment of taxes and service in the field.

ALEXANDER M. JASIENSKI.

In the Fall

(Scenes from the life of north-eastern Siberia.)

Wacław Sieroszewski was born in 1858, in the village of Wólka Kozłowska, in the government of Warsaw. Interrupting his studies at the local High School, he became a tradesman, a locksmith, attended the Technical School of the Warsaw-Vienna Railroad, and educated himself through the reading of exotic literature and works of positivist thinkers. In 1878, he took part in a labor movement for which he was exiled to Siberia and there during his sojourn he engaged in scientific studies and cultivation of belles-lettres. His great work on the Yakuts was published by the Petersburg Geographical Society (in Polish TWELVE YEARS IN THE COUNTRY OF THE YAKUTS.) His efforts from the field of belles-lettres appeared successively in the various periodicals: AT THE ENDS OF THE FORESTS (1894), ENSNARED, (1896), RISZTAU, (1890), DAWN, (1901), TWIGS, (1901), CHINESE NOVELS, (1903), The RETURN, (1904), The FLIGHT, (first edition under the pseudonym of Bagrynowski 1905), OL-SONI-KISAN, (1906). In 1903, he travelled to Japan which he described in his work TO THE FAR ORIENT, 1904, KOREA, 1906.

In 1905, with the outbreak of the political movement in Russia and in the Kingdom of Poland, Sieroszewski became one of the foremost fighters for freedom, ever faithful to what he deemed his ideals. Frequently imprisoned and ever active in this revolutionary movement he was eventually compelled to leave the kingdom, and later began to work upon the scientfic treatise of the movement of which he is one of the leading representatives.

His individuality as a writer manifested itself in his first endeavors, in distinct and strong colors, and later never yielded to any hesitations as regard his ideal and artistic aspirations. Very simple, little complicated, not too refined, it does not embrace a too wide of a sphere of phenomena, but when it embraces it, it does so with the eye of a true artist and man who is unshaken in his tendencies. Examples of his exotic world never become ethnography and geography; he sees and feels nature individually with an unusually developed sense of color. More typical and partial is his relation to man.

Paul Szczerbina (AT THE ENDS OF THE FORESTS), Alexander (ENSNARED), Wichlicki (RISZTAU), and Johnny Brzeski (CHINESE NOVELS) — all these are like brothers; all have their souls built and moulded along identical lines, and are full of altruism and heroism, all have the same goal: through the man to the nation — through the nation to mankind. All experience the same wilderness of adventures—ever on the brink of terrible precipices; very few of the younger writers are capable of building stories with such unusual plots as those of Sieroszewski's; he is a master at straining one's curiosity by means which in all his creations are more or less alike; ultimately, his heroes are rescued, the author's optimism ever being triumphant. In the light of this belief in the all-human ideal the barbarism of civilized Europe appears all the more nefarious, obtruding itself as it does upon exotic peoples as a mistress of culture and good manners. Sieroszewski's CHINESE NOVELS are one complete act of accusation against the "Kuturtraeger", just as all his works are in general an apology of humanity. This idea with its sunny brightness is taken from the life which he portrays and is not a tendency clapped on for the time being; it belongs, therefore, to the field of true art. What calm, what peace pervades the Chinese village in the novel NANG-MING-TSE! What pastel hues he uses in order to create the suggestion of peaceful and beautiful life! What perspective of horror he employs in order to act all the more powerfully on our fantasy! And several pages farther — how intensely he impresses us with his objective description of the lot of the Coolies. Most concentrated are the qualities of this truly masculine pen, despite his immense sensitiveness, as depicted in the picture "At the Bottom of Misery", which by force of its Dantean vigor belongs to his greatest masterpieces.

In Polish literature, in which even the poets of the first rank are not always artists, you cannot too strongly accentuate Sieroszewski's art. All his works have a well constructed plot; their power consists in their intensive poesy of nature and idea, impressing the reader with their skilful composition and powerful dramatic art. The author insists on absolute objectivity; he gives no psychological analyses, fails to portray the souls of men, and simply describes his exterior observations, in his famous clear, precise and unusually sparing manner.

