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The Spirit of Poland

Dorothea M. Hughes



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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

The Spirit of Poland

A Play in Three Acts

By

DOROTHEA M. HUGHES



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1917

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The Spirit of Poland

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JAN 17 1918

No. 1

meat

The Spirit of Poland

CHARACTERS

PAN (MR.) MALEWSKI *proprietor of a Polish estate*
 PANA (MISS) WANDA MALEWSKI *his daughter*
 TADEUSZ BOLSKI *an American, on way home after
 a year at a Russian college*
 SASHA POLIVANOF *a lieutenant in the Russian Army*
 SEBASTIAN *an old servant of the Malewskis'*
 PEASANTS :
 JUSEF *the bridegroom*
 MAGDA *the bride*
 STACH *a lover*
 MANKA *his sweetheart*
 BARTOSZ *an old man*
 HANNA *his wife, foster mother to Wanda*
 JAN
 BASIA *his wife*
 ZOSIA *their little girl*
 VIKTA }
 FRANKA } *women*
*An infant. Two men to fill in dance. A fiddler (or
 two if preferred).*

NOTE

“a” is pronounced as in “far.” “ch” as in German.

TIME OF PLAYING.—Two hours.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Outbreak of the European War.
 ACT II.—Time of Russian retreat.
 ACT III.—The winter of the next year.



STORY OF THE PLAY

Pan Malewski and Wanda, his daughter, make ready for the dance they are giving. Tadeusz has lost his way and accepts Malewski's invitation to stay over night. The dance interrupted by Sebastian's dreadful news. "Austria has declared war on Russia!" Sasha Polivanof, a Russian officer, is quartered under Malewski's roof. Wanda's contempt. "I hate him!" Tadeusz, who has known Polivanof at college, tells him that he has fallen in love with Wanda. Polivanof declares that if Russia wins it will mean freedom for Poland. Tadeusz is unconvinced. "I have no faith in Russia." Wanda accuses him of cowardice, and gives Polivanof a knot of Polish ribbon. "When the bullets sing, your eyes will light me." The Russian retreat—across Poland. Wanda and Polivanof. "You will save us." "Marry me and ride with my troops to safety." Wanda refuses in scorn. "Give me back the knot of ribbon." The homeless peasants find shelter at Wanda's house, which has been mysteriously spared. Hunger. Malewski decides to sell his violin. Wanda's plea. "Wait a little—only half an hour——" The slipping minutes. Tadeusz comes from America bringing food and hope. "I thought of a face I had seen in my dreams." The hungry are fed. "Long live Poland!"

COSTUMES, ETC.

PAN (MR.) MALEWSKI (pronounced Maleskie). About sixty. Act I, wears a good suit of modern clothes. Act II, overcoat and hat.

PANA (MISS) WANDA MALEWSKI (pronounced Vanda Maleskie). A pretty girl about twenty. In

Act I she wears a peasant dress. (See MAGDA, etc., below.) In Act II black dress, long cape and outdoor wraps. A shawl over head on second entrance. In Act III, black dress, with a knot of Polish crimson ribbon and a long crimson sash.

TADEUSZ BOLSKI (pronounced Tadush). About twenty-five. Act I, riding suit. Act III, same, with heavy coat over it, and a knot of red, white, and blue ribbon. Smooth face.

SASHA POLIVANOF. About twenty-five. Uniform of a Russian officer, with cape. Wears moustache.

SEBASTIAN. About sixty. Costume in Act I should suggest an old-time servant. It may be black, or perhaps brown, with black braid. In Act III wears heavy coat, riding boots, cap.

BARTOSZ (pronounced Bartosh), JUSEF (Yusef), JAN (Yan) and other peasants in Act I wear white coats trimmed with red or blue, red caps with peacock feathers, loose trousers gathered at knee, and high boots. BARTOSZ in Act III wears old gray clothing, ragged coat, etc. He has a long beard. JUSEF and STACH are about twenty-two. JAN is rather older.

MAGDA, MANKA, BASIA (Basha), and other peasant women wear gay skirts, some flowered, some striped, some white or plain-colored with stripes round the bottom. White waists, and bodices of different colors. Gay kerchiefs knotted at back of neck, or bare heads. Hair done in braids, either loose, or coiled above ears or on back of neck. In Act I quantities of beads are worn, but not in Act III. In Act II, shawls cover heads and shoulders. MAGDA and MANKA are about eighteen or nineteen. HANNA is about sixty. BASIA, about twenty-five. VIKTA and FRANKA, young women. ZOSIA (Zosha), a child of eight or ten, dresses like her elders.

PROPERTIES

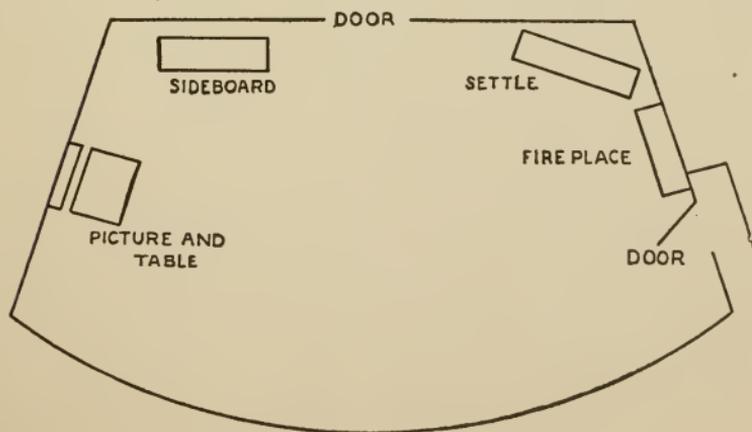
Act I.—Two candles, picture of Virgin. Long wreath of red and white flowers, and another of blue and white, and a third of any color. Violin, mirror, step-ladder, cigarette. Calling card. Piece of candy. Embroidered belt, and embroidered cloth. A folded paper. Calling card. Bottles and glasses. Bell (to be heard off stage). Key.

Act II.—Newspaper. Letter. Knot of Polish crimson. Bundle of handkerchiefs apparently filled with personal belongings. Portable household goods. Lantern. Basket of food.

Act III.—Violin and case. Beet roots. Basket or package of food. Saddle-bags. (These are two large bags of cloth fastened together with a band of cloth or leather. They should appear to be stuffed full of goods.) Knot, or badge, of red, white and blue ribbon. Polish flag.

SCENE PLOT FOR ACTS I AND III

INTERIOR BACKING



ACT I

SCENE.—A room in the house of Pan Malewski—a nobleman of ancient family. On right wall, a picture of Virgin; underneath it a stand with two candles. In front of it a step-ladder. In left wall, at back, a fireplace, and against back wall—next the fireplace—a settle. A door at back, and a door at left. A bell-rope hangs at the back. Mirror over fireplace. To right back, a sideboard covered with silver. The room is cleared of the other furniture, as for a dance.

ACT II

SCENE.—A snowy field near the village. A few fallen trees or logs. Everything as dreary as possible. If a very simple setting is desired, the former scene may be covered with white drop curtains, furniture, etc., being removed.

ACT III

SCENE.—Same as Act I, except all silver and movable valuables are gone. Table down L. C. A child's coffin is on table. The candles are lit before the Virgin's picture.

The Spirit of Poland

ACT I

SCENE.—PAN MALEWSKI'S house. Time—At outbreak of war.

(PAN MALEWSKI, WANDA and SEBASTIAN discovered. SEBASTIAN stands by step-ladder, R. WANDA, down C., is dancing. PAN M.; on settle up L., is playing an air used later. WANDA stops suddenly.)

WANDA (C.). No, no, I mustn't! I have no time. (Runs laughing up L. to her father.) Dear little Father, stop. Do you think I can help dancing when you play? (She lays her hands on the strings, then dashes R. and scrambles up the step-ladder.) Now Sebastian, the blue and white. (SEBASTIAN hands up a wreath. Just as she is about to put it over the Virgin's picture PAN M. begins to play, in the spirit of mischief.) No, no! (PAN M. plays louder. WANDA flings down the wreath, jumps down from the step-ladder and dances, giving herself up to the swing of the music. Then she checks herself. Up C.) Stop! stop (with a mock majesty), or I shall lose my temper.

