

A GIRL
IN THE
KARPATHIANS



BY MERIE
MURIEL
DOWIE

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A GIRL IN THE KARPATHIANS

A Girl

in the

Karpathians

By

Mélie Muriel Dowie

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A GIRL IN THE KARPATHIANS.

CHAPTER I.



IN attempting any study of the history of East Galicia, some time a province of Red Russia, an uncommon caution should be observed, and the work pursued guardedly with the hand upon the pulse—since it is bewildering.

For a fairly unimportant little province, East Galicia boasts a history whose picturesque ups and downs, lightning quick changes, and sensational incidents might have been spread over an entire continent, and no one country of that continent could have declared itself ill-provided or anywise stinted of suitable adventure.

Its name has changed about a dozen times in the last seven or eight centuries, and while its birthdays might be counted, he would be daring indeed who should venture to date all its christenings. Bits of

four or five nations roam up and down in it, and treat it like a fatherland: Ruthenians, Poles, Jews, and Huculs [Hutsuls] are the chief of these, and of them all the Ruthenian or Ruthen—I find both designations in use—has undoubtedly the first claim.

Of course, the situation of the province accounts in large measure for its strange fortunes. Itself of a small practicable size, and lying handy for four frolicsome Powers, it has been tossed from one to another, and seems to have fitted neatly to the palm of each. Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Austria were the Powers, and perhaps it fitted best the palm of Poland in the old days, and that of Austria in the new. As I think of it, I seem to see the noble game of Bags of Beans proceeding in the playground of Europe, and those grown-up children—the four Powers—flinging that little bean-sack, which is East Galicia, from corner to corner.

Peopled first by the Ruthenian race, it has been overrun by Jews; colonised, if one may use the term, by conquering Poles; and, through all this, the Huculs, a distinct and separate people, have pursued a chequered but persistent existence in the heights of the lower Karpathians, which make up two-thirds of the province.

"*The Huzul*," says K. E. Franzos, in the early pages of his novel, "For the Right," a volume put into my hand to-day, when, after the completion of my own chronicle, I am writing the opening paragraphs of its initial chapter—"the Huzul is a hybrid, uniting the Slavonic blood of the Ruthen [Ruthenian] with the Mongolian blood of the Uzen, his speech bewraying the former, while his name testifies to the latter; so also does the defiant dauntlessness of his bearing hidden beneath an appearance of proud restraint, but apt to burst out suddenly, like a hot spring through the covering snow."

I give the end of this authoritative paragraph purely for its own sake; to me, the terms employed seem a size or so too large. I did not perceive that "defiant dauntlessness," I am thankful to say,—an uncomfortable quality, surely; and the proud restraint was equally unobservable. Characteristics may have altered somewhat since 1835.

"*The Huzul's life*," says the author in continuation, "was one of liberty on the mountains, acknowledging no nobleman and no officer of the Crown. Poorly enough they lived in the forest wilds, their sheep yielding milk and cheese, the barren soil a few oats for scarcely eatable bread, while meat was within reach of him

only who would stake his life in killing a bear." . . . Further, he quotes a proverb which runs thus—"No falcon can live caged, no Huzul in bondage;" and we are told that there are glens so remote and unvisited that no money has ever been current in them.

This in the first chapter of what I am told is a most remarkable novel, and these brief excerpts hint sufficiently at the character of the country and the people I was going to see when I started out from Paris last May.

Were I not informed to the contrary, I should like to assume that Prince Koloman, a Hungarian prince who held the bean-sack in 1215, founded the little town of Kolomyja (Kolomea), which lies, white and shining in the sunlight, on a green plain beside the Prut river, like a pearl washed from the river-bed. To the innocently deductive dreamer this seems a felicitous explanation enough, but, unfortunately, it won't do; it is a great deal too obvious and straightforward for history, and so I must ask my readers to accept instead the fact that a Roman colony occupied the town's site and gave rise to the name. It is disappointing—Colony—Kolomy—it doesn't seem to do; but such is history, and what more can be said? Leaving the discomposing recollection of the Roman

colony, I may remark that the little place to-day has some 24,000 inhabitants, the half of whom are Jews, the other half Ruthenians and Poles mixed.

Somewhere to the westward of the town the country steals gradually upward and upward, and becomes the outlying slopes of the Karpathian mountains; that is, the south-easterly part of the range. It was because I knew this that I went there. Between eleven and twelve at night the train trailed into the station, slowly and dead-weary of the long level journey. Something had gone wrong with the carriage I was in: they had examined it in the afternoon during a leisurely pause we made, and had decided that it could hold out. Nevertheless, it came limping rather painfully in the rear, whining from time to time over its hurt, and holding up one paw, so to speak. Perhaps that made us so late. I stepped out into the dark of the platform, where a crowd of Jews and peasants jostled and shoved one another and yelled in common. I was oppressed by a strong smell of sheep and garlic, and was sensible of being in a crowd of extremely dirty persons; but with my valise in one hand, the green hunting sack and leather bag in the other, and some indefinite being in the rear carrying my saddle in its case, I threaded

my way to the outer yard, and threw the things into a little two-horse fly, one of a waiting row. Though it was dark, the noisy but not particularly busy crowd had sighted or got wind of me, and several eager and disinterested members hung round to await developments.

Unaware whether the driver understood German, I intimated that my destination was "the best hotel," and listened while my audience wrangled as to which establishment deserved this title. It was just then that an impression was received by me which only deepened as my acquaintance with the people improved: they stood closer together, and made hotter, denser groups than any other people I had ever seen, and this was accounted for by their ravenous curiosity. Not one could bear the idea that any other should see or hear more of what was going forward than himself, so they leaned over one another's shoulders, and peered under one another's arms in an inconceivable fashion, until I dispersed them with a little homely German. Using a lofty and contemptuous tone constructed on the spur of the moment, I said, "Thut mir den Gefallen und gehet nui weiter!" and getting into the carriage bade the man go on.

He lashed his whip, there was a splash of tuneless

music from the bells the two little horses had on their collars, I clutched my belongings and clung to the vehicle, and we dashed down the rutty road into the blue night. Behind me there was the aimless quarrelling of the crowd, in front a transparent indigo of utter vagueness lit only by some little stars.

The flatness of the surrounding landscape, more felt than seen, and the evenness of that same blue was broken only where a poplar traced itself darker than its background. Of mountains there was nothing to see, of town or hotel just as little. I had time for a long quiet laugh, and a sensation so delicious yet indescribable as no other experience has been able to produce.

But I was very hungry. Where was the hotel, and the town too? Would any one be awake when I arrived? Should I, in point of fact, ever arrive at all? Yes, it seemed so. The road became a street, lamps started up at long intervals, houses gleamed out on each side, but all with shut eyes and sleeping faces. It was so late. A rough macadam rattled under the horses' feet, and we flashed, quite suddenly, into what seemed a wide square. No fear that the town was abed! Why, the whole place echoed with noise, and when the carriage stopped before a door from

which light and laughter streamed together, I knew that I had come to the hotel. Several servants ran out at the clang of the big bell my driver pulled, and I addressed myself with immense dignity to one of them in German, which the rest only partially understood—dignity, coolness, and a somewhat off-hand-not-to-be-trifled-with manner would, I fancied, meet the case.

Yes, I could have a room, "a magnificent guest-chamber," said the head-waiter, only masking his curiosity till a more convenient moment; and after some further parley I was shown upstairs. The magnificent guest-chamber was on the first floor, and looked into the square. It had eight chairs and one sofa in white covers grouped round an oval table, and two white draped beds pushed into corners. Until the man lit the lamp I had the feeling that a spectre supper party had been surprised and had dispersed at our coming; but the lamp-light and the whole-souled stare of the head-waiter superseded this imaginative flight.

"The young lady belongs, no doubt, to the German Comedy Company?" he said, of course in German. Giving him to understand that I belonged exclusively to myself, I assumed the hauteur which

used to be the property of people in novels, and which is, I hope, very foreign to my real nature, and ordered tea.

A little white pot with Polish tea, pale but potent, harmonised with the appointments of the room ; and having observed the man fill with cold water an enormous blue glass hand-basin, I told him he might go, locked the doors, and opened the windows on to the balcony. Kolomyja is not early, and good, and quiet, as becomes a small white town ; on the contrary, it is quite suggestively hilarious, and the square does not tuck itself in till after one.

I put my watch and money under the massive white pillow, with its strip of rich lace insertion to show the Turkey-red, laid my revolver and the matches on a chair, and spent an hour with the tea and my cigarettes, thinking amusedly over the situation and what it promised. That is the beauty of doing something which neither duty, necessity, nor pleasure distinctly demands : there is a margin of possibility with which no calculations or conjectures can fittingly deal. You are so out of your usual rut that legions of nameless adventures crowd indefinitely upon the immediate horizon. It does not matter if none of them ever come off. After all, adventure is not

everything; there is incident, and the next half-hour must always bring that with it.

I went to bed smiling in anticipation of I knew not what—just what chanced to happen, since I had no builded schemes, would be sure to please me, I thought. Kolomyja tired of laughing and of howling; below my windows waverous footsteps and unsteady voices fell a prey to distance. A Polish bed, though resembling the shop-made raised pie on which the cover is laid so that you can lift it right off and put what you please inside, is not uncomfortable. The little red blanket, with a snowy sheet buttoned round it, and nothing tucking in anywhere, delighted me by its cleanness. It had been a long day, and I was soon asleep.

My regret is that I may not write of my unbroken repose. I should like to. In point of fact, I had not been sleeping two hours when I was rudely awakened—by fleas. Of course, everybody except me knew that was coming. I lit the lamp, and would have exchanged the revolver gladly for a tin of "Keating."

The Kolomyja flea deserves a paragraph: it is a speciality. Large and well-built, of a finer growth altogether than its western brother, it betrays little of his athleticism and baffling agility; it moves

heavily and deliberately about its work with a due sense of what may be expected of it, and a fine consciousness of what a healthy flea can do, given time, opportunity, and the faculty of organisation. One of them discovered a piece of waste land, so to speak, upon my person, and laid me out in plots and spots, and sort of landscape-gardened me with exceptional taste and a far-sighted recognition of such advantages as the site offered.

Well, detail is superfluous. Only another thing that irritates me almost as much as a flea-bite is the way people complain of them who never suffer any inconvenience at all,—people who are tickled for five minutes, and can show a tiny red mark the size of a pin-prick, which they straightway forget. Others, again, ache for three weeks steadily : I am of these. This would not be referred to so particularly were it not for a circumstance that will be detailed later : only twice did Death come up and look very close at me during that summer, and he was nearest when he approached by this very avenue.

CHAPTER II.

MORNING and the market began simultaneously in Kolomyja. Down one side of the square, beside the row of little plane-trees, a rough railway line came unexpectedly. It went some seven miles into the country with a jangle of some great bell, and brought in the peasant people and their clean country stuff.

There is just one way that the sun filters through the opal of a dim-gold June morning, and when I looked out of window he was letting himself down the slim threads of the mist-web in light lines of shimmering yellow. Already the two-storeyed houses—like Swinburne's strong sea-daisies—"with lips wide open and face burnt blind . . . feast on the sun;" but they blinked their eyelids too, for there was a flutter of shutters and stripey awnings upon them.

The square was wide, needlessly wide, with large crazy cobbles for a floor, and rows of mean buildings down all sides, save where a church tower

was elbowed by the Jews' shops and trading stations.