The Polish naturalistic school has attained in him its epic of perfection. — From William Feldman's CONTEMPORARY POLISH LITERATURE, 1908, Lemberg, Warsaw.

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THE DRIZZLE and the copious rains, alternating without interruption for several days, kept indoors the inhabitants of the "yourta" (a Yakut hut) of Talak, condemning them to idleness. They often left the hut to gaze at the weeping sky, long and mournfully, because their hay was rotting on the meadows. Unfortunately the gray veil of rain showed no rent, and the heavy, leaden clouds dragged low, without revealing to the anxious eye ever the slightest trace of blue.

The downpour, not satisfied with the neglected holes in the roof left there from previous years, opened new ones and descended in steams upon the heads and shoulders of the dwellers; a large pool of water stood on the clay floor and grew deeper every moment. All kinds of filth, remnants of food, leavings of fish and fowl, the manure of the calves, dried and well beaten into the ground during summer heat, now swelled in the water and exhaled insufferable stench. The air in the hut was stuffy, cold and damp. The open fire in the chimney burned reluctantly, checked down by the clouds of bluish vapor that penetrated into the dwelling.

The hut was diminutive: it enclosed only about five square "sazens" (sazen—a Russian linear measure about 1 meter) of the encircling wilderness. The walls, erected from the bare trunks of the larch trees, slanted inwardly, as they ran upward to meet a flat roof, made of the same kind of raw timber, and that stretched so low above the heads of the inhabitants, that one of them,—Michaylo, ("ch" is pronounced like in German), a robust lad, busy at the window straightening cut nets, touched it continually with the unconscious movements of his curly head.

In the middle of the room there was a partition of the pillars roughly hewn with an axe, dividing the enclos-

ure into two equal parts, the right one for men, and the left one for women.

"Kyrsa" (Nickname—"White Fox"), my host, was sitting in front of the foremost pillar of the partition, facing the fireplace; he was leaning with both hands upon his right knee; a smouldering pipe hung from his lips. He was a robust Yakut, not yet old, a rich and independent master of several workmen; the owner of the house, nets, animals, household goods and also of three women: one wife and two daughters. The younger one was already sold but remained in the paternal home until the purchase money was paid in full.

No one spoke in the hut; a very unusual occurrence in a gathering of several Yakuts. The fire hissed and crackled, from behind the partition came the rustling of hides softened by hand, by constant rubbing. I had a presentiment that in this calm evil was brewing—and soon the storm broke loose.

A youth, nicknamed "the Rag", for his indolence, released the pent up forces. From the very morning he dragged his lazy feet from one corner of the room into another, now he suddenly upset a pail and spilled the water. It was only a drop added to torrents, but it proved one drop too much. All eyes flashed, all faces turned pale.

The dismayed "Rag" tried to blame Michaylo, who, he declared, has misplaced the strap for which he himself was only looking. Michaylo wrathfully reminded the "Rag" of the rake he lost last year. Everybody took sides and the quarrel became general. The tongues clattered with the rapidity of the wheels of a mill; oaths, curses and cutting sarcasms rushed, like a torrent, from convulsed lips; and above all boomed the terrifying threats of the master, like the trumpet of an archangel. The housewife felt equal to the encounter. She left her protecting seclusion and pitched into the battle with a zeal that would have been appreciated by all the women of the world. "Yourta" was buzzing like a stirred up hive. The husband asserted, the wife denied, the workmen swore, the maids whooped, the awakened child screamed in its crib and the calves bleated in response to the deep bellowing of the cows; the approaching evening brought them from the pastures. The last circumstance mitigated considerably the uproar, since the feminine element had to withdraw from the fray. And a complete quiet may have followed, were it not for the parting remark of the old Yakut who conceived the happy thought of having for once the last word. This word exploded with distinctness of a belated bombshell after a battle and at once aroused such deafening shrieks, protests, vituperations, that cows, and calves were frightened into stillness, the hushed wind died out, the clouds dispersed and I perceived a golden sunray that slipped through the hole in the bladder covering the window and suddenly cut like a glittering knife into the darkness, noise, filth and stench of our den. Frivolous and merry it danced a while and then settled in a small, bright, circle on the grizzled head of my host, just at a moment when his wife stuck under his very nose her fingers twisted into a disrespectful fig.