PAN M. (up L.). What a terrible threat!

WANDA (C., pretending to be offended). Well, I have a temper. (Coaxing.) But you won't tease me again. (PAN M. lowers his bow; WANDA shakes upraised finger.) Don't deny it, you always spoil me. (She takes two steps, R., toward the picture, then over shoulder.) And now you know I must decorate the Virgin's picture. (Climbs step-ladder again and ar-

ranges a blue and white wreath over the picture.)
How does that look, Father?

PAN M. Very well.

WANDA. No, let us try the other once more.
(SEBASTIAN *hands up the other wreath.*) Of course blue and white are her colors; but she loves the Polish red too.

PAN M. Twist them together, Wanda.

(She deftly twists them together and hangs them over the picture. Bell without.)

WANDA. There they are! there they are! And we aren't ready. *(Scrambles down off the step-ladder.)* Quick, Sebastian, hide it! hide it! *(SEBASTIAN seizes the step-ladder. She tries to help him. WANDA, R.)* Oh, do be quick!

SEBASTIAN (R. C.). I've got it. There, there, leave be. *(WANDA watches as though to make him move faster by the force of her ardor. SEBASTIAN slowly crosses the stage, L.)* All this hurry for a lot of peasant folk! *(Exit, C. WANDA flies to glass over fireplace, L., and smiling at her image puts a final touch to her hair and dress. Then she goes up to her father's side, L., with a skip. Reënter SEBASTIAN, C.)* The peasants have not come. It is a stranger.

PAN M. *(up L.)*. A stranger?

(Places violin in case on settee.)

WANDA *(up L.)*. What is he like?

SEBASTIAN. A foreigner, I think.

PAN M. Has he letters to me?

WANDA *(going C. to SEBASTIAN)*. Is he young or old?

SEBASTIAN (C.). He has no letters.

WANDA (C.). Is he old or young?

SEBASTIAN *(with a shrug)*. Young.

PAN M. *(coming down L.)*. Did he say what brought him?

WANDA (C.). Is he handsome?

SEBASTIAN. He has lost his way.

WANDA. Is he handsome?

SEBASTIAN (*another shrug*). Well enough.

PAN M. Ask him to come in. I'll do my best to redirect him.

(*Exit SEBASTIAN, c.*)

WANDA (*coming down L.*). Oh, Father, ask him to stay. Dear little Father, ask him to stay.

PAN M. He may be in a hurry.

WANDA. Oh, no. Why should he be? We never see a stranger from one year's end to the next, and to-day is my birthday.

(*Reënter SEBASTIAN, c., with TADEUSZ BOLSKI. SEBASTIAN withdraws with a bow.*)

TADEUSZ (c.). Pardon my intrusion.

(*Comes slowly down c.*)

PAN M. (*coming forward to greet him*). You are very welcome. I hear you have lost your way. What can I do for you?

TADEUSZ. I came to ask which road I had better take. I am on my way from Rokitno to Radom.

PAN M. (L. c.). You have indeed lost your way.

TADEUSZ (c.). And the worst of it is, my horse has gone lame. How far is it to Radom?

PAN M. A good twenty miles, and bad roads.

TADEUSZ. Worse roads than I have come through?

PAN M. Yes.

WANDA (L., *laughing*). A man was drowned in one once. The coach overturned, and he was drowned.

TADEUSZ. Then I must fling myself on your charity. Is there any place near here where I could exchange a lame horse for a sound?

PAN M. Let us talk of that later. In the meantime will you not stay for our festivity? This is my daughter's birthday, and all the peasants in the village are coming here for a dance.

TADEUSZ. A thousand thanks! But then how should I reach Radom before nightfall?

PAN M. Be our guest for to-night. A room is always ready for the stranger, and a place set at table for the "man from across the mountains."

TADEUSZ (*to WANDA*). Have I stepped into a fairy tale? (*To PAN M.*) I may be fifty kinds of a scamp.

PAN M. (*L. C.*). No, no!

TADEUSZ (*C., to PAN M.*). You ask me without knowing my name—my business?

WANDA (*L.*). Yes, of course. Why not? It is our custom. You are a "man from over the mountains."

TADEUSZ. "If this be dreaming, may I never wake."

PAN M. No dream, I assure you.

TADEUSZ (*to WANDA*). And the knight in the fairy tale came to a palace where all strangers were made welcome; and there he found the fairest princess in the world. (*To PAN M.*) I am still bewildered. (*Handing his card.*) Take my card, to convince me I'm not dreaming. (*To WANDA.*) I will gladly be a "man from over the mountains." I count it luck my horse went lame.

PAN M. The good fortune is ours. (*He looks at card, bows slightly and hands it to WANDA. To TADEUSZ.*) Do you smoke? (*He offers a cigarette. TADEUSZ accepts and lights it, but forgets to smoke.*) You must be cold. Come nearer the fire.

(*The men stand L. by fireplace. WANDA is back of them, by the settle.*)

WANDA (*looking at card*). Tadeusz Bolski. The name is Polish. I thought—— You speak like a foreigner. Are you a Pole?

TADEUSZ. I am of Polish blood. My great-grandfather followed Kosciusko to fight for the cause of freedom in America.

WANDA. Then you are an American?

TADEUSZ. An American citizen—on my way home from a year of college in St. Petersburg.

PAN M. Your home is in the land where all men receive justice.

WANDA. Where the children never see their fathers marched off to war.

PAN M. You do not live in constant terror of the police.

TADEUSZ. Why, scarcely.

PAN M. Every Pole worthy of the name fears the police.

WANDA. And in America every child is taught to read. If I were to open a school here I should be arrested.

TADEUSZ. You?

WANDA (*smiling*). And sent to Siberia, perhaps, if I persisted.

TADEUSZ. Impossible!

WANDA. Oh, yes—my father was born there, and my grandfather worked in the mines with chains on his feet.

TADEUSZ. But now—in these days—and for teaching —

WANDA (*still smiling*). I should be accused of stirring up a revolt.

TADEUSZ. I have begun to understand what freedom means—the freedom my great-grandfather fought for—now when I see countries without it. First Russia and now Poland. It makes me — (*He checks himself.*) If only there were hope, a revolt —

PAN M. (*bitterly*). Ah, a revolt.

(*He shakes his head.*)

TADEUSZ. You are hopeless—like my Russian friend, Polivanof. Hopeless of anything better.

PAN M. Those who had hope are dead.

TADEUSZ. But you seem to think nothing you can do will make any difference.

PAN M. Those Poles who tried to make a difference sleep in the lost battle-fields.

TADEUSZ. But the people—the peasants — That is what I tried to show Polivanof. The people will not stand it much longer.

PAN M. You say your Russian friend is a fatalist.

So am I. But I am not hopeless. Liberty will come when it will come.

TADEUSZ. But why not fight to bring it?

PAN M. I thought the Americans were a practical people.

TADEUSZ. So they are, but —

PAN M. A revolt is not practical.

TADEUSZ (*eagerly*). But is there nothing I can do? No cause I can join? Poland gave my great-grandfather to America, and America owes my life to Poland.

PAN M. You are true to your race.

WANDA. I knew you were a Pole at heart.

PAN M. (*taking both his hands*). Stay with us, learn to know your great-grandfather's country.

WANDA. You are one of us already.

TADEUSZ. I wish I were. I wish there were an army mustering now for the defence of Poland, that I might fight for her liberty. Perhaps you might buckle on—(*less seriously*) my blanket roll.

WANDA. If every one felt as you do, Poland would soon be free. (*Distant music heard. WANDA goes to door, c.*) Here they come. This is my name day, and we have chosen it for Magda's wedding. (*TADEUSZ and PAN M. come down L.*) All the peasants are coming for a dance, and then a feast in the big barn. I have decorated the room for it.

TADEUSZ. I see you have red, white and blue there in the flowers.

WANDA. Yes, blue and white for the Virgin, and red and white for Poland.

TADEUSZ (*L.*). But red, white and blue is also for —

WANDA (*C.*). Ah, yes! For America, and freedom! (*She comes down L. to her father's side. A loud burst of music. SEBASTIAN and the peasants enter slowly, c., walking two by two. MAGDA and JUSEF come first, HANNA and BARTOSZ next, then BASIA and JAN, and last of all MANKA and STACH. MANKA is shy with STACH, but he is forward. Little ZOSIA runs near her mother with a wreath. ZOSIA*

runs forward with the wreath to WANDA.) Thank you! Thank you all! Ah, little one, I have not forgotten you.