As in any other market, the peasant women sat behind their eggs and butter, their chickens and fresh fruit, their green things and young cucumbers ; but the women themselves were different. An undeniably deceptive air of cleanliness is inseparable from their coarse white linen dresses, made gown-fashion in one piece ; a joyousness of contrast is secured by their red or pink aprons and head-cloths, and upon their feet they wear sometimes sandals (*Postoli*), but for the most part top-boots, of which they are extremely proud and fond. One might suppose something incongruous in heavy black boots, bare legs, and one flimsy dress of linen, with its gathered print apron or breadth of orange-red woollen cloth in front, and the streams of pearls, corals, and other beads upon the neck ; but harmony and a perfection of absoluteness is the birthright of the peasant ; what she wears is what she and her people have always worn,—every variation would be a mistake, and there is no improvement that could be suggested. Here only has Art whispered her last word. The men wore linen blouse and trousers, and top-boots too, and some of them had straw hats ; but generally, whether in the moun-

tains or on the plains, the hats were of black felt, round and low-crowned, large and wide brimmed, with a bedizenment of peacocks' feathers, red and yellow woollen phantasies, and perhaps a flower or two for the more foppishly inclined.

The embroidery on the tops of their sleeves—upon the men's as well as the women's dresses—is Greek, and conventional in pattern. Natural designs are fortunately unknown; and for the effete and jaded fancy that finds vent in crewel-work, one has not to condole with this south-eastern land. In their passion for colour and their perfect employment of it the strong influence of Turks and Tartars may be traced. These people did not invade Poland for nothing. If they scoured her land, and wasted with fire and sword no less than ninety-one times, as history tells us, they left art secrets to a clever enemy, in whose clothing, building, and pottery the rich and daring invention of the Turks is manifest in Poland and Ruthenia to-day.

Like dark hook-billed birds, the Jews in long black gaberdines stepped among the peasant folk, high narrow shadows in a riot of singing colours. Two long locks of hair, trained to curl where nature is complaisant, fall in front of his white ears; the

rest of the head is shaven commonly, and below his felt wide-awake there is a skull-cap: such is the Polish Jew, and Galicia is his chosen Palestine.

Whatever may go on beyond the Russian frontier the Jew in Poland has a very fair time. He may live where he pleases, is not hemmed into a slatternly quarter by a certain hour at night, has his own schools, may follow what trade he likes, controls the money affairs in whatever quarter he is found, and is at liberty to pursue indefinitely his religion. This he does in a praiseworthy manner, sitting at his window all a Saturday afternoon, making yarns of prayers, and walking on the Rialto in the neatest thin black shoes and the whitest of cotton stockings when the day is done. For the rest, he is at liberty to best, outdo, cheat, and take a mean advantage of his less-sharpened Christian brethren all the other days of the week. This is surely as much indulgence as any one has a right to expect in any country.

I walked through the market, past where the women sold canary-coloured cherries, to where the brown pottery, with yellow and green designs upon it, glistened in the sun. By eleven o'clock, all the principal street loungers and shop people had, as might be seen by their faces, learned the strange

story of my arrival overnight. When I went into a café to get an ice and see the news, a hush fell upon the place, and the waiter rustled the Russian papers from the grip of an important customer to place them in my hands. I was much flattered, pored over the sheet, and avoided Berlin and Paris journals as though they had no meaning for me. At the *Poste Restante* there were not so many people to excite ; but, walking back to the hotel, I decided that with weather of such a kind there was but one thing needful, and that a mountain. Under certain atmospheric conditions the inclination to lie for hours upon a hillside in the sun's very eye becomes so strong that all else gives way to it.

The head-waiter nearly wept when I announced my intention of departing, and ordered horses and a man to take me further on my way. I could not share his depression, and when lunch, in the shape of two small ducks, fried whole in batter ; the insidious boiled potato, against which seemingly the cuisine of no country is proof, and a dish of plums, conserved in vinegar by way of a vegetable, were sent up, I ordered a bottle of Hungarian wine in a reckless spirit, and prepared to take my farewell of civilised cookery.

Next, an adieu was bidden to the trappings of an average woman, and I indued myself with the tweed suit, skirt, coat, and knickerbockers in which I had decided to face every climatic possibility for two months.

With the heat, what it was, and what it was like to be, perhaps I had better say that for me no summer day in sun or shade was ever yet too warm, and many have been by far too cold.

Of my three shirts, one was silk, the other two pink flannel ; the rest of me cased carefully in woollen. I have never envied a man his appearance, only the superior convenience of his clothing. In assuming a coat such as his, it is his pockets that I want. When I put on a shirt, I do it for its comfort, and with knickerbockers I only seek to equalise our chances of escape in case of tumbles.

This is not original that I know of. Most likely, other women who imitate in some sort their brothers would say as much, and sigh, at the same time, for the masculine vanity which fathers other views.

But discussion of this would be endless, even if the head-waiter had not just come in to say my carriage and a couple of good horses were at the door. Believe, at anyrate, this much, that his ves-

tural advantages and not his "points" are what I grudge a man sole possession of; if a woman's clothing offered any conveniences superior to their own, we should find men of sense desirous of imitating women.

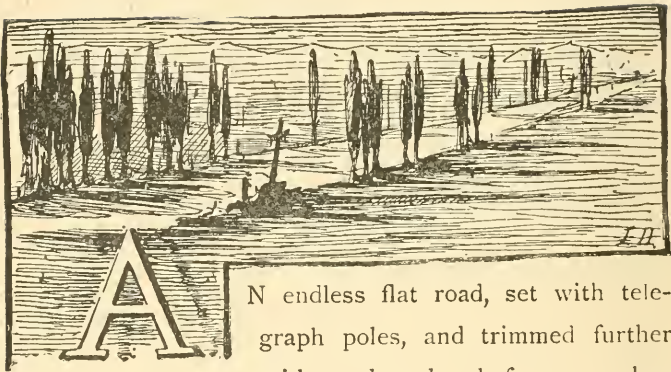
The decent black, in which I secure immunity from a world's harsh criticism, was packed away in my little valise, together with cuirass and helmet of modern warfare. An address in Paris that would find my people was tied to it, in case, well—in case I didn't have the luck to come back. My seal applied to the lock, I intimated to the head-waiter that it would please me to meet with these belongings on my return, and that if, at that vague date, I had any money left, a *douceur* should reach him which would not be unworthy a head-waiter's acceptance.

At the lower door there awaited me the little conveyance, with half a haystack roped on behind, a driver who was said to know some German, and a curious and eager populace. The young man from the drapery establishment across the square, noting my tweeds, and having the usual rooted traditions about our countrywomen, murmured "*Eine Engländerin*," palpably for my benefit. I took a cigarette from my case and lit it, by this simple action dis-

elling for ever the notion that I hailed from certain respectable Islands. The case slipped from my hand as I was putting it in my pocket ; in picking it up, the head-waiter noticed a coronet which happens to be engraved upon it, and at once received the impression that he had entertained a Russian Princess unawares.

But feeling that it was not fair to interrupt the market any longer, and cause, indeed, a stagnation of the town's whole business, I got in beside my hunting-sack, saddle and saddle-bag, and told the man to go on, remarking roomily "To the mountains !"

CHAPTER III.



AN endless flat road, set with telegraph poles, and trimmed further with poplars, lay before me when we left the town. After a while I began to time the wayside crosses, and making a little calculation found that in an hour and a half the average was a cross every thirteen minutes. I liked them: rough-hewn and hung with the garlands and dried flowers of many a festival, they are æsthetically satisfying and impressive; one would not have the figures better "sculpt."

On each side there was the green-and-blueness of

surrounding country and sky. Poland is intensely green. Villages, or clusters of houses, were thatched with straw; and the churches, with round Turkish towers, gilded and glittering, were roofed with wood-slats. Upon the road we passed plenty of peasants walking, or driving their little long wooden carts, light and rattly as possible. When a Jew's cart passed us it would be drawn by two lean and wretched, much ill-treated horses, and as many as thirteen or fourteen black crouching figures would be sitting closely upon its sides, in the attitude of hens upon their perches, when they ruffle out their feathers for the early four o'clock sleep.

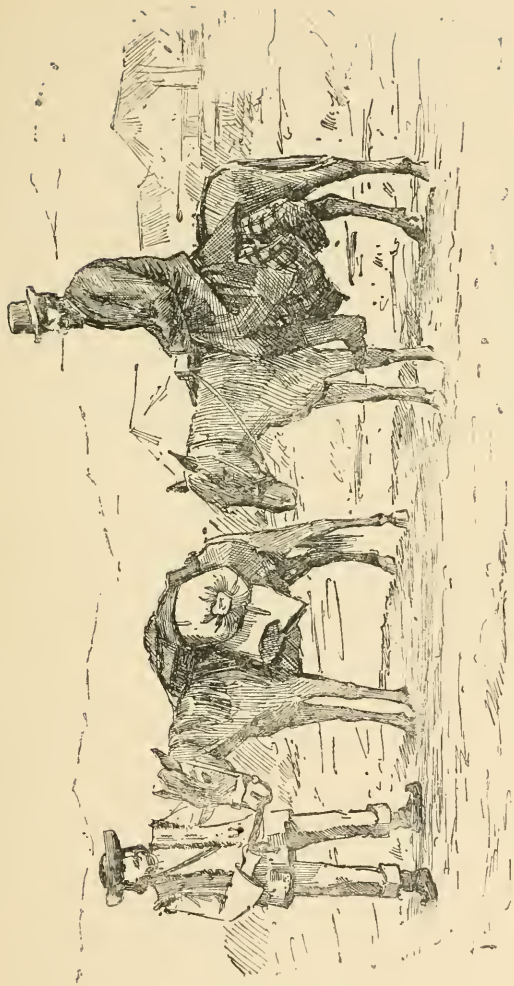
The peasants took off their hats, stared a little, but not rudely; and, if we were going slowly, came and kissed my hand. I had foregone gloves for the summer, and lay back in the little carriage, not uncomfortable, a good deal amused, supremely interested, with my cap upon my knee, and the sun deliciously violent upon my hair.

After a time I began making cigarettes, and sometimes handed them to the children, who came running alongside to greet me and to beg. It was easy enough to guess what their little reference to "Papirrusa" meant; and it pleased me to see their strange little

faces, with the straight waveless fringes over their foreheads, their grey or blue eyes, shrewd and simple both, but usually very sweet in expression, and their flat, wide mouths, with the long upper lip which is as Scotch as their high cheek-bones. They were brown enough, beneath their *legère* clothing, but with the brownness that has occupied a surface very fair to begin with, and none of them looked robust, fat, or particularly strong, like the English village-child.

When the afternoon was waning we approached Délátyn, a little mountain town which geographical authorities have honoured by their recognition. Here my driver intimated that two hours' rest would be required for his horses, and it occurred to me that I could eat something if circumstances offered an opportunity.

The village was all of wood; the Jews' houses distinguished from the peasants' by their plastered walls, washed usually a light blue colour, but conveying a dirty impression for all that. We passed under the *Schrank*, an immense and murderous-looking pine log which crossed the road at a height of three feet from the ground, and would, at a touch of the toll-taker, rear up into the air to let a carriage pass. I



paid no toll, for I had arranged that I would give the money required for them to my driver, and he should settle them as he returned. We drew up opposite a *Wein-schenke*, which had an archway as an entrance to the courtyard in the background; under this my driver led his horses, the little carriage rumbling upon the floor of pine planks.

Prepare for that word pine! It will occur with amazing frequency during this simple account of my summer in Galicia, where everything is begun, continued, and ended with its assistance. There is no getting rid of it; the mountains pour pine-trees; the river shores are strewn with the wreckage of them; when there are floods upon the plains huge flotilla of dressed and un-dressed logs roam aimlessly about the country, and the people are too apathetic to steal them.

I jumped out of my carriage when it stopped beneath the arch, and judged it prudent to transport my traps into the extremely dirty room of which a fat Jewess threw wide the door.

She was herself the frowsiest of her kind, and she reached me an uninviting type of chair upon



which I heaped the bags, myself leaning upon the table for a rest after the long sitting of my drive.