"That's for you——eat it, "na", screeched the furious but always beautiful "Kiumis" (Nickname).

The thumb wiggled nearer and nearer to the open mouth of the unfortunate.

What happened next? Did "Kyrsa" take revenge, as a man should, for this most bitter offence that a Yakut can suffer from a woman? Or did he prove himself once more "the wife of his wife", an "old woman", "a softy", as the neighbors called him, and failed to knock out the teeth, or break the ribs of this enterprising woman whose labor enriched and fattened him? I do not know. Because foreseeing the downfall of my friend, in whom the love of wife always dominated the sense of duty, and not wishing to witness his shame, I snatched my gun and ran out.

The wind lay low, the dome of the clouds broke open here and there, receded and disclosed bits of pale blue sky. The glittering sun shone through one of these rents, and the whole region, melancholy and tearstained a moment ago, now smiled in golden brightness. This glimmer of happiness had in it an illusive shadow of playful and tender sadness. The setting sun illumined a landscape of withering vegetation, of wrinkled earth, of trees turned to rust, yet everything glowed under its departing rays, like the body under the reviving warmth of a last kiss. The drops of water shone like diamonds, clinging to the lacy tangle of twigs in trees and bushes. The flush of the western sky spread over the fleeing clouds and against it the supple willows dropped in the last shiver the tears of the departing storm.

Before me, between two walls of high ridges, crested with the fringe of forests, the lake shone resplendent, melting in the distance. Its shores, as they receded, grew darker, dropped lower, and then towered suddenly into dark cliffs. Slender larches, agitated willows, small bushes and even weeds stood revealed on their top, like a fine black lace.

The amphiteatre of clouds rose above the waters; their heavy shapes, shot with gold and crimson, turned below into fleeting reflections, dancing upon thousands of crested waves.

I followed a winding path that led me through the meadow of yellowing grass to the top of the cliff.

How ugly and gloomy seemed this "shaytan tumul" ("Satan's Forest"), as I reached its shade! Uniform, rather flat hills ran into each other and gently sloped towards the west; the whole ground was covered with dirty-green moss, profusely interspersed with the leaf of the yellow dewberry ("Moroshka"—looks like a yellow raspberry, grows on the stalks about two feet high). The tangle of the underbrush and the spreading trees added to the gloom of the falling shadows. Here and there gnarled trunks rose singly or in irregular groups; the green of these ancient larches looked decayed. The silence and the darkness of the night hung heavily below, but the mighty top caught with their crooked fingers the departing rays, and played with them a while.

I stood a moment in mute contemplation of the wilderness—no native dared to brave its terrors after dark. Its silence and quiet were paralyzing like death; the rippling water, its only music, murmured softer and ever softer; the after glow of the sun set grew cold. I watched its receding steps, as it shone upon some remote and still remoter lakes. I followed the fleeting light tantalized by curiosity, tormented by longing.

The progress was not easy. Every few steps I was obliged to cling to the branches above, while I tried to clear at a bound narrow but deep pits, walled in, like wells, by the trees felled hundreds of years ago, and treacherously covered up by moss and leaves. The pits were full of water with a bottom of solid ice; one careless step, a fall and one could perish with a broken neck or languish with twisted arms or legs.

In many places the swampy streams wound their way sluggishly with hardly any current; their banks were so flat and marshy that they would be impassable were it

not for the fellen trunks. The woods were full of uprooted stumps; their upturned roots, covered with dripping slime, assumed in the dark all kinds of threatening shapes. The white splashes of "yaguel" a low plant with large, whitish leaves), around them, glimmered with the dull light of a shroud torn to pieces, lending an uncanny touch to their savage outlines.

No wonder the naties often see in these woods mysterious beings, floating in the beams of the moonlight, or standing out black against the red glow of northern lights. Sometimes it is a tall "devil of the woods", sometimes a black Slav hunter, "the szatan" who come from the south and now reams about the Yakut huts and kills their cattle. Woe to the place where such a shadow was seen! With one shot he kills from 50 to 200 animals. A southern weapon is terrible, especially in the hands of a devil. This evening I was not destined to meet any spirits of the wilderness.