(She gives ZOSIA a piece of candy. Peasants file by, greeting PAN M. and WANDA. They half bend their knees and kiss their hands. It may take too long for all to do this.)

PEASANTS. Praised be the name of the Lord.

WANDA AND PAN M. For all eternity. Amen.

PAN M. So you have been made man and wife. I wish you long life and prosperity, and every happiness.

JUSEF AND MAGDA (C.). We thank you humbly.

MAGDA. Will you accept this work of my hands?

(Comes down L. Gives a towel, which she binds around WANDA'S shoulders, and gives a belt to PAN M.)

PAN M. AND WANDA. Many thanks.

(MAGDA returns to JUSEF, up C. SEBASTIAN goes up C., and exit.)

PAN M. Here is something to start your house-keeping.

(MANKA collects money in her apron for the bride.)

TADEUSZ. May I add my bit?

WANDA. Of course!

JUSEF AND MAGDA. God bless you!

WANDA. You are a good worker, Magda. Your linen is white and fine. Jusef will have a good house-keeper.

JUSEF. Oh, she is a fine lass! No one makes better bread or churns finer butter.

BARTOZ. Oh, you have done well for yourself. Magda has the largest feather bed in the village. Every one will envy you.

VIKTA (R.). Magda is lucky too. Jusef made so much money helping to build the new bridge that he bought himself a cow.

FRANKA. And another pig and some chickens.

MANKA. Besides, he is a handsome lad, and as strong as an ox.

STACH (*up R. C.*). You had better not notice how another man looks. He is not for you.

MANKA (R.). I can look at whom I please. No one can forbid me. I'm not married yet.

VIKTA (*to FRANKA*). Silly Manka, to quarrel with Stach. She may lose him yet.

FRANKA (R.). And you would like to find what she loses.

VIKTA. Don't be stupid!

PAN M. You must need refreshments after your long ride from the church. They will bring us some of our old mead presently. The tables are laid for supper in the big barn.

WANDA. And the lawn is cut smooth for dancing. But let us start our first dance here. Come, Jusef—you shall be my partner, as is the custom, and Father will take the bride.

(Music strikes up—a fiddler or two may be introduced in peasant costume. The dance begins. SEBASTIAN dances at one side with ZOSIA till close before the end, when he exits.)

TADEUSZ (*snapping his fingers, and taking a few steps*). I've got it!

(He whirls round by himself, and then comes laughing and triumphant to WANDA'S side, and takes her partner's place in the next figure. The old people—HANNA and BARTOSZ—dance stiffly but with spirit. When the dance is nearly over SEBASTIAN enters, c., terribly grave. The couples slow down breathless, and stop in groups R. and L.)

SEBASTIAN. Master! Master!

PAN M. What is it?

SEBASTIAN. News! (*Pause.*) Austria has declared war on Russia! (*The peasants are dazed by the suddenness of his announcement.*) A squad of soldiers has arrived. Russia has sent orders to every man in the village.

MANKA (R.). Orders! (*She looks at STACH.*)

MAGDA (R.). Orders! They will take you, Jusef?

JUSEF (R., *lifelessly*). I do not know.

SEBASTIAN (*coming down c., hands PAN M. a folded paper*). This was to be given to you.

(PAN M. *reads.*)

WANDA (*down L.*). Not you, Father? They are not taking you?

PAN M. (L. C.). No. Only men worth killing—men with tough sinews and young blood—men who might one day rise against Russia. I am no good—only to curse. No! All the Russian Government wants of me is that I shall open my doors to their agent. (*Slaps paper with the back of his hand.*) I am to take their recruiting officer under my roof and feed him at my table—yes, at my table. It is specified here.

(PAN M. *tears paper and flings pieces on floor, walks to fireplace, hides his face on mantelpiece a moment and then takes up violin.*)

WANDA (*after look at father*). Poor old Hanna! Yes, you had better all go.

TADEUSZ. What can I do?

WANDA (*without hearing, to HANNA*). Don't cry.

TADEUSZ (*up L., suddenly*). I may be in the way. I think I'll look after my horse.

(*Exit TADEUSZ, C.*)

BARTOZ. Let us go and gather together all the men of the village, and seek to learn more news.

HANNA. Yes, come.

BASIA (*lifting ZOSIA into JAN'S arms*). Put your arms round Daddy.

(MANKA and STACH make up quarrel as they go.
Exit peasants, c.)

PAN M. I suppose this was to be expected. It was to be expected that Russia should put in her front ranks POLES, and Germany should put in her front ranks POLES; but I wish this might happen to Russia.

(*At the word "this" he scrapes his violin, till it screams as if tortured.*)

WANDA. Father!

PAN M. And this officer, their representative! I am to sit with him, and break bread with him, or it will be the worse for me! (*Comes down L.*)

WANDA (*following*). I—I—(*catching her breath*) I shall not speak to him, Father. I shall spill salt between us. I shall show him how I hate him.

PAN M. (*looking at her, for the first time and earnestly*). No. (*He places hand on her shoulder.*) No. I shall expect you to take your place as hostess.

WANDA. Perhaps—I don't know—I'll try, but—but I don't think I can.

(*Enter MANKA, c., tear-stained and breathless. During following conversation PAN M. goes and sits, down L.*)

MANKA (*running down L.*). Pana Malewski! Panienska!¹

WANDA. Why, Manka!

MANKA. I have got by Pan Sebastian at last. Panienska will pardon me?

WANDA. Indeed, yes. What is it?

MANKA. Stach—they are taking Stach.

WANDA (*smiling sadly*). You have forgiven him, Manka?

MANKA. Oh, yes. Panienska does not understand. I loved him all the time.

WANDA (*taking MANKA's hands*). Poor Manka!

MANKA. I loved him all the time, and I have told

¹ PANIENKA, Little Miss (pronounced *Panyanka*).

him so. I am sorry I was bad to him. And we are to be married if only—— Oh, will not Panienska be gracious? Will she not ask them to wait a few days? Only a week, till we are married?

(She kisses WANDA'S hand and looks up at her imploringly.)

WANDA. Russia never waits—not a day, not an hour, not a minute.

MANKA. But if Panienska asked?

WANDA (*very tenderly*). I can do nothing, I have no power. Go back and say good-bye to Stach.

(Exit MANKA, c., apron to her eyes. Enter SEBASTIAN, c.)

SEBASTIAN. A stranger is at the door. I believe—
(with detestation) the Russian!

(He comes down L. and gives visiting card to PAN M.)

PAN M. (*rising*). Lieutenant Sasha Polivanof. That is the man. *(To SEBASTIAN.)* Be polite to him. He is our guest. Show him in.

(Exit SEBASTIAN, c.)

WANDA. Beast! I can't stay! I won't stay!

(She turns swiftly.)

PAN M. Wanda!

WANDA (*her back turned*). I hate him.

PAN M. Wanda! *(She turns her face to him. He places hand on her shoulder.)* Be yourself, spirit of ancient Poland, spirit of courtesy. They can take away everything else from us but that. We will still be courteous.

WANDA (*head thrown back*). I understand. I never saw before. Because I am a Pole, and he is a barbarian, I will not stoop to be rude.

(Exit swiftly, L. Reënter SEBASTIAN, c., behind SASHA POLIVANOF; he indicates room with a gesture of the arm and then makes a stiff bow and at same time pretends to spit, exclaiming "twoo!")

(Exit SEBASTIAN. SASHA unceremoniously flings his cape and hat on settle up L., and comes down c.)

SASHA. Am I addressing Pan Malewski?

PAN M. (standing, down L.). I believe I have the honor to be your host. (Both bow stiffly.) Have you dined?

SASHA. Thank you, I have.

PAN M. Perhaps you will have some wine?

SASHA. Yes, I should like some. What I had at dinner was very bad.

(Enter TADEUSZ, c.)