I asked for something to eat—anything she could give me; and went to close the door upon several black-eyed children who had crowded there with Hebrew curiosity.

“I could have anything I liked; perhaps I would order something?”

I did so, tersely—“Bread, cheese, and a glass of beer.”

“It should be served immediately. How far had I travelled to-day?”

“From Kolomyja.”

“Where was I going?”

“I didn’t know.”

“Didn’t know? That was very odd! Where did I belong to?”

“I didn’t know.”

“Oh, that was too singular! From my accent, she saw at once that I was German.”

I complimented her on her intelligence, and suggested that she should get the beer, if it would not inconvenience her.

She called the order to some one outside, in

a strange Hebraic patois, which was unknown to me.

"And did I say Germany was my country?"

"I was not aware of having said so."

"Then to what country did I belong?"

"To one where no one felt bound to answer the impertinent questions of strangers."

She didn't wince at all.

"Was I a Christian?"

"That she must decide for herself."

"Oh! then I was a Jewess."

"No; I was not."

"That was impossible. There were only Jews and Christians. People who were not Jews were of necessity Christians."

I told her there were many other sorts of people—in the land I came from.

"Russia!" she cried, with an odd sort of gleam in her eye.

I laughed and drank her *Wohlsein* in some particularly thin beer, which was served me in a foggy glass. She began to be amusing. Having tried me with a few more questions, which I answered or parried as I pleased, she retired in response to reiterated cursing from the passage, and her daughter, a young

woman of considerable attractions, came in. She gave no greeting, so I pretended not to see her, and confined my attention to some sheep's cheese and black bread, with nothing actively deterrent about them. Sheep's cheese is ivory-white in colour, wet, glistening, firm, but elastic or indiarubbery in texture : one sprinkles salt on the top.

Anybody who has once eaten it, and survived to pen its description, who still retains strength and keenness of perception sufficient to hit it off under ten adjectives—it will be noticed that I have used six only—may boast of her constitution ; but I saw the day coming when I should eat my sheep's cheese to the rind, and be glad of it.

The girl, dark, dressed in red, with little, languid, leopard-like movements, slow, but fierce and sure, I could believe, upon occasion, was looking fixedly at me from two glinting slits of half-shut eyes. Her mouth was open, and she rolled her head back upon her shoulders, saying nothing. Suddenly, with the deftness of a jungle-cat, she shot out her arm, and stroked my sleeve down softly, and laughed away back in her throat. I repulsed this feline amenity with more irritation than I felt, for I was too amused and interested to be annoyed.

“What did I do to my hair to make it look so much?” she asked suddenly.

“I did nothing; it was so.”

“And to make it shine and be so light?”

“I kept it clean,” said I severely.

The little, round leopard head kept rolling slowly, even her whole person seemed to sway and undulate, and she had the softest, slowest of soft slow voices.

“Would I, perhaps, like to buy a few hairpins in Dělátyn?”

“No, I would not; I had plenty.”

“Then,”—with the swiftness of the leopard’s spring, “I would no doubt give her the one I was wearing; the large one at the back?”

I drew out my yellow shell pin, and laughed; the trick had been so neat. “No,” was my reply, “I had only that one, and I liked it a good deal too well to part with it.”

At this critical juncture a man, the girl’s father, came in. My driver had told him I was going to Mikuliczyn; how had I fallen upon such a decision? Mikuliczyn was only a village, Dělátyn was a town; it would be much more interesting to me. Things went on in Dělátyn—what could go on in a village?

I felt sure that things went on in Délátyn,—things I shouldn't have cared about, too.

He could let me a house, he could hire me horses, he could and was prepared to sell me, let me, hire me, or provide me with anything I cared to name, whether he happened to have it or not ; but what he could not finally explain to himself was why I should want to go to Mikuliczyn ?

I smiled. "If I didn't like it I could come back," I said ingeniously ; "and in any case, I should remember him and his family."

He bowed and was much flattered, and I fancied I had done with them. Not so. The daughter, it seemed, had conceived an affection for some one who had treated her with whole-souled contempt, and desired a small souvenir.

I said I should be delighted, but feared the things in my bag would be too simple to please her, even if I could spare them. She watched me eagerly while I searched and produced at length the single article I could spare—a white silk cord with which I laced my shirts up the front. This meagre offering she accepted with a certain reluctance, and I took leave of them with a nod or two, having paid for my own and the horses' refreshment.

From Délátyn the scenery grew wilder and more rocky. The river we kept passing, the river Prut, had hollowed a channel for itself through sheer rock, and, from what I noticed of its course, tore savagely at its banks in winter and in spate-time.

The hills, covered with pines, were strikingly reminiscent of the West Highlands, and I wondered if I should see a lochen or two, glimmering like metal in the late afternoon sunlight. Not such a thing, however, did I see all the time I was in the mountains.

At the north-western end of the Karpathian chain, the show-end, called the Tatra Mountains, there are beautiful lakes, immense waterfalls, and, in fact, if rumour speaks true, the regulation "grand" sort of scenery. Also there are health resorts, troops of lungy invalids, healthy climbing tourists, guides, and carved paper-knives. On the whole, I preferred to dispense with the lakes rather than have them and suffer their accompaniments.

It was seven o'clock before we made the next important halt in a village of which I did not know the name; and here I was to leave my carriage and driver, whose horses were *gänzlich ausgenützt*, and ride further on my way to Mikuliczyn. The house at which we

stopped resembled much the Jewish Wirthshaus of Délátyn, and having little patience left wherewith to reply to tiresome questions, I stayed outside, while my driver got a glass of beer at my expense, and inquired for horses.

Passers-by brought up infallibly, like machine-moved figures, at my side, and by the time the horses came I could have taken a fairly correct census of the neighbourhood within a mile-wide circle.

The delay made me impatient, for the evening deepened in the unknown hills, and twilight shadows came slipping out of the woods where they had tarried all day, to brood along the valley; I knew it for one of those occasions on which one can look back with pleasure, but which at the time presents principally its irritating rather than its artistic side.

Sitting upon a chair in the lamplight, that mass of perfectly clad people would come before my eyes, and I should feast upon impressions which my senses would, upon their own responsibility, have stored for me. It was so: at the time I took note of the handsome faces only vaguely, saw the shy, coquettish, side-long glances of the women, and the bold surprise of the even more shy men. The women, of course,

though I was so strange to them, knew I was only a woman after all, and could take time and courage to smile at my cloth cap or what not; the men thought there might be something more about me, and were not so sure.

The only available riding-horses belonged to a young chip of a Jew, who came up leading them. He smiled oddly to himself, and said "vorzüglich" over and over again. The whole populace clustered closer than ever to see me take out my beautiful saddle—last on the back of a Yorkshire hunter—and put it on the *Doppelmäuser*, whom it wholly swamped. (I can't find this word *Doppelmäuser* in my dictionary even among the "appended list of words which the Prussian Minister of Education has decided shall be taught in the schools," and there are some very funny words in that list; but *Doppelmäuser* means, to my mind, something that is sly and knowing in a pleasant and humorous sense, and it occurred to me then and there, that evening, as the one name for the little brown horses.)

Each girth was altered to its last hole, the stirrup-leather taken up half a yard, but nowhere could it grip the little beast. A sheepskin was sent for and put on him—still his lean withers sloped away below

the "tree" in the most absurd fashion ; but I believed I could poise myself upon it, though it would need some "riding."

A strikingly handsome peasant singled himself out to help me. His manner was very



lively and funny, with the frequent gesture of scorn at the ignorance of his fellows, and the "st, st, st," when the straps would go wrong. The head-gear slipped easily over the *Doppelmäuser's* knowing little head, and slipped off again even more easily ; but,

after much shortening, the Pelham was wrestled in between the obstinate brown lips, and, in the whole shouting, yelling, pushing crowd, the *Doppelmäuser* was by far the quietest person. I was elbowed ruthlessly even by my handsome peasant, who, when I pointed out a mistake in his arrangements, shook his hands behind his ears, with the gesture of a person whose calm head is driven dizzy by the popular idiocy, and retired to the extreme verges of the crowd. But he was very ready to catch the glance I sent

searching him, and with a blush and smile quite surprising in a youth who had had his three years in an Austrian barrack, and thus gleaned a knowledge of saddles, wriggled back to the half-choked *Doppelmäuser*, and grasped the sliding arrangement of the stirrup quite faultlessly. Then some one hung on to the off-side, and I stepped into the saddle; for mounting in the ordinary way was out of the question with a thing so near the ground.

The Jew proceeded to make a difficulty about the price, although this had been fixed at four shillings before the saddling; my late driver, however, came out and swore at him in an explanatory way, and after the handsome peasant had got his kreutzers and his last kiss from my hand, we started forward over the great rambling pine-bridges that crossed the river.

A supreme power of balance kept me in the saddle, and I began to "find" *Doppelmäuser's* trot at last. When whipped he kicked savagely and got his little head a-twisting, and rubbed the Pelham on his ankle, and in the road, and had a world of ways,—for all of which I could have grown to love him in time.

But, to get along, he had to be held up on

an extremely short snaffle, and admonished with my heel like any donkey. Thus we made some pace. Before the moon got up there was a blue and foggy sky which only allowed a couple of stars to come out at a time, so I could not see the country, though the hills made themselves vaguely felt; but about ten, when the light June night was well begun, things grew clear again, and the white road proceeded alluringly up the valley in front of me.

Doppelmäuser's little bits of narrow upright hoofs shuffled through the summer's first dust; the other beast, with the Jew upon it and my kit, came in the rear; standing-hay scents steamed up from patches of field to right and left; the moon was climbing up the sky above the outline of my new found hills. Some of these conditions are with one anywhere, at any summer's opening, in any land, and yet I knew that whatever should arise would not be the same. Such a moon, just such scents had been near about me in England, but I was riding to no familiar English sequence. Infinite vague suggestions thronged beside me, fascinating but shapeless, and induced a strange, warm, heady feeling that is worth the toil of hours.

I was so glad I had no one to speak to. With a companion we should have said it was a lovely evening. Alone, I never even thought this.

CHAPTER IV.

OVER another resounding pine-bridge, which, clasping a ragged dry bed some two hundred yards wide, spanned the now insignificant stream of the Prut river, and then we came to a square low house with more than a little of the farm about it.

My Jew ranged up alongside. Here, he said, the high-bred lady would find eminently respectable Polish people who would lodge her for the night. They knew a good deal of German, and—and—they were respectable in the very last degree. Even as the English mind recoils before advertisement and decides to buy some less-heard-of soap, so I well-nigh decided that people with such a flaming character had best be avoided, but I liked the situation of the place. It sat in the crook of the river's elbow, near the bridge; behind it were fields of not too wide extent, and back of those the pine hills.

I alighted, hung the horse up on the fence, and knocked upon the door. The woman who came to it

had that vast reassuring sort of stoutness that decided me at once as to her respectability. Her husband followed, and in a short while we had concluded a bargain.

Travellers usually came to her house, she said. She found them in everything for 80 kreutzers a day. We will call that 1s. 8d. It probably is not 1s. 8d., but we may call it so.

The Jew was paid and dismissed with the horses. I took the saddle on my head, and followed the woman into the small square entrance-hall, and from there, on the right hand, into a wide square chamber, upon one of whose three small beds I immediately dropped.

Before, riding, and not knowing how long I might have to be in the saddle, I had been as fresh as paint and keen as any lizard; now, having arrived, I was tired at once, sat on the bed with my yellow legged feet stuck out in front of me like a dorking, and felt slight, rather weak, half-controlled smiles chase over my face, as I glanced about the room.

The woman brought in an engaging looking soup-tureen, from which, however, no steam rose, and a lordly dish of maize-meal porridge.