I did not even come upon a "shaytan", or a dried up corpse of a Tunguz (a tribe of nomads in north-eastern Siberia). Many years ago they were seen here in large numbers, hence the name of the "Satan's Forest". They were generally found sitting under a tree, or with their back against a rock; dry, small, twisted out of shape, they turned towards the east their eyes, picked empty by birds. On their knees there was a wooden bow or a rifle, at their feet an axe with a broken handle, and at the girdle, set with silver and embroidered withbeads, there hung in its case a knife, also broken—so the dead could not harm the living. A little to the side there were generally traces of reindeer bones, the harness of the killed animal and small Tunguz sleighs. Nobody ever dares to take any of these objects, so valued by the natives. The guilty is punished on the spot: he wanders in the woods until he comes to the same place and returns what he has taken. The stubborn ones, who refuse to submit to this unwritten law, lose their way several times, ten times, hundred times, always come to the starting point and can not leave the magic circle until they right the wrong and propitiate the owner with a gift. It is dangerous even to touch a thing belonging to a corpse, because this brings a snow storm—"purgue", or at least a strong north wind. The friendly natives advised me even to avoid looking at a "shaytan", because this brings a speedy, and sametimes an instantaneous death. But this wild night I longed desperately to meet at least such a "shaytan"—and was punished for the daring wish.

The twilight passed into night; the faintest glow disappeared from the sky, as, at last, tired and with torn garments, I left the tangle of the "Satan's Forest". The azure dome over me was punctuated with milliards of hazy lights; the fog spread like gauze over the valley, interposing a dense veil to my exploring gaze. For an instant the wonderful play of moonlight over the scene charmed my thoughts away. Beauty seemed to be wafted over gloom and savagery. Clouds of white vapor filled the clearing with restless shadows to the very brink of the forest, whose bare tree tops cut into the misty transparency with the immovability of skeletons. The moon sailed high, its pale shimmer sifted through the mist and touched with uncertain gleam the slumbering waters of the lake below.

Stillness and quiet, the ghastly movements and mysterious lights, the consciousness of perfect solitude for miles around the bottomless wilderness of the surrounding world, all this opposed to my soul's longing a nameless dread, a gnawing hopelessness.

I sprang forward to drive the inner terrors away. It was time to return. But the way home was not clear to me: pressing through the underbrush I have lost the sense of direction. A narrow track was visible in the dark and I decided to follow it, hoping that it would lead to some habitation. But my track was made either by water or by wild beasts and was one of many that cross each other in the woods. I wanted to return to my starting point at the clearing and from there to plan carefully what direction to take; but the spot of my momentary brooding disappeared. The night changed her panorama of shadows and the fog hung its heavy cobwebs in every passage. I began to explore the woods in several directions, never sure of retracing my steps aright. I rushed here and there—the grim face of madness lurked at me from behind every trunk. I stopped, sat heavily on a fallen log, and resolved to await the dawn. I remembered those unfortunates who were brought home from the "tayga" (forests of northern Siberian)—pale, haggard, with terror and madness struggling in their eyes. The wretches sometimes roam near their own huts, and see them not; they see the sun rising and setting and do not know which way to turn; they shriek and howl like beasts. When they are finally found and brought to themselves they say that they have seen a devil. This fatal mental disorder is largely caused by exhaustion in fruitless running about.

The weather was cold. My garments were wet with drizzle and fog; besides it was far too light for a night in the woods, so the chill soon penetrated to my very marrow. I tried to make fire, but the matches were useless in this dampness and the one that caught fire, went out in smoke, the moment I brought it in contact with wet twigs that I scrambled together. Finally I had to be satisfied with an armful of grass with which I covered my feet, naturally most sensitive to cold. I inspected my rifle and finding everything in order I leaned against a tree and tried to sleep.