TADEUSZ. I have just been to the stable, and it seems the Russians have taken a fancy to my horse. (He starts at seeing SASHA.) Good gracious! Polivanof! (Comes down R. c., with hand held out.) We didn't expect to meet so soon! (SASHA steps forward and, disregarding the outstretched hand, kisses TADEUSZ on the cheek. TADEUSZ stands in comic picture attitude, like a small boy being kissed by his aunt, his knees bent and his fingers spread out. Aside.) All very well with ladies!

SASHA. I had hoped you were safe out of the country.

TADEUSZ. Glad to say I'm not!

SASHA. With a Polish name and a Polish face, your passports might not help you. I'll see you get your horse back at once. You must be off.

TADEUSZ (R.). What a piece of good luck that you should come here. I had no idea you were a friend of the Malewskis!

(A dead silence.)

SASHA (C.). Pan Malewski is too polite to explain.

I am not a friend, in fact (*with sadness*), I am an enemy.

TADEUSZ (*bewildered*). You are here under their roof —

SASHA. I am quartered here. I was not invited.

TADEUSZ. But still—Pan Malewski, this is the Count Polivanof, my college friend I told you about.

SASHA. You, an American, do not understand.

TADEUSZ. Oh, I understand why Poland hates Russia. But you are not an out-and-out Russian. Pan Malewski, you should like him. His brother and two of his uncles were sent to Siberia, and by rights he should have gone too.

PAN M. (L., *with meaning*). Pan Bolski, words as light as yours have sent many a man to his death. You, an American, do not understand.

TADEUSZ. I understand the Russian Government is rotten to the core. No justice! No free speech. I understand that just as well as you and Polivanof here. You both know it. All the more reason you should be friends.

PAN M. A friend of yours is a friend of ours. (To SASHA.) This room was cleared for a dance. I will have the table and other furniture brought back.

(*Exit, L.*)

TADEUSZ. Well, Polivanof, I never thought to see you in uniform. I suppose that means you have gone back to the army.

SASHA. I share my country's fate.

TADEUSZ. There you go—Fate, Fate. I suppose you would say it was Fate that sent my horse lame on just this stretch of road.

SASHA. Yes, Fate. But a day's delay will not alter your life's history much.

TADEUSZ. You wouldn't say that if you had seen her.

SASHA. Her? You can't be in love, Bolski?

TADEUSZ. It is not so much her beauty as the light in her eyes. She makes me feel like something better than myself when I talk with her.

SASHA. You are impressionable, my friend. These Poles are charming, no doubt, but ——

TADEUSZ. Wait till you see her. Then you will understand.

SASHA (*slowly*). I hope I shall not. I could never understand without being in love.

TADEUSZ (*embarrassed but hearty gratitude*). I say —— You are a brick, Polivanof.

SASHA. Why?

TADEUSZ. I understand you.

SASHA. Do you? I doubt it. Why this praise?

TADEUSZ. Oh, merely —— Well, it is rather decent of you. I understand.

SASHA. What?

TADEUSZ. You don't want to be my rival.

SASHA (*slowly*). You are mistaken. I was thinking of myself. I should be sorry to fall in love with a Pole.

TADEUSZ. With a Pole!

SASHA (*slowly*). Yes. You will pardon me. I am always outspoken. What I mean is, I should be sorry to fall in love with one of an inferior race.

TADEUSZ (*indignant*). Upon my word!

SASHA. You do not know the Poles.

TADEUSZ. I am one myself.

SASHA. No. You are a typical American.

TADEUSZ. But when you set up for a liberal—a friend of the oppressed—and then to talk of ——

SASHA (*interrupting with deliberation*). I wish all people free. I wish the Poles free—the Jews also. I should like to see the blackamoors in Africa free. Good-will is one thing, marriage is another.

(*Enter WANDA, L. She stands a few paces inside door, as if she had intended to speak, but had forgotten what to say.*)

TADEUSZ. Pana Malewski, this is Lieutenant Sasha Polivanof. (*Sarcastically, aside to SASHA.*) One of a superior race.

WANDA (*acknowledging with inclination of the*

head). Has Lieutenant Sasha Polivanof everything he wants?

SASHA. Thank you, yes.

WANDA (*with suppressed scorn*). The house and everything in it is at his service.

SASHA. I cannot accept —

WANDA (*sarcasm betrayed*). Perhaps he would like the daughter of the house to polish his boots for him.

SASHA. May I ask if Pana Malewski overheard what I was saying before she entered?

WANDA. A Polish lady does not listen behind doors.

SASHA (*turning away and betraying relief; then, gravely*). And a Russian gentleman does not ask a lady to polish his boots.

WANDA (*impulsively*). Your pardon!

SASHA (*stepping forward*). Your pardon—for everything I have said. (*He kisses her hand.*)

(*Enter PAN M., L., with bottle. He goes R., followed by SEBASTIAN with a table and chair. SEBASTIAN places them, R. C., as quietly as possible.*)

PAN M. (*surprised*). Lieutenant Polivanof—(*then with unruffled courtesy*) I see you have met your hostess. Here is the wine. Will you be seated?

SASHA. When my host has a chair.

(*PAN M. goes to sideboard, up R., and brings glasses. Exit SEBASTIAN, L. WANDA goes to settle up L.*)

TADEUSZ. Tell us what you are doing here, Polivanof.

(*PAN M., at R., uncorks bottle.*)

SASHA. Seeing to the recruiting. I am also surveying the country. In war-time good maps are a necessity.

PAN M. Especially good maps of Poland. Good maps of Poland have been needed in every European

war. (*He fills glasses. Reënter SEBASTIAN, L., with two more chairs, then exit, L.*) Will you now be seated?

(*The men sit, PAN M. at R. of table, SASHA to the L. and TADEUSZ back.*)

SASHA (*sighing and abruptly changing the subject*). You have splendid looking men in your village, Pan Malewski. You should have seen them mustering on the green. Tall, stalwart fellows—heads up, shoulders back—magnificent soldiers.

TADEUSZ. Look here, Polivanof!

(*WANDA comes down L.*)

WANDA (*hotly*). Why do you come to take away our men? Jan leaves Basia and little Zosia, Jusef leaves Magda, and Stach leaves Manka when he was to have married her only a few weeks from now. What right has Russia to our men?

PAN M. (*warningly*). Wanda!

SASHA (*quietly*). The great war has come, Mademoiselle,—the greatest war in all history. Russia has need of all her subjects.

WANDA (*unheeding*). What is the war to Poland, with half her men under the Kaiser and half under the Czar?

SASHA. The war will mean something to Poland if Russia wins.

WANDA (*paying no attention*). Cousin fighting cousin, and brother fighting brother. You have taken away our freedom, and now you would make us murder our own kith and kin.

PAN M. (*interrupting WANDA; to SASHA*). My daughter has said too much. Will you forget it?

SASHA (*rising*). Forget? No! I sympathize too much to forget. (*To WANDA.*) I say a victory for Russia will mean a victory for Poland. I will tell you something I know. In a few days the Czar will publish a proclamation to all the Poles that if they will fight for him he will give them liberty.

WANDA (*joyfully*). Liberty for Poland!

SASHA. Autonomy!

PAN M. Ah! What does he mean by that?

SASHA. I am not certain. I only know what I hope he means: a free land and a free people, bound only to Russia by the ties of friendship.

WANDA. Bless you for that!

PAN M. (*rising*). I never hoped to hear such words from a Russian. There is no doubt about our loyalty when for once Russia is on the right side and fighting against our common foe!

WANDA. The common foe of all humanity.

TADEUSZ (*rising*). Do you mean that the feelings in Poland are stronger against the Germans than the Russians?

WANDA. Our feelings had time to grow strong during the thousand years when we had forever to guard against their treacherous assaults and fight against them!

TADEUSZ. I remember—the first reigning Polish princess — your namesake — drowned herself rather than marry a German and deliver Poland into German hands.

WANDA. Every right-minded Polish girl would do as much now.

SASHA. I am glad to hear such sentiments — to prove to you my good-will, Mademoiselle, I will watch over your peasants. Stach, you say?

WANDA. And Jan and Jusef.

SASHA. And Jan and Jusef of this village. They will be in my command. I will see they are well treated, and send you news of them.

WANDA. Oh, if you would!