“The hen’s supper, it used to be at home!” thought

I, in faint amusement, and sat down to investigate the soup-tureen. Beautiful clumps and clots of milk were in it—sour milk, but of a sourness exquisitely fresh, and clean to taste. The woman showed me the method of procedure. You filled your soup-plate with the milk, which you ate with a spoon, and every now and then you took a spoonful of the porridge from the big dish before you. Will any one tell me there was ever such a supper? My hostess stood beside me, a queer woman's mixture of curiosity and shyness, telling me she had a lodger already, and expected another in a few days, beginning every sentence with "Ich sag' Ihnen," or "Jetzt, ich bitte." I was going to write that I never heard her, but since I remember what she said, this cannot be so; certainly I paid no attention.

A bereaved feeling came over me when she cleared away those dishes. Though I had ceased to eat, I did not want them to go. What gives a more homely feeling than the sight of food? Even strange food? Things to eat have appealed to one before, one seems to know them, and a loaf of bread on a platter will convey a keener sense of friendliness than many a human being, who may turn out an enemy.

She fetched a teapot and a small tumbler, and left me

with them. I drew my little Epictetus from my knapsack ; it would be as well to have a motto for my journey, and the poor slave would give me something fitting.

You cannot open the *Encheiridion* at the wrong place, for there is none. This is what was printed just where I put in my finger : " Do not seek to have all things happen as you would choose them, but rather choose them to happen as they do ; and so shall the current of your life flow free." I took a couple of cigarettes with this reflection, and then went sanely to my bed.

The morning brought me an odd feeling : the desire to rise immediately on waking ! A new feeling is something to be so glad of, to offer royal entertainment, that I leapt out on the wood floor and looked from my three windows over the garden and the yard.

There was only a slender screen of enervated plants between me and a possible public, and I wished them an added luxuriance for a moment, till it struck me that I might well leave Western indecency behind me here, and pursued my toilet with an unconcerned directness which education and popular influences have tried in vain to spoil. By ten minutes

to five I stood in the grey dew of the farmyard grass and looked round me.

It was a convenient little howf; one-storeyed, raised some four feet from the ground by means of a layer of boulders faced with logs, with gallery at the back, and shallow flight of steps leading down. My room and the kitchen looked through the gallery to the yard; the chamber in which I had supped, and the fourth room, fronted the roadway and a tiny slip of garden. Outhouses, woodshed, henhouse, and cowshed made two sides of the square, and the fourth side was open for the long low cart to drive in.

The fields at the back of the house were called a garden, though sown with oats, hay, and potatoes in fair quantities. I roamed aimlessly about them and up the pine-hills, and saw the other lodger, an artist, with his canvas on his back, his paint-box in his hand, and his feet bare. The wild flowers grew as do wild flowers in the West Highlands, though new kinds greeted me on every hand. I am always glad not to know what a flower is, and never wanted to be on those terms with the great purple-eyed things that stared at me from the hay, or the blue things that winked to me from beside the footpath. Why should I wish to class them, to press them, or to tell exactly

what they were? We got up a nodding and smiling acquaintance in no time, and when I sat out writing in the sunlight, right among the standing grasses, they drew their delicate shadows in a pale atmospheric blue upon my white pages, and I could hardly bear to bring the inky words through their thin leaf-spears, or foul with hazard blots their innocent eyes.

But a field of globe ranunculus upon a marshy hill-top would not be overlooked, and I had to take home a big posy of them to set upon my table. We had met before, the ranunculus and I; away in Morvern they had spread themselves, wherever the nut-bushes would let them, and attained the splendid stature of their juicy stems as readily in Scotland as in the Karpathians.

So insensibly did my life assimilate itself to the life of my farm-hosts that I cannot tell the moment when we fell into harmony. The bedroom of my first night was relinquished in favour of the expected lodger, who was delicate and could not deal with hardship—hardship in this case being the occupation of a little outhouse flanked by the cowshed and the ash-pit; very favourable specimens of both, let me add. I was not delicate, and with memories of the fate of

the heroine in "Tales from the Castle," that early classic, I took up my abode beside the cows.

Looking back upon this period, and nearly sinking beneath the consciousness that a reason for remaining in Mikuliczyn may be expected of me, I rake vainly in that ten months' past to find one. It is not forthcoming. It seems possible, however, that I may have wished to rest after my rush across Europe, or to learn the Ruthenian language, or to observe the habits of the peasants, &c. Any of these excuses will serve to explain my four weeks' tarrying in this somewhat plain village of all the lovely ones I might have found.

The household upon the farm was not less interesting than any other household in which one chooses to interest oneself, and my outhouse gave me very high-class opportunities of observing the characters and habits of the inmates.

They were people of mixed nationality, not Ruthenian, but Polish, and yet to them German seemed a half forgotten language, rather than one half learnt, and they had a German name.

"*Proszę Pani*" I heard the peasants in the yard calling my landlady, and fancying this a kind of title, I too used it. It meant, in point of fact, "Please,

Lady," and was merely the catchword due to the innate civility—servility, if you like—of the Slav peasant. Still, in my mind it designates the fat, loud-voiced woman who cooked my dinners for me.

Her's was a striking personality. She had a large figure, and wore a blue skirt curiously hitched up at the two sides and tucked into her waist; above this a garment which is called in Scotland a bed-gown, in France a *camisole* or *matinée*, while in England it is the old unbecoming form which belonged to the white piqué dressing-jacket some twenty-five years ago.

I was not alive twenty-five years ago, and don't mean to pretend that I was, but one of the most hideous qualities of white piqué was its durability, and I saw one of these dressing-jackets, hard, white, and fresh to a fault, in a wardrobe drawer only a few years since.

I made friends with the Proszę Pani by going into the kitchen one morning and exclaiming in unfeigned admiration over her soups.

Mathilde, the young, mild, Madonna-like, widowed niece, was burying a table beneath some blue checked material, and hanging over it with the scissors, so I was called upon to express myself on dressmaking.

"Wissen Sie solche Jacke machen wir uns selbst,"

said the *Proszę Pani*, taking up a portion of the blue bed-gown between the finger and thumb.

I nodded intelligently; personally, I should never have doubted it. It had two seams, one under each arm, and three buttons down the front. It defined the figure nowhere, which, in the case of the *Proszę Pani*, was, perhaps, a good thing. It was quite straight, and reached only an inch or two below the waist in front, just to the edge of her bosom. This energetic woman rose before five, and did a tremendous day's work—all the cooking, a good deal of the milking, most of the supervision, and the whole of the scolding. Still, according to her own views, she "had no health."

On the days when she was ailing she lay upon a bed in the great front keeping-room, with a piece of coarse muslin over her face, presumably sleeping; but let any one of the workwomen, or the servant *Olena*, or even a cow, put her foot in it—a cow is especially liable to do this—and the muslin fluttered in a hot wind of Ruthenian objurgation as the *Proszę Pani*'s voice echoed through the house, for whose fine acoustics the big music-loving pine-trees that formed it were answerable.

In the middle of the morning she usually strolled

out to the gardens, where three or four white and red women were bending to the nettles; though I did not follow her, I could picture her beneath a big black umbrella, and faint drifts of violence, chastened by the sunlit stretch of field they crossed to reach me, would come in at my window and amuse my ear. The pathetic whine in her voice when she addressed me was the only alternative to the *allgemeine Schimpferei* (Universal Scolding), which long years of dealing with the peasantry had taught her. She had her moments of amusement too, when shrill screams of vulgar laughter announced that she was playing with Paulinchen, the four-year-old infant of Mathilde and the man who went to sleep drunk once in the snow, and never awoke to repeat this piece of carelessness. I used to be very sorry for Paulinchen, though she was being early hardened, and her wonderful courage enhanced every day, for the Proszę Pani had a huge muscle, and pulled the poor child about unmercifully.

Mein Herr, the head of the family, was a big, fair, soft man, who by fits and starts interested himself indolently in fishing. At one time he was never without a cast of flies round his green-black hat and a rod leaning against the house corner, within two minutes' walk of which you could always find him.

Of course the weather could change very rapidly in the mountains, and though it might be sunny and still one minute, who could tell but that it would be warm, damp, and grey the next, with a light wind,—neither east, west, north, nor south, but only the fisherman's wind,—lightly crossing the water, and the keen trout rising to the shadow of every passing wing?

Usually one could find him below the bridge, casting thoughtfully; but after half-an-hour he would come back depressed, and, in answer to my query, would say, "Kein einziges, Fräulein!" "Not one." "Dass ist 'was merkwürdiges" (this was his favourite expression). "Aber kein Fischer kriegt nicht! wenn nur Einer 'was fangen könnte, es wär mir nit e' Mal so arg—aber gar keiner kriegt nicht!" And I noticed that this was in reality his sole comfort; that if any other man on the river *had* had luck when he hadn't, it would have been unbearable to him.

One way and another we got a good many fish; and though I was too lazy to do much myself, I sent to England for smart flies, which the big old trout in the dark pools had never seen before, and knowing fellows who had eluded the old man for years, plopped and spluttered in the batter without



which the Proszę Pani never thought of cooking them.

The family mode of living was not remarkably interesting. They ate in the kitchen, chiefly from the pans, and Olena, the servant, stood by the washing-up board licking the spoons preparatory to washing them. The farm-hands took their evening maize-meal and their noon potatoes at a long table in the wooden gallery which looked out upon the yard, and the food was served in neat troughs. At night they came into the kitchen for their money, which was taken from among the pillow-slips in the long drawer, and each kissed the Proszę Pani's fat hand as he or she received the kreutzers.



CHAPTER V.

EXPERIENCES of the mild and quiet nature that always occur to persons who go in search of adventure these unknighly days, heaped themselves upon me. Amongst them is a hygienic experience of which I am really proud. It relates to the way I preserved my skin. There blew almost always a searching wind, which burned and browned better than the fiercest sun and many patent ovens. I soon saw that to wash myself with the absurd frequency that I and other people do at home would be ridiculous. I found the way to encourage the skin to bear up against the weather is not to wash it. Let the skin alone—it knows how to keep itself clean, and how to stay on one's features, if it only gets the chance. The single daily bath in the river was quite sufficient ; and before it was warm enough to bathe, I had a grand cold splash with my

big blue glass basin, and the hard water from the well. There should be a word about these wells. They are square, built round with rough hewn logs; an immense crane, made of a pine-tree and very nicely adjusted, dumps the wooden jugs under the water, holding them firmly by one ear—much like the bathing women of my youth; it also lifts them up and swings them deftly to the edge.

But with the warmer weather my blue basin fell into disuse, and in the early morning, or about eleven, or previous to coffee at four, or in the evening, or the night, or indeed any time, I went straying over the ragged river-bed barefoot to the weir. The approach to the river on my side was flat; on the further, the hills rose. The sheer bank that overlooked the stream was sweet with wild strawberries, and I would swim across in a slanting line, buffeted by the current, and risking the queer whirlpools, to climb up with immense difficulty and eat all that were ripe.

Fine white river-sand, easily superseding every other material, was delicious to wash with, and left arms like satin that would not have shamed a nymph. Only the cows looked on, and sometimes the little peasant herds gathered to watch me swimming. I had never bathed

just in this way before, and at first prowling in among the trout-fry and tadpoles was nervous work ; but I found it most inspiring, often spending two hours in and out of the water ; even the day I slipped on the bank when about to dress, falling upon a sunken pine-root which cut my side and bruised me badly, and that other day, when, having chosen a new spot, I was swept away by a current fiercer than I had known, and banged pretty severely upon some rocks—even upon these and minor accidental occasions I preferred my wild rivers to any seas that come and go upon wide beaches.

After the bathing, a ride was my principal excitement. The village had gathered that I cared for horses, and sometimes as many as five would be tied up near the cart shed in the yard for me to choose from. Saddles were more difficult to find : my own, totally unsuited to the size of the beasts, I had given up, and doffed my skirt *sans gêne* to bestride the comfortless wooden ones, whose stirrups, hung on by knotted ropes of unequal length, were made of the plastic willow.