Soon a dull ache seemed to pervade my whole body and to absorb all the senses one by one: touch, smell sight, while hearing became unusually acute. I heard the beating of my heart, the rush of blood in my veins, the rustle of leaves, the swish of rising and falling vapor; these minute sounds seemed to multiply endlessly. Suddenly amidst the subtle hallucinations I heard an unmistakable sound—and opened my eyes. It came from below, possibly from a lake and was rythmic like the stroke of an ear. I glued my eyes to the undulating fog from behind which the sound seemed to come; soon I distinguished a moving shape which, gliding, divided the space into cloudy atmosphere above, and inky lake below. A moment later the shape assumed the slender lines of a Yakut "piroga" (a small boat, made of reindeer hide), then I saw a boatman crumpled together on its bottom. He dipped into the water first one then the other spadelike end of his long ear. Finally I could distinguish even the silver stream of water that trickled down from the raised end of the ear. Soon the dark silhouette disappeared, the noises changed character: the boat was grounding. I crept in the direction of the sounds, hiding carefully, so that the man should not see me before time; if he did, he would escape—I was certain of that. At last I spied his back, he was busy taking something from the bottom of his boat.

"Tell me all about it." I greeted him according to the custom of the country and then emerged slowly from behind the bushes.

He screamed and jumped away but did not attempt to run away: He recognized me. I also knew him at once;

he was a poor Yakut who lived about five versts (versta—about ¾ of an English mile) from me.

"I don't know anything! I did not hear anything! Everything is all right. Oh! How you scared me", he answered hurriedly and reached out his hand to me.

"Who did you think I was?"

"What can a man expect to meet nights in the woods?", he avoided an answer and measured me from head to foot with suspicious glances. "Sometimes you think — a man, an acquaintance — you talk as if you knew him. Ah, well, in the end, you see, it is not a man!"

"And what are you doing here so late?"

"I am getting home. Isn't it a holiday to-morrow? And my fishing is far away, on the Babilone lake, hundred thirty versts. You know, we are poor people, we live on fish — I have no horses; it is on the boat for me, always on the boat! I must drag it through the woods; the way is rough,... I hurt my foot—and so—I am late——"

"Your foot is hurt? Is it very bad?"

"Very, I could hardly stop the blood flowing."

"Did you call and whistle?", I asked, thinking of the sounds I thought I heard in the night.

"I? No", he shut his lips tight, bent over his boat and crossed himself furtively.

"And you, what are you doing here?" he asked me in return.

I hesitated. "I am after the ducks." This was a lie but I did not wish to scare him away.

"The ducks—", he repeated and began to laugh heartily, his white teeth glimmering in the dark like pearls. "The ducks never come here."

"They do not come? Why not?" I asked helping him to drag the boat through the outskirts of the woods to another lake visible at a distance. The fisherman was sorely disabled.

"The lakes are different," he explained. "And they are so many in our land; as many as the stars in the sky; and the stars are just the reflections of the lakes! The lakes are different as the stars are different—large and small, deep, that you can not reach the bottom, and shallow or marshy. In some, the fish is fat, in others, lean; some have very bad water—it kills the cattle and makes a man sick; in others, the water is as pure as air."

We stopped at the shore of the next water, pushed the boat off and jumped in; the fisherman in the front, I in the back. We sat with our backs leaning against each other, and gliding smoothly, we appeared in the dark like some twofaced god of this wilderness: One head bearded, Caucasian, the other, flat, smooth, Mongolian.

The Mongolian head continued its recital, interrupting, whenever the boat tipped to leeside, with a warning to me to sit still.

"....Everything comes from the water.... And the cow lived formerly in the water, before the man caught and tamed her. In the water, just like in the air, different animals live, even people. Just look!", and he pointed with his ear to the green woods of the lake. "Isn't this a forest?"

It was truly a forest, black, mysterious, inhabited by the fishes and the corpses of the drowned! No swimmer, once caught could have ecaped this submerged "tayga."

"Many years ago", continued the Yakut, "the old people tell us, everything was different—everything was better, because there was more water—the sables came of themselves to the gates of the dwellings, and the fish was go plentiful that you just had to shoot an arrow into the lake and it would come out with your prey all stuck on it; — but what now? There is nothing: the sables escaped, the fishes are few; it is only the merchants, our fathers, that save us; without them we would die—they give us money for taxes—they give us tea, tobacco, calico—Oh, yes, the merchants..... I wish I were a merchant."

Our boat touched the land; we dragged it again to the next lake—and then to the next, and so on.—This is the only way to travel in this land of lakes, swamps and morasses covered with forests.