(TADEUSZ *crosses to L.—conflict between jealousy and humor.*)

SASHA. Where is a piece of paper that I may write—ah—(*spying torn order*) this will do. (*He picks it up and unfolds it. Then he smiles.*) You do not treat official papers with much respect, Mad-

emoiselle. I think I recognize this. "To take under your roof Lieutenant Polivanof——" Ah, well, it will do nicely to write down the men's names—and also yours.

(He seats himself, R. C., at table, takes pencil from pocket and waits expectant.)

WANDA. Jan of the bridge.

SASHA. Yes.

WANDA. Jusef by the green.

SASHA. Jusef by the green.

WANDA. Stach the tall—all from our village.

SASHA *(writing and looking up)*. And your name?

WANDA. Wanda Malewski.

SASHA *(as he writes)*. Pana Wanda Malewski, *(dreamily)* Wanda!

WANDA. Thank you.

(She looks down, for tears have started to her eyes.)

PAN M. If Russia gives Poland her freedom it will be the grandest, the most generous act.

SASHA. I believe Russia is capable of it. I believe when I am fighting for Russia I am fighting for freedom, for justice, and for the nations that have a right to be. I believe I am fighting for Poland.

WANDA. You are a hero. You will deliver your country and mine from tyranny.

TADEUSZ *(at L., still aloof, to SASHA)*. You come in a devil and go out an angel.

SASHA *(rising)*. Then let me wear the Polish colors—if not openly, then next my heart. Give me a knot of the Polish red that I may never forget that the honor of my country is bound up with the liberty of yours.

(He holds out his hand, and WANDA takes the bow of red ribbon from her breast and gives it to him. He looks at her, then carries it to his lips and places it next his heart.)

PAN M. Wanda, this wine is not good enough for

our guest. (*He rises, goes up c. and rings.*) He shall have the oldest, the very oldest. (*Enter SEBASTIAN, L. PAN M. comes down L.*) Sebastian, take this bottle away, and bring up ——

(*He goes close to SEBASTIAN, indicating by his gestures his excitement, but speaking too low to be heard. He gives SEBASTIAN key. SEBASTIAN goes to table, picks up bottle, and exit L., eyebrows arched.*)

SASHA (R. C.). The thought of Poland, the thought of you will give me strength when the bullets sing. I shall see your face as I see it now; your eyes will light me.

TADEUSZ (L.). A Russian and a Pole can never be friends! I, an American, do not understand.

WANDA (L.). Pan Polivanof is different.

TADEUSZ. Not so very.

PAN M. (C., *hand on SASHA'S shoulder, pressing him back into seat*). Sit down! Sit down, my friend. You have spoken words which bring hope again to my heart. I cannot honor you enough.

(PAN M. *speaks a moment with SASHA.*)

TADEUSZ. I am not so fortunate as my friend. He leaves to-morrow to fight for Poland and for you, and I leave to go quietly back to America.

WANDA. Then you are going home?

TADEUSZ. Yes.

WANDA. But I do not understand. The chance has come, the chance of a hundred years. The freedom of Poland hangs in the balance. And you—after all you have said ——

TADEUSZ. Turn my back like a coward? Well—there is one reason, just one, why I will not fight in this war. Polivanof will pardon me, I am always outspoken—I have no faith in Russia.

WANDA. Then your chance will never come!

TADEUSZ. I find I am practical, after all. I will not fight where I see no hope.

WANDA. No hope! After all he has said.

TADEUSZ. Some day I shall yet serve Poland. When I do—— (*He pauses.*) When I do, will you give me also a knot of ribbon?

WANDA. That time will never come.

TADEUSZ. Who can tell?

WANDA. Chances come only to the brave.

TADEUSZ (*after pausing to master himself*). The cause to which I give my life shall be the liberty of Poland—not the aggrandizement of Russia.

(*Reënter SEBASTIAN, L., with bottle of wine and four glasses which he places on table. Exit, L.*)

PAN M. (*going to table*). Friends, too often has the cause of liberty been wrecked by just such words as have been spoken. Now, on the eve of parting, on the eve of a great conflict, let us remember that our hearts are united in one hope.

TADEUSZ. Thank you, Pan Malewski. I stand rebuked.

PAN M. This, my friends, is the last bottle of my grandfather's vintage. (*He draws cork.*) Six times has one health been drunk in this wine—always the same health. (*He pours.*) Once it was drunk in war-time to the sound of cannon, and once in the midst of desolation where a few met by night among ruins. Twice it has been drunk in a foreign land, and twice in a land bound in chains. Will you drink that health in this wine, for the seventh time and the last?

SASHA. I know what the health is.

TADEUSZ. So do I.

SASHA (*raising his glass*). To a Free and United Poland!

WANDA. Right! Right!

TADEUSZ. To a Free and United Poland!

PAN M. AND WANDA. To a Free and United Poland!

(*With glasses held high they gather and touch glasses, then drink the health.*)

ACT II

SCENE.—*A snowy field near the village. Time, during the Russian retreat. PAN MALEWSKI and WANDA standing, L., looking off at L.*

WANDA (*pointing*). There, Father, don't you see him?

PAN M. Where? The snow makes my eyes ache.

WANDA. No. I was mistaken. I thought I saw a dark speck off toward the setting sun.

PAN M. Heaven send he gets here before night. I see now I should not have sent him.

WANDA. It was I who sent him.

PAN M. Yes, sweetheart,—because I complained.

WANDA. No wonder! A whole week without news.

PAN M. I should have waited another week.

WANDA. He has been over the road so often. He can't get lost.

PAN M. No, no. He can't lose his way.

WANDA. He isn't in sight yet, though I can see for miles. I can almost see the spires of the town. The plain is like a white sea.

PAN M. It will be a red sea soon with the sunset.

WANDA. And then black. (*Comes down c.*)

PAN M. You cannot see him—not a sign of him?

WANDA (*scanning horizon at back*). Not a sign. (*Turns L. again and looks off.*) Why, there is some one—there behind the fir-trees. (*Points L.*) There! There! Isn't that Sebastian?

PAN M. (*looking L.*). This man is on foot.

WANDA. It is he. He has left his horse in the village. (*She waves.*)

(*Enter SEBASTIAN, L.*)

PAN M. Any news? Any letters?

SEBASTIAN. A letter and a paper.

WANDA. Read the news. Never mind the letter.

PAN M. The letter is from America.

WANDA. Oh!

PAN M. (*coming down r.*). Still, I will read the news first.

(SEBASTIAN *stands l.*)

WANDA (*c.*). Oh, no! it is a week old.

PAN M. The letter is older than that. (*He opens it smiling.*) It is from Tadeusz Bolski. (*He looks at WANDA, who pretends no interest.*) He says he is well.

WANDA. Why should he not be well? All is comfort and prosperity there.

PAN M. And has met his mother.

WANDA. Oh, yes. He will never leave home again. We have seen the last of him.

PAN M. He says he thinks of us often.

WANDA. Thoughts will not save Poland.

PAN M. Wanda—(*he looks at her meaningly, but she will not look up*) wiser men than he distrust Russia.

WANDA (*with indifference*). Oh, I am fair to him. (*With change of voice.*) Father, read us the news.

(PAN M. *opens the paper.*)

PAN M. (*aloud*). The Russians —

(*He forgets to read aloud in his excitement, scanning the paper with breathless interest. He beats it with his fist, and then spreads it out again on the table.*

WANDA *springs to his side to read.*)

SEBASTIAN (*eagerly*). Please, sir—the news—have the Russians won a victory?

WANDA. The Russians have been defeated.

SEBASTIAN. I have heard worse news.

WANDA. Yes, but they are retreating across Poland.

PAN M. Wanda, did you notice the date?

WANDA. No, what?

PAN M. (*pointing*). More than a week ago.

WANDA. Why, that means that they may be here now—any minute.

PAN M. And that? (*Pointing*.)

WANDA. Orders——

PAN M. Yes, orders.

WANDA (*after reading*). Oh, it can't be true.

SEBASTIAN. What, Panienska? (WANDA *pushes paper toward SEBASTIAN, and begins to cry on her father's shoulder. SEBASTIAN, half to himself.*) Panienska forgets I cannot read.

PAN M. Don't cry, don't cry, my little one, it may not be so bad. (*To SEBASTIAN.*) The army has instructions to destroy all the stores of food so the Germans cannot follow, and to drive the people into Russia.