My skirt was, in its way, a treasure ;—in its way, however, only—in the way of any other skirt it might have failed to please ; but its way was to undo in a

second with its flat buckle at the side, and be ready to lie on my arm, or on the saddle, or my shoulder—anyhow. My knickerbockers and leggings fitted and “sat” like a charm, and there is no doubt that for a *slim* woman, the male costume and the male way of riding may be well enough.

Bareback riding, upon a thing with the action of a mouse, does not require any large amount of intrepidity. After many varied arrangements, I found that it was the most comfortable manner of mounting. Now and again the little wretches kicked, but, on the whole, they were at one with the idea that the less movement of any kind they made the better. They had a power of dead or torpid quiet, which is possibly the reason that they can bear heavier burdens and hold out longer than any other horses in the world.

They don't throw themselves about a field in useless capers; they wouldn't chip the sides of their stalls to matchwood, and rattle their head-chains up and down through the rings till your ears sung. Put them in a field, and they drop their long necks, and feed straight forward to the far side of it, but so slowly, that you must wait full five minutes before you can shut the gate on their hindquarters; and they have never heard of corn.

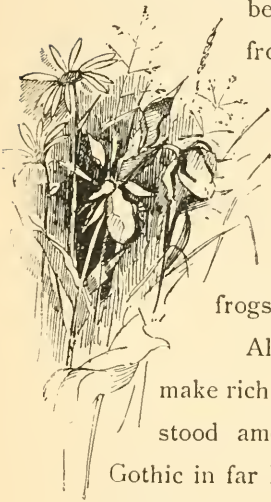
As I rode along, the wayside pools were all a-wriggle with tadpoles, frogs, water-worms, and newts of every description with little black hands, daintier than a lady's. From the frogs arose always a low, soft music; they were humming over, with a melancholy sigh for pleasures past, the gay choruses of the night

before, just like any other people home from a party. Countless dead companions floated beside them unheeded, and one wondered how these came to their end, noticing that even there the ruling passion was strong in death,—for all the

frogs died swimming.

All the beautiful orchis-spires, which make rich a favoured Scotch or English meadow, stood among the grasses, as graceful and as Gothic in far Ruthenia as anywhere at home; and sometimes I had a honey-scented bunch dangling at my saddle-bow, but more often tied ruthlessly to the ragged mane of my horse.

The weather, like the scenery, was Highland in character; no day went over without, at least, some rain, and one knew always just which cloud to thank for the shower. You saw him, thick and black,



coming deliberately towards you ; and if you were sitting *insouciant* in a field, he would stop dead over your head and empty himself on the top of you. If walking, he would follow you and give you every drop he had by him. He could adapt his pace perfectly to yours ; I proved this one afternoon when riding, by putting quite a large cloud to a sharp trot.

Of all places the winding woodways by the streams pleased me most, for there the red-cup moss gleamed out at me, and stag's-horn moss trailed in garlands. When I first saw it I dashed off my horse and fell upon it, with an accession of that patriotism which burns so fiercely when one is away from home.

Patriotism never bothers me in Scotland—I don't feel the slightest inconvenience from it ; but, once away, I seem to secrete quite an alarming quantity, and it is bound to come out somehow. Slavs are different in this respect ; they can rave over the land, even while submitting to the inconveniences of living in it. Far be it from me to sneer at a feeling of that kind ; I admire and wonder about it, because it is so different from ours, and I like it in them. Of course every one must live after his manner ; “miserable indeed must be the creature with no parent soil,”

still, for a Scot, it nearly always seems best to go away from his country and talk about it.

The dark hills ; the constant blue mists that stole about among them ; the sudden suns that burst out and swiftly laid each pine-tree's arm with silver ; the irresponsible wind, that whirled along the valley for ten minutes, then crouched somewhere far away and could be heard laughing or whistling softly down the woodland, with his hands in his pockets, so to speak ; the trout in the river—they are all—it is all so Scotch, that my heart literally glowed with love of it, and I twisted my tartan cloak, plaid fashion, round me, settled my Tam o' Shanter on my head, and gloried in my nationality, and the good luck that made me a Scottish lassie. Now, this is really Scotch.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the *Proszę Pani* would have coffee on the table, in the snug porch, and the artist, the delicate lodger, and myself would gather there without much sociability.

The consumptive lodger would hand me the latest Polish newspaper that he had received, with a bow and a civil phrase in German ; the artist would borrow a cigarette paper with profuse apologies, and we would



inquire of one another if we had bathed that day, and what the temperature had been. Here the consumptive lodger came in ; he always knew the temperature, and the artist and I listened deferentially, though neither of us cared a whit whether it was cold or warm, so far as bathing was concerned. When I had asked the artist if he had been working hard, and the other man if he had had a walk, conversation languished, till it occurred to them to remark that they had seen me riding. The fact was that neither the artist nor I were naturally sociable or civil, and the consumptive lodger could not get very far with us, though he was both.

This artist, who went by the name of "Der Herr," as though there had never been another in the whole district, was rather a remarkable young man—a handsome Pole ; but, as I afterwards learned, not a Polish type of handsomeness. For a long time he presented himself only as intensely civil, shy, and remote ; and though he lived on the farm, I hardly saw him during the long day. He kept his materials in a room near mine, however, and here the peasants would come and visit him, when he was stretching a canvas or what not. It was his habit to come into the mountains every summer, so he was well known, could speak

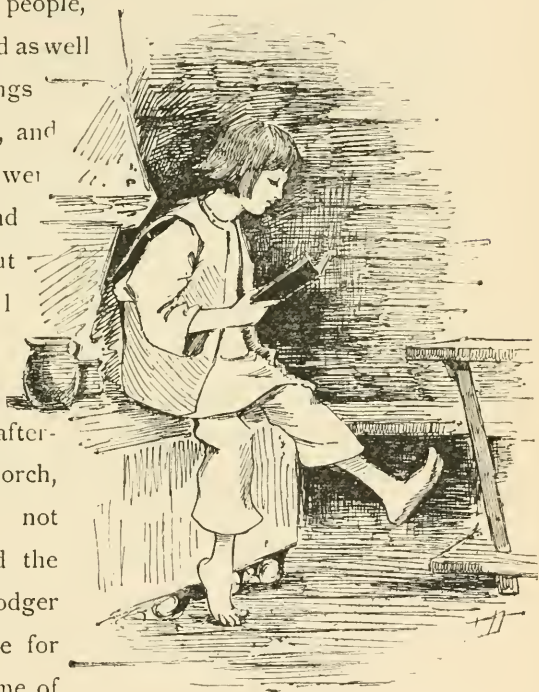
the Ruthenian language as well as his own, and was much loved and looked up to by the peasants.

A little fragile boy, Iwan, was his almost constant companion, following him like a dog; and once or twice a day I could hear strong bare feet thudding round the corner of the house, and see the child following him with the paint-box on his head. It was a pretty little procession that went afield, for sometimes a peasant or two trailed after, and sat in the grass beside him while he worked, chatting by the hour together. This did not seem to disturb him as ordinary conversation might have done; it was not conversation—it all harmonised and chimed in with his life and his work. He was living, dreaming, thinking, and painting this peasant life, and it could never be too much in his mind or in his heart as it seemed to me.

He was the one absolute good of the village. He taught the peasants German, which is immensely useful to them, and Polish when they did not already know some. The children he would instruct in the Ruthenian alphabet, and spend hours most patiently boring at their thick skulls in the hope of finally getting through and inserting something; for, though the peasants are far from stupid—indeed the most intelligent I

have ever seen—yct, not being accustomed to learn, it came very slowly to them. He would sit on a bed's edge telling sparkling stories to a whole family of sickly-looking people, till they laughed as well as their poor lungs would let them, and imagined they were really joyous and hale again. But this was as I afterwards knew him.

On such an afternoon in the porch, if work was not going well and the consumptive lodger seemed to pine for company, a game of



chess was started, and I would stop a while to see them play. One day, to my delight, the village postmaster, a tall man, with an oilskin cap, much nursed nails, a pair of cuffs, and elastic-sided boots (his characteristics I have enumerated just as they

struck me) came down the road, greeted us, was introduced to me, and at once swept the consumptive lodger from the bench to usurp it himself. I learnt more Polish than chess in watching them, for though the postmaster conducted his daily business in German, he conducted chess in Polish—in a great deal of Polish. He would repeat one expression about twelve times in a low chuckling voice, but quite distinctly, while thinking out and making a move. During the long length of a minute it would be “Poczekaj” in a self-satisfied, humming tone; and when I had learnt this phrase never to forget it, the painter would fall upon him, and he would emit a little sad, high cry, like a frog’s note, as he watched his favourite piece, the “Läufer” (Bishop) whipped off the board. His large blue nails glittered like round flat shields on his brown hand, as it hovered revengefully above the painter’s Rook, and he would fall to crooning “Tak jest” nine or ten times, when he compelled his opponent to move his Queen.

The little Iwan, who never could leave his painter-hero long, would stand inconveniently near me, with his supper of black bread and raw garlic only just down his throat; but his green felt hat, with its brim picked up over his ears, and downward slant

back and front that only the years know how to bring about, made up to the seeing sense what was suffered by the other. The consumptive lodger would look on glumly. Perhaps when out that morning he had been overtaken by a shower, and so was still sullenly wearing his goloshes, though it had sunned up, and promised to hold for three hours.

The postmaster won, and swept the board, chuckling like a child with a new rattle. The painter was savage, I could see, and though they put away the pieces, a very little chaff encouraged them to set them out again. At first jocular personalities flew about, and the postmaster worked cheerfully among his pawns, singing over a new air to himself the while : meantime I looked away.

A big rainbow had turned up from nowhere in particular, and planted himself against a coppery background, whereupon, as always happens, it began to rain. God's promise seems to read the other way now ; and not only that one, but some others.

As the pieces got fewer, the painter brought his left eyebrow into play, which had a serious import ; and the postmaster buzzed about the board like an aimless bee, a Bishop in his fingers, and uncertain what he would take in exchange.

Down the road would come the little pink figure of a Jewish girl, with the letters, straight into our porch, when her packet was immediately taken



from her and investigated by all present save myself, to an obligato of amazed and pertinent comment. From under her yellow head-cloth the black eyes in her little sallow face flashed with Hebrew archness, and, her letters returned to her, she was hounded gaily on her way.

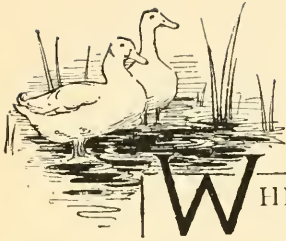
In an atmosphere of that kind, with such utter trivialities to engage my attention, I could not unfold the *Daily Telegraph*. It was better to watch the game between the painter and the postmaster, and let the hot afternoon slip past me all unemployed.

The consumptive lodger broke up the séance by sneezing farcically, and announcing he had caught cold. I cannot respect a person who sneezes in an absurd way; it should be a matter of study, like shaking hands. I remember a man once with whom I was getting on admirably, talking about Ideal Socialism, when he suddenly said "Hrash" upon a sharp, high note—said it twice; and a prolonged stare at his flushed

countenance, coupled by my noting the flurried search for his handkerchief, explained to me that he had sneezed; but of course I could not take up Ideal Socialism again after that—who could?

Having said “good afternoon,” I would go to my outhouse to read or eat wild strawberries. In the evening a solitary walk preceded supper, and toward midnight, when the village was in bed, I bathed in the black hole below the bridge, with only a moon-beam for companion.

Such was the dull and pleasant pattern of my early days in Mikuliczyn.



CHAPTER VI.