After an hour we came to a narrow stream, evergrown with rushes, following it we reached another lake; on its shore we could see in the dark cascades of sparks escaping from the chimney of a "yourta."

"You will probably stop at Chachak?" my companion inquire when we landed. "I am spending my night there. "I took half of the truck and proceeded to the "yourta."

I knew Chachak for some time. He was a crank that amused and often scandalized his neighbors with many crazy pranks.

"Chachak 'Ohonior' (Old) made a cap from a whole wolf", they would tell me with a laugh. "Chachak 'Ohonior' paid the merchants only two rubles for a brick of tea. "To pay three, they would have too much profit', said he."

"What of the merchants? Were they satisfied?"

"Eee—the old woman paid them the rest, in secret.—How is that? Don't you know Chachak? He won't pay three—he wan't drink, but pay, he will not—"

In his youth Chachak was famous as the first hunter of the land. His courage, coolness and skill were legendary. Above all sports bearhunt was the dearest to his heart; he roamed the woods in summer and winter, with a hatchet and a rifle, killing the bears in the field or in their own lair, wherever he chanced to find them. He burned for these bloody encounters with the fever of a gambler. Any rumor about a bear affected him strangely; he would not sleep, he got angry with everybody, had fits or rage and at the first chance, ran off from home, tracked the animal and killed it. Not once when the hunters would invite him to attack a whole brood of beasts, an irresistible hunter's fury seized him; he did not wait for the dawn; slipped away in the dead of night, with his horse and a faithful dog, hastening to meet the beasts singlehanded. Later he would be found pale, besmirched with blood, amidst the outstretched carcasses of the "masters of the woods". The comrades had nothing else to do but to eat a piece of the raw heart and liver of the vanquished, to drink a cup of their blood and to exclaim lustfully the three victorious "uch!" All eyes then fastened upon Chachak who, feigning indifference, confused but proud inclined his head modestly, while his face shone with the afterglow of heroism. Was it not he that killed the bear with a "tail" who, as everybody knows, is not a bear but a devil. Didn't he chop down the "shaytan of the ice", who rushed at the people, carried off cattle and could not be killed either with a bullet or with a hatchet? Chachak himself never related his wonderful exploits, never gloried in his deeds, he was always silent and modest, as beseems a man who, most likely, knows more that the others.

However, since an accident that befell him sometimes before, he changed completely. He stopped hunting and cardplaying, grew lazy, become ever more cranky and sank into poverty—he lost his influence and prestige.

His "yourta" was near the shore and was seen stood at its gate. A merry fire played in the interior and we could hear the murmur of voices. Evidently, in spite of the late hour, they were not yet in bed. I came to the door and looked through the chink. Before the fire, facing me, sat Chachak with a net, but it rested idly on his

knees; with arms slightly outstretched, he narrated something to his interested listeners. At his feet a small child played with the metal butt of a knife that stuck in the wooden casing, attached to the leather trousers of the man, a little above the ankle. Chachak was extremely animated; he leaned repeatedly towards his hearers and pounded the clay floor with his mighty heel. "Horse flesh is repulsive to them — but they eat "pig", he drolled out, "and yet horse is a clean and elever animal."

"Oh, yes!", assented the hearers.

"And the pig! I have seen one — odious! No hair on the skin! Naked, filthy, stupid and malicious! Big ears, small tail, wiggles, like a snake; the eyes — small, and the teeth—like a dog's. And how wicked! In Yakutsk something happened to me — they almost ate me up. — They are just everywhere there. One morning I came out on the porch to smoke my pipe. Everybody was asleep, it was just dawning in the east. In the yard the pigs wiggled about squeaking. I was young and always liked my fun. They gathered around me in a circle. I stuck a fig at them. — They rushed at me like mad. I jumped on a bench, they pressed closer and grumbled viciously — and my thumb touched their very noses to the right and to the left. Here, here, here, for you! says I."

He spat in his fist and stretched out his fig in all directions.

Suddenly the door creaked; the women shrieked, the men jumped up from their scars, the children began to cry. Somebody was coming! May be a "Nutcha" (Yakut word for a Russian, anybody from the south) and with a pig! Chachak was tensely silent, his arms dropped listlessly to the sides.