(SEBASTIAN *makes gesture of despair.*)

WANDA. But, Father, it can't be true.

PAN M. It may not be true, but if it is I have a good deal to attend to. Sebastian, go and warn the peasants of what may come.

(*Exit SEBASTIAN, R.*)

WANDA. I shall stay here.

PAN M. (*irritated*). Nonsense, child.

WANDA (*half sadly*). I am not a child.

PAN M. I can't leave you here. Why do you want to stay?

WANDA. I am a woman.

PAN M. (*resuming the playful tone of happier days*). A silly little girl—naughty, too.

WANDA. If I do not stay, who will bring you word if the soldiers come? I am a woman, and I have a right to do my part and watch. (*Quick change to playful.*) Don't prevent me, or I shall lose my temper.

PAN M. What a terrible threat!

WANDA. May I stay?

PAN M. Well—home before dark?

WANDA. Yes.

PAN M. Run, if you see soldiers?

WANDA. Yes.

PAN M. Good-bye, my treasure.

(Exit PAN M., R.)

WANDA. Say, "Good-bye, Sentinel."

PAN M. (*off stage*). Good-bye, Sentinel!

WANDA (C.). Good-bye, Captain. (*She stands at attention—then relaxes, and looks at TADEUSZ's letter.*) Better men than he distrust Russia. (*She looks off L., and hides letter, as though instinctively. Enter SASHA, L.*) Pan Polivanof! Is it chance or a good angel brings you here?

SASHA. Fate, Pana Malewski (*he kisses her hand*)—and an angel. But I come with a retreating army.

(*Throughout this scene, he speaks with marked slowness, except when marked to the contrary.*)

WANDA (*interrupting after the word "retreating"*). You can tell me, is it true the Russians will burn everything as they retreat?

SASHA. It is true, Mademoiselle. But it is not of that——

WANDA (*interrupting*). But you command the troops which will pass this way?

SASHA. I command some of them. But that is neither here nor there.

WANDA. Oh, then it is the Holy Virgin who sends you to us. You love the Poles. You will save us. You will tell your soldiers to spare us.

SASHA. I'll do all I can. But this is beside the point. It is you I have come to save.

WANDA (*not heeding last clause*). I am so grateful! So thankful. I had rather die than see the little children, the old people, wandering homeless in the snow.

SASHA. It is not a question of children and old people now, but of you yourself. You are in danger.

WANDA. I suffer with my people.

SASHA. You do not know the horrors of a retreat,—of an invasion, and all that follows.

WANDA. I am not afraid.

SASHA (*passionately*). I say you do not know. It is these little hands (*he takes her hands*) that will wither—these eyes grow dim; the brightest being on God's earth that will suffer. Fate shall not ask it.

WANDA (*frightened*). You mean—the retreat—but you promised to protect us from the Russians. I do not understand.

SASHA (*rapidly*). Do not be frightened. I will save you. Marry me. I will get a priest now. There is time. I have ridden ahead of my men. Marry me and ride with my troops into safety.

WANDA (*withdrawing her hands*). Oh, no! no! It wasn't that I meant.

SASHA (*still rapidly*). Your father will bless me for taking you away.

WANDA (*in distress*). Oh, it was of my people I was thinking. Thank you for all your kindness, but—I am not ungrateful, but now let us talk of my people.

SASHA (*rapidly*). I say you do not know the horror. It is you who will suffer—and I love you.

WANDA (*slowly*). I should be a deserter—a coward. I cannot. Now let us talk of my people.

SASHA (*passionately*). But I love you, Wanda.

WANDA. If you love me, you love Poland. What can you do for her?

SASHA. Your men—Jan, Jusef, Stach, I will still look after them.

WANDA. But Poland——

SASHA. Your house—your barns—shall be safe.

WANDA. But the village there? (*Points R.*)

SASHA (*in final effort*). We are wasting time.

WANDA (*firmly*). The village before our eyes!

(*Points R.*)

SASHA (*bending head, as if yielding to Fate*). A soldier knows only his orders.

WANDA. I knew it! I knew it! They will do exactly as you tell them.

SASHA. A soldier knows only his orders. (*He pauses, expecting interruption.*) And—I am a soldier.

WANDA. You are an officer.

SASHA. But I act no more of my own free will than the commonest man in the ranks. I also am under orders.

WANDA (*with sudden change of manner*). What are they?

SASHA. When so great a cause is at stake —

WANDA. What are your orders?

SASHA (*looking at distance*). To clear the land of every shelter and of all food—of anything that might be of use to the Germans.

WANDA. That means cottages?

(*Light begins to grow dimmer.*)

SASHA (*pause*). Yes.

WANDA. Cattle?

SASHA (*pause*). Yes.

WANDA. Grain?

SASHA (*pause*). Yes.

WANDA. And you will bid your men do it?

SASHA. My orders —

WANDA. Disobey your orders. You told me you were ready to die for Poland. You asked for a knot of the Polish red to remind you you were fighting for Poland. Disobey your orders. They cannot do more than kill you.

SASHA (*sadly*). You cannot understand. I would fight for Poland—die for Poland. But this must be done for the sake of the great cause. It is a military necessity.

WANDA. I do understand you. Russia comes first,—always Russia. Let all Poland starve rather than a single foot of Russia be touched! Give me back the knot of ribbon I gave you—the Polish colors you were to wear next your heart!

SASHA. No! I will still fight for Poland and for her rights—though you do not believe me. One day—when the war is over—Russia will free Poland; and then you will understand.

WANDA. One day—when the war is over—there will be no Poles left. Give me back my colors. I shall wear them to my grave.

(She holds out her hand, and SASHA sadly takes the knot of Polish ribbon from an inner pocket and hands it to her. She takes ribbon and turns away. SASHA looks long at her.)

SASHA *(gesture of despair)*. Fate wins.

(Exit SASHA, L., with bent head.)

WANDA *(stretching out her arms toward village, R.)*. To-night Mother Mary looks down on the smoke from little chimneys; to-morrow she will look down on blackened ruins. To-night she sees the children sleeping in their cradles; to-morrow she will see them carried weeping over the snow. Will a free Poland ever rise from the ashes?

(Enter SEBASTIAN, R.)

SEBASTIAN. Panienska! *(Horried and reproving.)* What is Panienska doing here? She must come home with me. I never heard of such a thing!

(Exit SEBASTIAN and WANDA, R. A pause of a minute. The stage grows dark. Then a red glow spreads over the scene. The distant wailing of women is heard off. Enter BARTOSZ, L., spying.)

BARTOSZ *(calling over shoulder)*. It is safe. They have gone.

(Enter, L., HANNA, BASIA with ZOSIA, MANKA and MAGDA with her baby.)

HANNA. Woe is me! What is the good of coming back?

ZOSIA. Mother, where are we?

BASIA. We are near the village, darling.

ZOSIA. Where is our house?

BASIA. There—over there (*pointing R.*) by the charred tree, where you see the glow. Those red coals are our homes.

HANNA. There is no place to go. In the wide snow there is no shelter.

MAGDA. In the wide world there is no shelter.

MANKA. No shelter from the winter storms.

BASIA. Come and lie in mother's lap.

(*She seats herself on a log, L., and holds out her arms.*)

HANNA. There is no other place for her to lie.

BASIA (*wrapping her cape about ZOSIA*). The snow is cold.

BARTOSZ. We must stay here, daughter. (*He seats himself down C.*) We must stay here. If we go over there the soldiers may find us.

HANNA. Who knows if they are really gone?

BARTOSZ. Oh yoy, yoy, yoy!

HANNA (*sitting down, L. C.*). Oh yoy!

BASIA. We may not warm our hands in the ashes of our homes.

(*MAGDA and MANKA seat themselves close together.*

MAGDA draws her shawl close about the baby and bends over it as though to give it extra warmth.)

MAGDA. Once I came here with Jusef, six months and a year ago. We were planning about our home then.

VIKTA. There are no homes for us now; we shall never have husbands of our own. All our men have gone to feed the cannon.

MANKA. I wish he knew about the baby.