WHEN I first came I was delighted that my room had its single eye upon the farmyard—that the whole drama of the place would go forward within range, so to speak ; but after a time I felt otherwise. The drama of the place was often in bad taste, and occasionally downright offensive. I did not care to see people senselessly enraging themselves—oaths, even when you do not understand them, make you shiver ; nor did I care to see people thoughtlessly practising the most hideous cruelty. The horses and cows had not much to complain of, although their simple actions often gave rise to violent passion—but how did the hens and ducks die ? I took a good deal of interest in the army of “ Aylesburys ” which was shooed out towards the river in the morning, and returned, quacking in chorus, about twelve, only to have a light lunch and be shooed out again. Nearly every day one of the loud white brood was carried dripping past my window, the knife held to its neck

(not conspicuously in the right place), its head bent acutely within the Proszę Pani's severe clutch, and its still quick wings flapping in a death agony. She always began to pluck them before they had ceased to struggle, too.

No, the drama of the yard was not attractive. Now and then a jangling two-horse fly of the kind I had come in, with its inevitable half-haystack, drove up and stopped opposite the house. It usually held some police officials, or a doctor, or both, bound to a further village upon an inquiry with regard to some crime—a woman poisoned and a child found murdered are the two examples I remember. These persons halted for the midday meal at our hospitable door, and a great deal of hurry was observable in the kitchen. Long stakes of pine-wood, the remnants from plank-dressing, were pushed into the whitewashed oven, and a tragic screeching from the hen-house, coupled with the recollection of the Proszę Pani having passed my window with a big blunt knife, explained that she was solving life's great problem for a couple of thin little chickens.

Scarcely dead. I could see her slip them into the boiler for a brief moment, in order that they might be easier to pluck, and the suggestions that occurred

to me with regard to the hot water I might have to use were complicated and peculiar. That is about what roughing it amounts to. You are brought face to face with things which civilisation saves its women the need of looking at, and consequently the need of thinking about. I don't mean only chicken-killing; but the discipline of such experience, especially for excitable persons, is excellent, and teaches a repose and a calm philosophy in the face of distressing occurrences which would do much to hasten the extinction of the fussy and mouse-screeching woman, a type of which the world is at last a little weary.

The servant-girl was called Ulanno, but Olena is, I am told, the correct spelling of the name. She was a farm-hand as well, and deserves a few words all to herself. She was the roughest-voiced, roughest-laughed, roughest-mannered person I ever knew; when in the morning I looked from my window and shouted "Daj Wody," "Bring water," she nodded her head vigorously under her dirty yellow and red kerchief, and I saw her bare red-brown legs springing up the wood steps to the house, and her two tomato-coloured aprons, one in front, one behind, narrow, skimpy, and tight, disappearing round the door corner. When she came in with the

water she nodded her round turnip of a head again, and said "Dziendobry." Hers was a face without any claims to beauty or good looks; unlike the plain face of fiction, it was not always redeemed by a pleasant expression. Her complexion was of the thick, greasy, brick-dust order; her eyes no particular colour; her nose, broad and flat, came a short way down her face, and then seemed to turn back disappointed, because it had noticed what her mouth was like, and did not wish to be nearer to it—really, one could not wonder! She shouted appalling pleasantries to the men in the yard, and her conversation in the hayfield was supposed to be singularly unrefined; her voice was damaged from reasons one need not name; she drank schnapps as often as she could get it; she stole and smoked one's tobacco with unabashed freedom; she slept in the sawdust heap beside the cows, and never washed! I tried to think that she did not make my bed, but she did, for sometimes when I came in I could see her at it, and I knew it before I was round the corner of the door.

Twice a day there went forward a mysterious chopping sound in the yard. This was when some one was preparing nettles to mix with scalded meal, and

put the ducks off, so to speak, for another couple of hours. Ulanno usually did this job kneeling on the steps of the wooden gallery, and very often in the passage outside my door. The business left a damp green stain on the boards, and if you went over it with bare feet an hour later, you were handsomely stung. One day, above the chorus of the ducks' suggestions, there arose a human howl. There is no mistaking a human howl, even if it is not followed as was this by a volley of "Oi-yoi-yoi," "Oi-yoi-yois," enough to unroof the shed from which it proceeded. I did not rise immediately—I was at work; but when the yard began to ring with supplications to "Jezus-Maria, Jezus-Maria" in some other voices, I got up slowly and went out.

The place was white with infuriated, hunger-maddened ducks, but across this ebullient sea, from my outhouse, I had a good view of the *Proszę Pani* in her short blue jacket, wringing her hands upon the steps. I couched my inquiry in pithy German—I put my hands to my mouth and shot a remark above the ducks. "Was ist los?" was what I said, and literally translated that means "What is loose?" for instinctively I felt there was something loose.

It was Ulanno, seemingly. She had been chopping



nettles, with all the ducks egging her on from behind, and she had hacked off her finger!

I went straight to the shed where "Oi-yoi-yoi" was the only expression of the poor creature's pain, and found her lying on a heap of clover-hay, with the mutilated hand stretched out beyond her head. The farmhouse people seemed to think it was a job particularly suited to "Jesus-Maria," for they did nothing but moan and invoke these busy people. Believing it wiser not to wait for external aid, I tore up one of the child's pinafores for a bandage; at the time I did not notice it was a pinafore, but later on I saw the people looking sadly at the fragments of a pink, striped thing, and recognised the stuff I had made use of. I could only hope they put it down to "Jesus-Maria."

After much remonstrance, couched in three languages she did not understand, I got Ulanno to let me take her hand and wash it—the first finger was taken off quite neatly at the first joint; it looked rather unpleasant. I knew no way to deal with the girl and her howling, but I gave her my arm to grip like mad, while I treated the finger with bread pressed into dough, cobwebs from adjacent rafters, and the pinafore.

I got a bandage on her arm to stop the blood-flow,

and in ten minutes the "Oyi-oi-oi" came far softer, and the poor hand was comfortably placed on a high hay-heap, while outside the farm-people, tiring of a one-sided conversation with "Jezus-Maria," had hearkened to the remonstrances of the ducks, and were concluding the nettle-chopping. Next day, not a "Dziękuję" ("Thank you") did I get from the saddened, sobered Ulanno, who did very little else save tell the people who passed by how it had happened.

It is a great many years since I learned that people rarely say "thank you" when they have strong reason to do so, and say it freely on quite uncalled for occasions. Some time after registering this observation, I was precipitated into a philosophic inquiry as to why any one should ever, under any circumstances, be required, or expected, to say "thank you." And after heavy wrestling, I came out with no answer; there was no reason that I could find; later, it began to annoy me when by chance people did say "thank you," and now the feeling of irritation is so strong that, did I see an opportunity of doing some one signal service, a great drawback to doing it would be the fear that in him I might find the exception, that he might bury me beneath his gratitude.

After Olcna's accident I could not help remarking that my tobacco lasted longer than it had been

wont; and before I had explained this to myself I observed that there was less superficiality in the cleansing of my room—fewer matches left upon the floor, fewer cigarette-ends just below the edge of the bed and the chair. In fact, things were not so distinctly swept round as previously they had been.

A day or two passed, and when sleeping away my working hours in the hayfield, some one dropped a cap upon the head which was freely given to the noon-tide sun. I levered up an eyelid with difficulty, and saw a tomato-flash between me and the sky—it was Olena.

Half-an-hour later, to my extreme annoyance, I felt my head being lifted up, and, with the savagery of a sleeping person, I said firmly in French that I wished to be let alone. A hoarse tenderness in Ruthenian was my answer, as Olena placed the cushion she had brought, and not so deftly all at once, because of the hand. After that, certain other little attentions told me that I had a friend in the farm-girl, and I was glad. It shall not prejudice her memory that, having annexed my yellow hairpin (that hairpin was bound to go) and my nail-scissors, she left her sawdust heap one midnight, and the farm-place knew her no more.

CHAPTER VII.



THE dress of the peasants was the prettiest I have ever seen, and I was especially delighted with their cowhide sandals. These, I am told, are worn in a slightly differing form by the peasants in Norway and some of those queer unexplained peoples on the west coast of Ireland. This does not surprise me. What surprises me very much is that they are not worn by the peasants of every country, for they are the earliest possible notion in the way of foot-gear, and their fashion is at once strong, simple, and artistic.

These sandals, and the sheepskin jacket, or *kiptar*, which is also an article of clothing common to the peoples of various countries cleverer than ours, became the objects of my keen desires, and I confided to the coffee party that I would like to possess them. The painter, who knew every one in the village, took upon himself, with no particular avidity, to introduce me and my requirements to a maker of sandals and an artist in sheepskins; and on the former of these quests we set out a day or two later towards the end of an afternoon when his work was done.

Passing through the village, we turned in at one of the Jews' shops, and I was given to understand that the leather had to be purchased first. This, in two hard oblong pieces, was shown us, and ninety kreutzers demanded. I saw the painter was surprised when I promptly offered half, till I explained that it was not the first time I had dealt with Hebrew salespeople.

For fifty kreutzers I took away the two unyielding bits of hide, just tanned as one might see them at any practical bootmakers in England. Away up the hills and through the pine-tree glades we went, past little sunny bits of field all full of flowers, and along

the bed of a stream or two till we came to one of the quaint, comfortable wooden houses which are so unlike anything I have seen in our country : again, I believe huts are very similar in Norway.

Stooping at the wide-spreading eave, which was a foot and more too low for me, I followed the painter into the dusky keeping-room which *is* the hut, save for a sort of entrance part where provisions, implements, wooden jugs and buckets are stored.

It is customary to use the abbreviated form "Slawa" of their strange greeting, "Slawa Jezu Christu," meaning "Glory to Christ." The inmate replies, "Na wiekki Slawa," "May He be praised for ever;" and after nods and good-days thrown variously to members of the family, we sit down on the wooden bench which runs around the wall, for chairs and stools there are none in a Ruthenian cottage. The bed and the stove usually share the opposite side of the room, the bed being a broader pine-bench with no mattress, and several rough blankets flung upon it, and the stove a wonderful structure of wood and clay, which, with its surrounding waist-high shelf to sit, or place the pots on, is a good six feet square. The effect of this whitewashed stove is a pile of dressed stone blocks of differing sizes placed one upon another ; thus you

have the base of all, then the protruding shelf, then the actual fire-cavern, then the chimney and oven, the two last of decreased sizes. The fire-hole is a foot and a half wide, a foot high, and three to four feet deep, running to the house-wall at the back; the chimney root is in front of the fire, instead of, as in England, at the back or side. This excellent plan ensures the greatest heat and the best burning towards the front, and never have I seen a stove or oven upon which cooking becomes so artistic a pleasure as it does at these great Polish wood-fires.

On that upper ledge of the stove where a graduated heat doubtless appeals agreeably to the extended body, a man lies, leaning on his elbows, looking and spitting out into the room. The peasants have the strangest habit of continually coughing, sniffing or spitting, which is, of course, peculiarly revolting to the Western mind; but I decided that the almost universal throat and lung complaints to which I shall refer presently must be accountable for it.

Another man is sitting somewhere near a little window, and a woman is thudding about the room with her fine bare feet. Every toe comes into play when the foot goes down, and is active and independent in a way that our insular toes are not, even

when divested of their constraining boots. At first, when my feet were white, the peasants were much interested in feet so diverse from their own—ours, narrow, thin, and arched—theirs, thick, strong, fully-developed; and the women would take up one of mine as gently as if it were going to break off in their hands.

The moment the painter sat down the men began to talk and laugh with great vivacity. He appeared to have the knack of inspiring and conducting a conversation of surpassing interest if one might judge by the fervour displayed, but, when I diffidently required a translation, I was told that he merely “referred to the harvest.” He referred to the harvest, and there had been all that drama and comedy, those signs and wonders—well, it is indeed a queer people.