The entrance, as usually in Yakut "yourta", was placed back of the fire place, the only source of light in the evening. There was a moment of curiosity and even of fear before I emerged from the shadow. Yes, it was a "Nutcha", but an acquaintance, a friend and besides, without a pig.

The faces brightened up, the hands stretched out, they greeted me cordially, openly, as here in the north a guest is always greeted. Chachak laughed out right, he made me a place beside himself on the bench before the fire and ordered the tea kettles to be set to boiling.

"Tell us all about it; how goes everything?" all enquired.

I began to relate the news of the neighborhood; they listened attentively, although they have heard them many times before. Then my traveling companion came and the conversation became general. The men soon surrounded the table upon which Chachak's wife placed the lunch, a bowl of sour milk, freshly curdled, and a pile of dried fish, called "youkala."

Chachak stood by the fire, toasting his back, and took no part in the conversation. His daughter, a young and rather pretty wench, placed upon the table a few saucers and cups of ordinary faience, and a customary Yakut treat began: first tea with a cold lunch and then a hot supper of fish. Although the food was savory and we were ravenous, we could not do justice to everything that was served. Chachak noticed it and attacked me with playful churliness.

"You don't eat! Are you full—? Is it customary to go visiting without any appetite? You Slavs, you eat like birds in other people's houses but when you get home you order your wife about "Samowar"! (an urn for boiling water and stuping tea). Put the kettle on the fire! I am hungry! 'That's a shame.'"

Everybody laughed unconstrainedly and the old man joined in the merriment. The conversation touched upon general topics but soon returned again to the burning problem of the current gossip.

"How is Andrew?" "He weeps?" "And not a trace of the boy."

"Not a trace."

"It's a pity. Such a likely lad."

"And nothing was found?"

"Nothing. All neighbors came to help; they searched the lakes, the woods—they searched the whole work — not a trace, nowhere!"

"Eee—surely a bear. They say there is one in the valley, Kecherges saw him", murmured my fisherman hurriedly.

At the word "bear" Chachak, who played with his fingers in silence, jerked up his head. A hush fell upon the room, every eye was riveted upon him. His old wife, with a troubled look, began talking at random.

"A bear, and where was he seen? Asked Chachak quickly in a subdued voice, sitting down again.

"Eee—such a gossip—nobody really knows", answered the fisherman with confusion.

"A bear, surely", dropped musingly from Chachak lips. — The body was not found, nor any clothing. — Yes, "he" always burries in the ground what is left of his prey—"he" even scratches the blood off. Yes, it must be him? You say, Kecherges saw?" He addressed the fisherman directly.

"He is lying," retorted this one with ill-will.

"Ah! 'he' is wise, cunning, revengeful. Andrew must have done him something: may be he boasted, may be he told on him. 'He' remembers an offence. — And now 'he' carried his boy away! 'He' may be far away in his mountains, in the wilderness, yet he hears well; he hears what we are saying now, and he understands all, like a man, better that a man! Who knows what he really 'ia' is.—You just skin him and see how very much like a woman he is. Revengeful—and hates fiercely—he never forgives— '" added Chachak with bent head.

"What, you Russian, you go away?" He turned suddenly to me. "Take care, take care. The bear is large, but he steps softly like a shadow, and rushes upon one unawares. I tell you, stay with us for the night. "He" is not joking. Long time ago I was not afraid, but now —look!" He pushed up his shirt sleeve; the sight was sickening: the left arm which, as I noticed, he moved very awkwardly, was as thin as the bone itself; encased in a dried skin, with veins and tendons twisting about like bundles of cords; it was criss-crossed with white scars. "I killed many, many", he continued", and I knew that some day they will kill me. They will tear me to pieces because I am afraid—now. And this is how it happened. The season was a little more advanced than now, it was freezing. I prepared my traps for the reindeer and God gave me one big animal. It was far from home, the roads were bad. Flesh, hide together with the intestines,.... it would have taken seven or eight horses to transport his carcass. I decided to build a store-room on the spot and to depose my game temporarily, till the winter roads would open. I started to work in the morning, taking my child along. The lad lingered somewhat behind, while I walked briskly down the road. I was about to pass a ticket of willows on the hill nearby when "he" dashed out. He ran to me, like a dog, and before I collected my wits, he was upon his haunches. I reached for