MAGDA. I do not wish it. When my child was born I was glad. I said, "Even if Jusef dies I shall have his son." Now I wish he had never been born. I shall see his little hands grow thin and weak. I

shall see the deep lines come about his mouth. I shall hear him cry for the food I cannot give him. There is only one end to it all. (*To the baby.*) Hush, little one. Mother loves thee. (*She sings lullaby.*)

BARTOSZ. They have driven away our cattle and sheep. Where is the light of dawn?

HANNA. They have burned the shelter over our heads. The embers glow and the embers die. Where is the light of the dawn?

BARTOSZ. The winter snows will fall thick on our graves, and there will be no dawn.

MANKA (*springing up*). There is a light!

(*Enter WANDA, R., with light and basket.*)

WANDA. Janova, Jusefova,—are you here?

HANNA. Panienska!

WANDA. I could not come to you before they had gone. I did not know where you were hidden. But now I have brought you something to eat.

ALL. Thank you! Bless you!

(*The peasants crowd about her; some embrace her knees while some kiss her hand. BARTOSZ keeps on mumbling, "Bless you! Bless you!" They take the food eagerly.*)

BARTOSZ. They have burned everything. They said the Germans should not have it, so they burned it all,—hay, grain, our food, our houses, all.

HANNA. We have no place to lay our heads.

WANDA. No place to lay your heads!

BARTOSZ. They have taken our cow.

HANNA. You said the Russians were our friends, but they have burned all; and the women and children and old folks, all they could find, they have driven before them out of the land.

MAGDA. We shall sit in our cellars on charred wood and eat roots. When the deep snow comes we shall die. My baby boy will die. The Russians have done this.

BARTOSZ. We are the grain between the millstones—

Russia is the upper and Germany the lower millstone—they grind, and we—we die!

WANDA. No place to lay your heads—and my father's house still stands! Nothing to eat, while the soldiers have left us food to share with you! An order saved us, an order given to the soldiers. They asked, "Is this Pan Malewski's house?" And then they passed on and left us untouched.

HANNA. Heaven be praised for that!

WANDA. As long as there is a roof over our heads you shall have shelter. As long as we have any food in our house you shall not starve. (*To HANNA.*) You are my foster-mother, and the rest—they are my people.

HANNA. No! No! Panienska! You cannot take us in. We would drag you down.

WANDA. God will send us help from somewhere. I feel it is coming. Mother Mary will send us help when our need is great. And now, are we not one big family? We are one blood and one kindred. If there is to be any Poland left, we must stand by one another now. I will sell the earrings out of my ears, and the rings from my hands, but I will keep you all with me. (*To MAGDA.*) Jusefova, take this (*she gives her shawl to her*) to keep him warm.

MAGDA. Bless you! Ah, he shall not die, my little son. He shall live to take his father's place. He shall live to bless you. He shall live to rebuild our home.

WANDA (*to all*). Come! Come, and put that tired child (*pointing to ZOSIA*) to bed in the crib where I used to sleep. Think when you bend over her and watch her in the night that even so the Virgin Mother bends over us and watches us, her children!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as in ACT I. Time, late winter after Russian retreat. All the silver is gone. A chair R. A child's coffin on the table down L. To L. of table, WANDA, and little ZOSIA. Behind table, BASIA. To R. of table, MAGDA kneeling. Near her are MANKA and HANNA. VIKTA up L.*

MAGDA (*rising*). Now I will set out to the church.

WANDA (*gently*). Jusefova, you can never get there. A strong horse could scarcely get there in the snow.

MAGDA. I will get there. I will carry my child on my shoulders and place him in consecrated ground. There is no drift deep enough to hold me back.

HANNA. You would be mad to try.

MAGDA. But my child will never go to Heaven if we bury him in the orchard, as you say.

WANDA. Do not be afraid. In other times it would be as you say, but now—all Poland is consecrated ground.

(*She breaks down and kneels by the coffin at L. of table, leaning her head on it and hiding her face in her arms. MAGDA kneels also behind the table.*)

MANKA (*going to MAGDA and laying her hand on shoulder*). Panienska must know, sister. The baby will be safe.

(*MAGDA flings an arm over the coffin, and holds it with the other hand as though protecting. She shakes her head and looks down, her face hidden. As WANDA begins to speak she looks up to her.*)

WANDA (*rising*). I say all about us is consecrated ground. Do you not know how Poland has fought for

Christendom? Do you not know how she has stood for the right, like a Don Quixote among nations, and never counted costs? Do you not know how she has kept the true faith in spite of persecution, and suffered and died for the sake of Christ? Now, in our time of need, Mother Mary will not forget us. She will send those Polish women who have died for the faith down to earth, and they will bring the soul of every child straight up to her. (MAGDA looks up to Heaven and then rests her eyes on WANDA.) There is scarcely a child left in Poland now;—but, I am sure, no matter where they are buried, Mother Mary has them all in her loving arms.

(MAGDA turns slowly, and then kneels, R. C., before the picture of the Virgin at R. and holds out her arms in supplication.)

MAGDA. Mother! Mother Mary! You had a son! You will take care of my little son.

(MANKA, BASIA, HANNA and VIKTA take up the coffin, and lower it for a moment before the picture, while MAGDA still kneels. Chopin's Funeral March heard off. WANDA winds her Polish crimson sash around the coffin. Exit women, C., with coffin, followed by ZOSIA. WANDA rouses MAGDA with a touch and goes with her to the door C. Enter, L., PAN M., with violin, as though he had been playing with MAGDA as far as the door. WANDA kneels before picture, R.)

WANDA (R.). Father, the Virgin smiled at me.

PAN M. (L., indulgently). Yes, child.

WANDA (pointing). The picture—I know she smiled. (Rises.)

PAN M. My little girl, people see very strange things when they are hungry.

WANDA. I believe she will send help to us.

PAN M. (turning away from her). The kind of help she sends to all dying souls.

WANDA (*much distressed*). No! No! There is hope. I am sure of that.

PAN M. (*looking at her again*). Wanda, there will be nothing left of Poland. Freedom will come too late. Foreigners will walk over the graves of a dead race and say, "Freedom comes too late. There are none to free."

(*Enter ZOSIA, c.*)

ZOSIA. I'm hungry!

PAN M. What is there left?

WANDA. Three potatoes.

PAN M. Three potatoes! (*He turns away, fingering the violin.*) It is time—quite time.

WANDA. I have sold all the jewelry, you know, and the silver—even the nut-picks. And they bring so little in the town. But now the snow has come and the roads are so deep it does not matter that we have nothing left to sell.

ZOSIA. I'm hungry!

WANDA (*to ZOSIA*). Wait a little, dear, and you shall have a nice hot potato for lunch.

PAN M. (*to himself*). Quite time. This little one shall not die—yet.

(*PAN M. passes hand over ZOSIA'S head. She seats herself on settle and sleeps.*)

WANDA (*to PAN M.*). And yet I feel more confident to-day than ever before. I can't explain why, but I know help is very near.

PAN M. Wanda, I am going to sell my violin.

(*He gets violin case up L. WANDA looks up in blank amazement.*)

WANDA. Do you mean you are going to the town?

PAN M. It is valuable. It will fetch—ah, several bushels of potatoes.

(*He comes down c. and places violin in case.*)

WANDA. But to the town——

PAN M. Yes. I know the danger only too well. I should have sold it long ago. I should have gone while the roads were open. But—God forgive me—I could not bear to part with it. I saw you selling your treasures one by one, but I never even offered——

WANDA. Father! Did I value anything of mine as I value your violin? (*She catches it from case, and holds it to her heart.*) It has sung me to sleep like a mother when my own mother was dead. It is a spirit, a living thing. Father, you would break my heart if——

PAN M. Wanda, Zosia is hungry. She will be hungrier to-morrow. May God forgive me for not having gone before, and may He strengthen me now.

(*He takes violin from her, in case, and starts toward the door, c.*)

WANDA. Father, hear me. I feel sure that help is coming—sure of it. Wait a little—only half an hour—and then, if I am wrong I will not keep you.

PAN M. (*solemnly*). No, Wanda. Remember, it gets dark early.

WANDA (*passionately*). But play me something before you go! You cannot refuse me that. (*He pauses. She smiles and lifts her finger.*) You always spoil me. Play!

PAN M. What shall I play? (*Comes down L.*)

WANDA. The dance—the peasant dance.