The woman asks if I know Russian, Little Russian or Polish, to all of which a head is shaken, and I venture only upon the probably quite ungrammatical “*Nie Polski*,” by which I wish her to understand that I am not Polish.

Usually there is a lean cat of an undecided grey colour and character. Beyond looking upon you as fresh pasture for the fleas which it takes care to

rub off upon you, it is unresponsive in its manners and shy.

The woman, with a very refined instinct of politeness, insists upon the young pig and the chickens dislodging themselves; and then, with surprising swiftness, she picks over and washes a heap of orange and white toadstools which no English or Scotch peasant would do more than kick over as they grew, let alone touch. Some of these she has by her in the wooden pot that holds the dandelion leaves, others she produces from within her single linen robe. They have lain there unsuspected by me, and quite uncrushed, in a row above the waist-line. I wonder when an English woman will be able to bring home mushrooms in her dress—above the waist-line?

But let us pass from these idle fancies that ran in my head as I watched the squeezing out of those noxious agarici. They were soon rammed into a one-eared earthen pot, which was covered thriftily with close wire netting, in the way of a practical life assurance, as were all the jugs and pots I noticed, and set before the blazing pine-wood fire. I have seldom seen a tub of potatoes less washed than was that woman's, but in an amazingly short space of time they were bubbling away beside the dandelions and the mushrooms.

Without a pause, she washes her hands, takes her rock and spindle, and sitting by the second window, one foot under her, and the other upright on the toes supporting her weight, begins spinning the harsh wool that makes the cord to bind the sandals with.

The painter, inspired no doubt by the grace and freedom of her attitude, begins to talk to her, and the man takes out his pipe, made of the hollowed youth of a nut-tree, and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length; moistens it, runs his fingers up and down in a prefatory squeal, then pipes the oddest tunes, supplying a rarely-varying bass with some low buzzing note in his own voice. There was a pleasant monotony in the little melancholy, unaspiring airs. It will be noticed that in Nature and all things near to her, monotony means rest, not boredom. With artificial matters, it is the reverse. Who gets tired of the delicate monotony of sounds? What eye wearies of the endless ranks of daisies by the wayside? Surely no one's. Thus with my peasant's tunes, it was the variation I resented, and there was very little to resent! His firm foot tapped the floor in an unfailling time. The low voice of the painter, the lighter tones of the woman, chimed perfectly with the rumble of the man's self-constructed

obligato, and the irresponsible twitter of the treble melody.

It is a characteristic scene, and has nothing *factice* about it: it is as unideal as the heart could wish. The room is close, the atmosphere fœtid—you have to smoke all the time. The people are unwashed and uninviting of aspect. The music is not pretty, the woman is not pretty—only they are fulfilling and pursuing themselves so certainly, so unconsciously; and Nature, who never made anything ugly, has decided that they shall give unalloyed pleasure to the sympathetic onlooker, of whom they themselves, beyond the first *naïf* curiosities and questions, take no notice.

They are in nowise shaken from their paths or their devoirs because a stranger enters. No terrible constraint seizes them; no chair is wiped and set for the visitor; there is no surreptitious changing of the child's pinafore in a corner, no swift slipping down of sleeves, or throwing of a dirty apron behind a chair. They are dirty and unashamed;—they don't know the difference between a nice and a nasty thing, so they serve you no politenesses and are quite unaware if they do anything disgusting. There is a total absence of that class of perception among them.

I wondered, during this interview, when a reference to the sandals was coming; but the painter remarked in German that the man lying on the stove had taken note of the build of my foot, and would get them done in a day or two. The woman was then engaged in spinning "Schnurrs." There she sat, working steadily, her fine teeth gleaming and her eyes twinkling coquettishly in the direction of the painter, upon whom it seemed a good deal thrown away. I was the infinitely more impressed—but then I am very impressionable; and the rhythmic movements of her brown perfect arms, the undulations of her classic figure beneath its almost classic linen vestment, and the varying glimpses of a fine tanned skin through the open breast-slip of the garment—these contrived a continuous sense of pleasure for me, and I wondered what she had thought and what said of me, for the painter told me she was a "Fuchsfrau," and she had little keen fox's eyes, sharp, and not too kind.

How my lungs greeted the fir-scents when we came out of that hut! How free and large the grey sky seemed; how cool and buoyant the furtive vapours that slipped along the grey valley. It was the hour before sunset. All of a sudden the shifty

day made up its mind—the rain leapt from the edge of a black cloud, and came shining down in white lines against the dull hill with a glitter caught from some far further light. We turned up our coat-collars and ran for home, finely wet in the twenty minutes that it took us to get there.



CHAPTER VIII.

It was during my visit to the hut of the artist in sheepskin, which took place under the auspices of the shy but Polishly-civil painter, that the condition of the peasants, physical and moral, grew clearer to me. Their political condition was very difficult to find out anything about, but I knew that Galicia had a Diet, practically governed herself by means of a Parliament in which Jews, peasants, and Poles sat side by side, and that she sent up delegates and representatives to the Chamber in Vienna; the peasants owned their land, and shared communal rights to wood and grazing, &c. Persons of the landlord class were unknown in all the parts I visited: there were no gentlemen's seats, nor a "big house" in any of the villages; no castles, ruined or otherwise, upon any of the mountains. Oppression, rack-renting, and evictions were unknown evils, of that I was assured; and beyond this, I felt that a political condition is not a bad one if you hear nothing of it.

The peasants' relation to the Jews is friendly, though perhaps to be deplored. Still, it seemed to me that to regret the domination of the Jews over the peasants in all business matters was to take hold of the wrong end of the stick. What one might regret is, that the Ruthenian is personally unpractical, unenterprising, and unambitious with regard to wealth, ease, and worldly advantage; though if he holds my view of these things, he will not regret these deficiencies, and will therefore be satisfied with the reigning systems. That the Jew handles money, imports goods, directs trade, and exploits labour almost exclusively, is not the hardship in a quiet Ruthenian village that it would be in one of our great centres, or even in one of our villages. For ideals differ. It is of little moment that the Ruthenian peasant should lose what he does not desire. Wealth—he cares little for it, and what it brings. He does not want to eat better food, or wear better clothes, and do less than the minimum of work that he already does. In all this he will be seen to differ materially from ourselves. He is happy, in his melancholy mountain way, with his lot and his opportunities. He has his garden, with the maize crop, his cow, his couple of horses, his own or his neighbour's wife, as the

case may be, for he is not scrupulous, having morals that are not Western ; and what more does he want ? These things suffice. If there is some money over, it means that he can gamble a little, or he can have a little more schnapps ; improvements, perhaps, but not improvements which he will work energetically to bring about.

Clever and hardy at his trade of wood-dresser, house-builder, bridge and embankment maker, or cattle-tender—fond of money only after an innocently shrewd, short-sighted, half-savage fashion—he has no talent for finance like his Jewish neighbour. He likes the sight of the coin in his hand ; he does not dally with long reckonings as to what this and that may or might fetch in the long run ; his quick intelligence is too quick to let him add thought to thought, and slow endeavour to slow endeavour, in the hope of making a few more guldens.

The peasant is improvident, but it is, after all, a one-horse sort of improvidence. Your man of simple tastes and few needs can afford to be a little careless of the future, a little thoughtless of the present, and quite unwarned by the past.

An incident which proved the exact nature of the peasant's lack of " practical " qualities occurred, oblig-

ingly, during my stay in Mikuliczyn. A man wanted some few gross of wood-slats to roof his house, and he wanted a man to set them when they were made. He went to a peasant whose trade was wood-slat dressing and setting, and attempted to press a contract upon him, and extract an estimate. The peasant would not accept the contract, and could not be got to give the estimate; so in despair the man wended his way to a Jew.

“Leave it to me,” said the Jew, barely listening to the description of the business; “I will roof your house for you, and give you an estimate to-morrow.”

The relieved proprietor went home, and the Jew sauntered down the village to the hut of the very peasant who had had the offer of the job.

“Look here,” said the Jew, “I want you to work for me. I’ll give you so much a day for it. You will also have to find the wood.”

Having further extracted all the needful particulars—which he previously had known nothing of—the Jew made a calculation, saw his employer, gave an estimate, formally arranged the contract, and set his peasant to labour at a small daily wage, himself making a handsome profit.

Well, you will wonder if the peasant was idiot

enough not to see through this and regret it. See through it he may have done; regret it—no! His simple vanity was gratified because his advice had been asked by the Jew, and his technical knowledge had been aired. He had a fair prospect of work, no responsibility, and a moderate wage which he knew would cover his daily expenditure, and was, in fact, a sum he was accustomed to, and knew the merits of. It was immaterial that the Jew should be pocketing the guldens.

Here in the West, where every one thirsts for anxiety, and worry, and responsibility, and doesn't think himself a man unless his forehead is lined and shoulders bent by a bitter load of it, this simple peasant would be scoffed at; but, in that he trammelled not his soul with the things of this world, and left his mind free to dwell on what it listed of Nature's wonder problems, while he provided sparingly for the wants of his body, some old Greek philosopher might have approved of him.

With his religion he is peacefully at home. The United Greek Church seems a commendable compromise between the Romish and the Protestant Catholic Churches. It has many of the good, easy, comfortable points of both. Its pastors may marry;

it encourages homage to, but not worship of the Virgin Mary, and it has a calendar full of pleasantly venal saints, who meet the sinner half way, and encourage him to feel that there's a sort of chance after all.

Unfortunately the clergy practise very considerably upon the ignorance and the really engaging superstition of their flock. They wring money, food, and horses, or whatever can change hands, from some bereaved husband, by delivering ingenious messages from his wife in purgatory, and so on. But, on the whole, I should fancy their influence, though conservative and unprogressive in the extreme, was not entirely for evil.

Upon the immorality, the blind, unrepentant, wholesale immorality of the peasants, they exercise no check; but then there is no such thing as a moral standard in any Ruthenian village I saw, and where nothing is aimed at, who can be said to fall short of the mark? But of this later.

In more than one house I was shown specimens of wood-carving which were only more beautiful and more interesting for being unlike all the refined Swiss-work one is so tired of, and for bearing traces of originality and individuality quaint in the extreme. The most amusing example of these patient, inno-

cent labours was a complete hut in miniature, which was the pride of the man who had made it, as well as of his wife and family. He, poor fellow, as I afterwards found, was rather a brainless specimen, and suffered from nerves and little whims; but even when he accompanied me on a journey, and walked miles beside a river sooner than ford it and chance a drop of water on his feet, I did not lose my respect for him, or my memory of that little toy which must have cost him many a winter evening with his pen-knife and his hone, when a smarter man might have been less harmlessly engaged.

He was a great sufferer from a disease that attacked nearly all the dwellers in that village, namely, goitre. Men, women, and children had these huge ungainly swellings in the throat, for which nothing could ever be done, seemingly. The simple explanation of it was the water, about which the people are singularly heedless, drinking quarts of it with quantities of living organisms plainly to be discerned, and swimming unconcernedly around in the glass.

Vainly I sought to arouse any fears in their minds, or to set a fine personal example by touching none of it save boiled, or after rigid inspection. They drank as freely as before, and the women multiplied necklace

after necklace upon their throats, while the men wore their blouses higher to hide the unsightly lumps.

A pitiful incident was the coming of a peasant to the farm with his eldest son, a fair, handsome lad of thirteen, very grievously afflicted. He wanted to ask the painter's advice about it; and finally, having heard of my treatment of Olena's finger, he wanted me to perform an operation on the boy.

In wild astonishment I conveyed to him that that was a surgeon's work, that my knowledge of such things was elementary in the extreme, and that any armed interference on my part, or the part of any other amateur, would simply result in the poor fellow's bleeding to death in about ten minutes.

The pathetic, hapless couple would not be affected by these explanations, and hung around me, and then around the painter, in the most distressing fashion, with a dear, dreadful hope that either of us might repent of our decisions and gratify them by murdering the boy.