my knife and pulled and pulled at it, but in vain. The day was cold — on leaving home I did not wipe it carefully enough after the meal and it froze to the casing. God's will! The "black" threw me on the ground. Helpless, I thrust my left arm into his gaping mouth and hollered at the boy to run for help. The stupid fellow rushed at the bear and struck at him with a knife — his knife — so long,—"he showed us l ɜ finger". 'You want to kill my father', he screamed. The "black" was frightened and rushed back into woods; the blade of the knife stuck into my breast and I would have died on the spot but the vest of deer hide saved my life. I was senseless for a long, long time."

"Well, then, ever since "he", crouching over me, looked me in the eyes, my soul is troubled—I am afraid", he almost whispered, "I am afraid — horribly."

Soon after I took leave of my hospitable friend and went home.

The moon shone brightly, the fog lifted, the wellknown path gleamed faintly in the dark. A thousand times I followed it without fear, without any disturbing thought, but now — as I approached the ticket where Chachak was attacked, unwittingly, my hand left for the handle of the knife and, for a moment, I seemed to see, in the inky bushes, the shaggy muzzle of the monster, resting upon his cruel paws.

A few years later I heard that Chachak disappeared, was lost in the "tayg" without any traces, — probably the "masters of the woods" have taken their revenge.

Translated by Mrs. Helena Piotrowska

Hospital Work in Warsaw

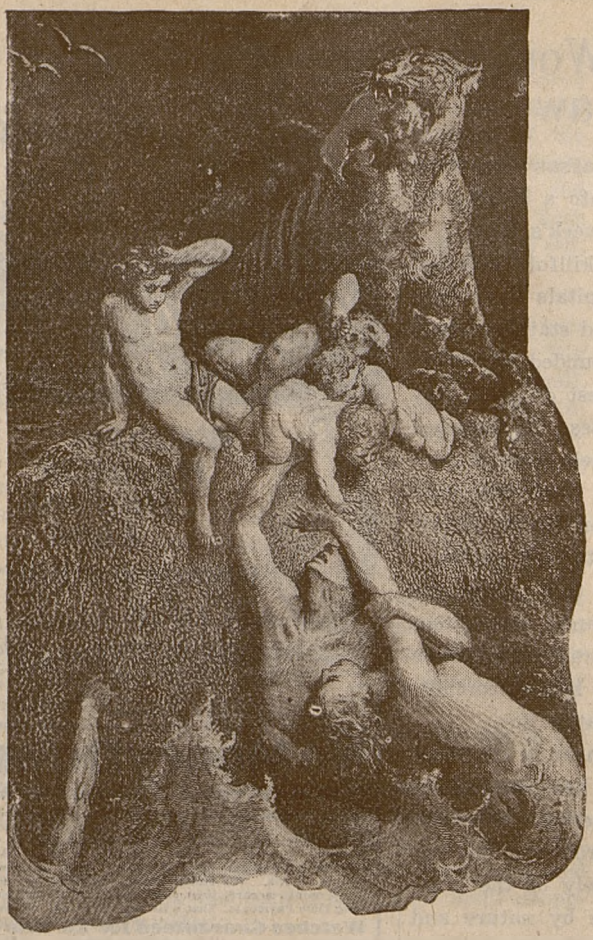
The citizens of Warsaw converted the cadet barracks into a hospital of 2,000 beds in three week's time.

Under the same skillful management evacuation hospitals have been created in the railroad stations where the less seriously wounded are taken from the trains to rest on their way to their final lazarettes. So absorbed are these people in their work of mercy that they hardly heed the daily bombs from air men—baby killers, as they are contemptuously called.

In addition to all this there are committees large and committees small from the central organization in Warsaw, the little hamlet committees in rear of the battle line.

How much work there is for these committees to do is hard to explain to peace blessed America. We have our unemployment problems, but our unemployed are largely of the transient class, well able by nature and practice to look out for themselves. But here the idle are largely landowners or tenant farmers at the last driven from their homes by stress of war and quite unable to fend for themselves under new conditions.

Food must be found for them and roofs and work. It is heart-breaking labor for the committees, but it is invaluable discipline and experience for the future.



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