PAN M. So gay?

WANDA. Memory sleeps in the strings. Wake it!

PAN M. The days before the war.

WANDA. Bring back the days before the war! I will live them again. (*She stretches out her arms.*) Let me see the bride and bridegroom, the whole troop of peasants in the sunshine. Let me see Tadeusz!

PAN M. I thought you had forgotten Tadeusz.

WANDA (*unheeding*). You can bring him back to me. Play! I want to see his frank, bright smile—once again before I die.

(PAN M. *strikes up the old dance tune.* WANDA *begins to dance.*)

PAN M. Wanda, you are too weak!

WANDA (*smiling*). Do you think I can help dancing when you play? (*He slows down.*) Oh, no, don't stop! (*He plays on and she dances.*) When I danced before he was coming—he was here—he was here! (*She dances faster.*) He was my partner and he snapped his fingers. (*As she snaps her fingers the music reaches the end and stops. Then her arm drops limp, and she leans against wall at R., her eyes shut.*) Thank you (*panting*), oh, so much. Now I see it all again. Once again I see the kind, merry look in his eyes.

(*Enter BARTOSZ, C.*)

BARTOSZ. I've got 'em.

PAN M. Got what?

BARTOSZ. I knew where to look for 'em. I've been grubbing under the snow. Frozen beets!

(*Comes down L. He places them triumphantly on table and then hobbles out.*)

PAN M. There, Wanda. There is the help. Now I must go.

WANDA. No, oh, no. Half an hour! You promised! What are a few beets? Father, I know the Virgin is sending us help.

PAN M. (*sadly and reverently*). Ah, yes, I believe she is.

(WANDA *stares off L. as if she could see through the wall.*)

WANDA. It seems to me that some one is riding. He meets great drifts across his path, but he will not turn back. He spurs his horse into them, and struggles forward.

PAN M. Wanda, you are beside yourself. You do not know what you are saying. (WANDA *turns*

giddy, and reaches to chair, R., for support.) Are you ill?

WANDA. No, indeed, only everything seemed to sway for a moment. Now I am all right.

(Enter SEBASTIAN, C., with package. ZOSIA comes down R. to WANDA.)

SEBASTIAN. May I speak with you?

PAN M. My old friend! What is it?

SEBASTIAN *(coming down L.)*. I have something here for my master.

(SEBASTIAN gives package to PAN M. and stands back. PAN M. opens package.)

PAN M. Food! Sebastian!—See, Wanda, see! *(His voice shakes.)* Sebastian must have saved this from his share. *(He turns and takes both SEBASTIAN'S hands in his.)* Sebastian, I thank you—not for myself, but for her whom we both watch over and guard. *(He drops his hands and turns to WANDA.)* And now you will not forbid me to do my share. I must go.

WANDA. I shall not let you go. He is coming nearer. I hear the beat of his horse's hoofs. Sebastian, I cannot thank you for all you have done—but soon all of us shall have enough. Here, Zosia shall have this now.

(She gives ZOSIA some food. The child eats.)

SEBASTIAN. No, no, Panienska! It is for you.

WANDA. Soon all of us shall have enough. Father, you shall not go. Now he is coming through the village. *(She stares through the wall back up L.)* Now he is coming up the hill—now he is at the door. *(Points to door C. TADEUSZ enters, C., carrying saddle-bags, which he flings on the floor. WANDA, her eyes wide and bright.)* Tadeusz!

TADEUSZ *(seizing PAN M.'s hand, and shaking it)*. How are you? Safe? Well? Thank Heaven I have not come too late.

WANDA (*as if faint, turning to picture*). Mother, I have never doubted.

PAN M. (*with instinctive courtesy, but as if bewildered*). You are most welcome.

WANDA (*as if in dream*). I have prayed for help so long.

(TADEUSZ'S eyes are on WANDA.)

PAN M. I am afraid we have not much to offer our guest. Potatoes, beets,—oh, yes, and this from Sebastian.

TADEUSZ (*hastily, to PAN M.*). I have enough with me—Good Heavens! (WANDA sways as if about to fall. TADEUSZ springs to her side and places her in a chair, R.) There, you will feel better soon. (*He kneels by the chair, rubbing her hands.*) How long is it since she had something to eat?

PAN M. I scarcely know.

WANDA. I have prayed for help for so long.

TADEUSZ. Have you a fire? Cannot something be heated?

WANDA. I have prayed also that you might come.

TADEUSZ (*taking her hand*). Nothing shall hurt you now. You are safe, quite safe. I will stand between you and every danger.

WANDA. You have not changed. The same kind spirit looks out of your eyes.

TADEUSZ. You are glad to see me, then?

WANDA. Content, absolutely happy.

TADEUSZ. But I am a coward—a runaway.

WANDA. The Russian retreat has come since I spoke those words. (*They look at each other. WANDA looks around the room with a smile.*) The decorations are not so gay as when you first came.

TADEUSZ. But the feast shall be real enough; my saddle-bags are full.

WANDA (*rising*). It is time they came in. Sebastian, go and call them.

(Exit SEBASTIAN, c., followed by ZOSIA.)

TADEUSZ (R. C.). Before they come, will you give me a knot of the Polish red? I have traveled many miles to earn it.

WANDA (*taking ribbon in hand, but hesitating*). But you cannot help Poland. You cannot feed a whole people. It is all very well for us to be saved, but what of Poland? What of our people who starve? What of our country, which will never be a country again?

TADEUSZ. It shall be a country again. I have brought help to you, but the American people sends help to your people. I have come to Poland as agent for the Polish Relief Society. I bring money to buy food and supplies.

PAN M. (*crossing R.*). Wanda, I was wrong to doubt. God will never desert Poland.

WANDA. There is hope in every word you speak. Say it again, "The American people sends help to our people. Poland shall be a country again."

TADEUSZ. Poland shall be a country again.

WANDA. And it is you who have done all this.

TADEUSZ. I! No.

WANDA. You have stirred up sympathy for us.

TADEUSZ. No! No! I am only one—one among the scores who have spoken and worked.

WANDA. You would deny your share if you could, but I read the truth in your eyes.

TADEUSZ (*turning away to avoid praise*). Pan Malewski, I am proud of America. I have found sympathy everywhere. Even the little children have given to the cause, and men who could ill afford it.

PAN M. He has raised up friends for us in a far country, and heart touches heart across the tossing sea.

WANDA. You do not talk of Fate.

TADEUSZ. No time when people are starving.

WANDA. You work, act.

TADEUSZ. I have work enough ahead. Tell me, through my wintry rides, may I carry a knot of the ribbon? Do I serve Poland now?

WANDA. You may have it. But you must give me a knot of the red, white and blue to remind me of

America, and the warm human hearts there that understand.

(They exchange ribbons; he gives her the red, white and blue badge he wears on his coat.)

TADEUSZ. This I take for a reminder—a keepsake, to carry through the months of hard work ahead, but when the war is over ———

WANDA. Ah, then ———

TADEUSZ. Then I shall seek another reward—your love.

WANDA. You carry it with you there already, there with the Polish ribbon. *(She places her hand over the Polish ribbon; he stoops and kisses her; she looks up in his face with enthusiasm burning in her eyes.)* If America will only help us for a little while—a short while—Poland will live! Poland will one day be a nation. *(Enter the peasants, c.)* My friends, we have endured together, let us rejoice together. Now our sufferings are over. *(She catches the Polish flag¹ from the wall and holds it high.)* Long live Poland!

TADEUSZ. Long live Poland!

(Puts his arm about WANDA. All sing Polish national song. WANDA stands between TADEUSZ and PAN M. ZOSIA, held by her mother, stands on table and the rest are grouped in background.)

CURTAIN

¹ *The Polish flag consists of a band of Polish crimson over a band of white. A spread eagle in crimson and white appears in the middle of the flag, partly against the crimson, and partly against the white. Another form of the Polish flag consists of an entirely crimson background, with a white eagle in the center.*

The words of the Polish hymn referred to are as follows :

*Though they dig a grave for Polish spirit,
It but rests asleep;
It will grow with ten times greater strength,
because its roots lie deep.
Though they stamp us out like fire,
we shall rise like fire again,
When the wind of freedom fans to flame
glowing coals in hearts of men.*

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