Besides this goitre, the people were a prey to consuming skin complaints of various sorts. Poor food and a lack of personal cleanliness were probably not so much to blame as the facile English creed would have us believe; for it is a sophistry to call a

diet poor because it includes no meat or stimulant, and the monotony of maize meal and potatoes, with such things as mushrooms, dandelions, leeks, and eggs, is at anyrate an extremely healthy monotony. As to their cleanliness—it certainly was a mere figure of speech—it had no existence in fact, for they swarmed with parasites of the three familiar kinds; but after all, can it be only a lack of washing which breeds and encourages these creatures?—A man who changes his single garment as frequently as does the Ruthenian peasant, and sweats as certainly at his labour as he must, has no chance of being very dirty, even though he do not wash. His clothing is so loose and so simple that the air passes freely through it, and in itself should be a great purifier.

Certain of the wasting complaints I saw were not indigenous to the mountains, or at least it seemed improbable that they should be; far more likely that they were imported from the distant barracks in which the men had served their three years, souvenirs of the degraded moral condition so common among these poor, uneducated soldiers.

The men, raw peasants, fresh from their hills, with only the lower vices of civilisation as yet assimilated, are, at the most critical period of their development,

seized away from their homes and planted in some great town or other under very miserable circumstances. Barrack life—I know nothing of it in this country, but in France and Austria I am fairly well furnished with statistics—is almost the most wretched that there is. The six daily kreutzers of the common private are not sufficient to provide him with wholesome distractions—cleanliness is a luxury denied him; and his vanity (a quality so useful under favourable conditions) is perhaps the only cheerful feeling he can count on. He is tempted to immoralities from the very conditions under which he lives. All he has is a smart uniform, a certain physical comeliness, and a deep yearning for anything outside the dreariness of barrack-life; and, possibly, for something a little more seductive in the way of food than what the canteen can supply. His “affections” are bestowed practically upon some domestic servant who can thieve him a little extra sustenance. He has connections with the common women, who require his kreutzers even more than he; and the long hours of guard are filled only by a vague hatred of the life he is leading, and a longing for even five minutes of anything else. Very rarely does he come back to his hills with a third of the

health he took away; and any disease he brings back is quickly spread in a place where a young man home from his soldiering has the attraction of so much novelty, in a place where morality, as we like to dream of it, is not even a name.

It is observable that civilisation, beginning badly by demoralising whatever it touches, strikes the first blow at any remnant of brute cleanliness and brute morality that may linger in the nascent soul; and only after hundreds of years of milling does it give back, or should one say permit, to its choicest spirits the simple life, a desire for which is the result of extreme intellectual and spiritual cultivation, the life that can only be achieved by those who have understood, lived through, and sloughed every sort of complication; and complications are the entire wardrobe of civilised humanity. In one form or another the strongest of us must wear them. The early garb thrown upon the peasant is ugly; we grow wiser by degrees, and make ourselves pretty to look at as we creep slowly back, by way of what we call progress, to the long vanished ideal; and at last we may wear the white robe of utter simpleness again, and live the perfect life,—perhaps.

As I looked round the hut of the leather-worker, and

saw him and his brother, tall, not ill-made, unhealthy-looking young men, and the three sisters, pretty, pale, and unhealthy too (all of whom were indefinitely married here or there), as well as some of their miserable children, I felt the Austrian barracks had something to answer for. I pressed cigarettes upon them, pushed the dear, pattering, loose-limbed calf out of the way, and sat down by a window, which I opened. Soon the room was blue with tobacco smoke, and through this I saw the poor artist in sheepskins sitting on the bench covered with a blanket, his little table beside him heaped with brass eyelets; wools, red, orange, green, and yellow; and snips of pinked-out red and green morocco, which he applied to the beautifully dressed skin upon which he was working. He could not have been more than six-and-twenty, and yet there he was confined to the house, an invalid, a wreck, and married! The brother was not so far gone, though sickly and scrofulous in the extreme. He used to bring me eggs, painted and decorated in self-made colours, and covered with very quaint designs. The sisters made the embroidery for the tops of sleeves upon the linen gowns, and all had charming artistic tastes, and gentle, winning natures.

A cradle was suspended from a rafter in which

there was a baby, and an older child, with large, too-open, maddish eyes, lay upon its stomach along the stove shelf, and when the baby howled or squeaked, jerked the cradle by means of a short, depending rope-end, with a violence sufficient to have injured permanently the lungs of any other sort of baby. As it was, I heard occasional feeble gasps from this unseen personality, which seemed to hint that life in that cradle, away up towards the roof, among the worst of the bad air, was something to be complained of.

One of the men played his wooden flute for me; and, after much encouragement, and many shy glances, one of the girls took it from her brother, and contributing first her soft humming note, gave us many a melancholy tune. Her pretty, faded eyes stole side-long looks towards the painter, who sat there, sound and firm, like a ripe hazel-nut for quality, talking so kindly to them all, that it was no wonder they loved him and looked love at him.

Sunday was the day on which to see the village people. Then they came out to attend the church in the morning and public-house in the afternoon (it will be noticed that certain of their customs resemble exceedingly those of our own people), and for these ceremonies they are in all their "braws."

I inspected goodly gatherings of them in both places. I imbibed a small quantity of spiritual refreshment in the pretty Turko-Græco-Moorish Church in the morning, and a glass of light ale in the principal "Karczma" in the afternoon, of neither of which I was sensibly the worse.

I liked them best at their devotions, the people. The gaiety of that church interior was in direct opposition to our Sabbath-black. There, as elsewhere, the red and white seemed to sing in harmony, and all was a trifle newer and more brilliant than in the week-day hayfield. Only, for the most part, they exchanged their sandals for top-boots, heavy, clumsy, wrinkling round the ankle; picturesque, too, in their way, but coming as a surprise below the narrow, flapping linen gown. In winter the women wear woollen knickerbockers, and their one upper garment is of wool, so it will be seen that they have realised the ideal after which the most reasonable of us are striving—no petticoats, and but one skirt. The men had trousers of rich crimson woollen, turned up some ten inches deep, and embroidered in yellow and green wool upon the hem, in the case of the most dressy youths.

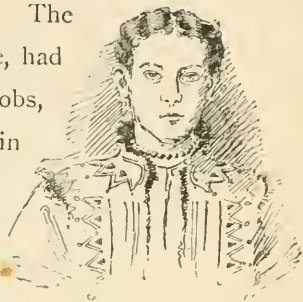
A good deal of rude chanting went forward in the

church, some knocking of the chest and kissing of the floor; but I hung modestly in the doorway, dubious as to how I should have acquitted myself, and unanxious to provide a spectacle.

Later, we seemed to reassemble pleasantly, frankly, and gregariously in the public-house. Church had been undeniably thirsty work. All the peasants who knew me came up and shook my hand, or kissed it, adding kind greetings of extreme politeness; and then occurred a curious instance of the force of will-power, even when unassisted by words or personal contact. Obeying the strong, unspoken prayer of the ever-thickening group, I ordered ale for them (a penny a glass), and a sort of half-hearted conviviality took possession of us. The truth was, they would have liked Schnapps, and I knew it; but feeling that they had the whole long, loitering afternoon before them, I desired to lengthen the process of inebriation as far as hospitality permitted.

I saw more of the young girls during that one half-hour than I had done in a previous fortnight. There they were, laughing and talking, standing about the room in their bright clean clothes, their hair bound with wool and soldiers' buttons (for the unmarried ones wear no head-cloths, though the informally

married ones do), and their throats one glitter of pearl-beads, amber, coral and green glass, with an occasional charm or coin hung on. The young men, the lads of the village, had peacock feathers, coloured wool-bobs, and big double dahlias galore in their black felt hats; the square, gaudily-trimmed pocket, by its slantwise band, across the chest, and their kiptar, or a coat of brown woollen, embroidered in orange and the corners finished with tassels, fastened by one button round their necks, the wide, straight sleeves hanging behind.



The Proszę Pani inquired of me after how I had been amused? I said excellently; and repeated certain phrases I had picked up which had occurred with a considerable frequency during the laughing conversation. The Proszę Pani's large countenance flamed a little. "And you are sure that you do not understand one word?" she asked. "Quite sure," I answered, laughing. Whereupon she thanked Jezus Maria impressively, and I was left to my reflections. Now, could these people have been swearing?

Upon the principle—which I have heard voiced by certain reformers—that what is right for a man

must be equally right for a woman, the Ruthenians would appear to be in advance of us ; but perhaps the reformers carry their principle further, and decide that drunkenness is equally wrong and degrading for both.

“What do the men think when they see the young women drunk ?” I asked, as I watched one of the prettiest girls reeling down the road about four o'clock in the afternoon, and suffered strange qualms of wrong-headed Western disgust. “Do they mind ?”

“How should they mind ?” was the answer. “Are they not drunk too ?”

Well, yes ; they certainly were. And I began to wonder why we express so much more horror at the sight of an intoxicated woman than an intoxicated man. Is it because we have been taught, with an amusing lack of reason, that a woman's standards ought to be higher, and that we have a right to expect a greater purity, a finer decency, in her than in him ? I am afraid it is. And when I looked into it, it seemed to me that if the one sight shock us more, it should only be because it is so much less frequent ; for surely what we want is not that a woman should be better than a man, but only that a man should be as good as a woman ?

I'm only asking. Of course, I know what I want ; but really I am not quite clear as to the general desideratum. The Ruthenian who gets drunk at least has the grace to permit a like indulgence to his wife and daughters—which is justice, at any rate ; but then they all go down the hill together.

I took this problem up a pine-hill with me and spent some hours among its mazes. On first coming out in those little sunny grass glades which surprise one now and again within the woodland, on first looking round upon the hot, gay standing flowers, with blue and green dragon-flies, and any choice of butterflies chasing among them, my thought was only one of irritation against the stupid human race that seems so persistently to mismanage and misuse every opportunity, every good gift, and every perfect gift.

It was the season of the myriad unknown beetle, and he was powerful in his masses, and astounding in his variations. He invaded everything. When he is in his zenith, then it is the heyday of the summer as well.

The July moon had been adding nightly to her third quarter, the fruit was red and purple in all the woods, and on the grass-slopes each ant-hill was roofed with the tiny wild strawberry, hiding his one

sweet berry beneath his single scarlet leaf. I let the flowers do what they would with me, then closed my eyes and listened to the silence of the trees. The thousand bird voices of an English wood were not represented there ; the plaining doves were absent from the high fir-tree tops ; and the little wood-mice it has always been my joy to reassure, for whom I have not moved a muscle in a long three-quarters of an hour—even these were not there to offer shy companionship.

A fine Scotch contempt for this gameless region had been difficult to overcome, even though I was cheered by hearing of bears, wolves, and wild-cats in winter ; but after a time, a very short time, I had found the charm of these lonely hills, and liked them just as well for being untenanted. No one can be in a wood, and irritated against, or disappointed in his fellow-man, without thinking of Thoreau's "Walden," if he has read it, and I should suppose the percentage of people who have not read it is becoming inconsiderable. Long before I ever got hold of the book I had dreams of some such life as his pursued under such conditions. I don't want to foist my selfish notions upon Thoreau ; but it seemed to me that there was little use living a life that one didn't

care about for the sake of people who didn't care if one lived it or not. I know that I could be quite satisfied with the companionship of beasts—I have never known one that has disappointed or "gone back on me," and certainly my whole scheme of thought can be a finer thing when I am not enmeshed in sordid calculations for my own good, or, indeed, the good of other people.

That Sunday afternoon I ended only with a half-cross, half-amused feeling that, hang it, there the people were, and one might as well take an interest in them and not sheer off at the first evidences of a depressing lack of sanity; colossal seriousness and lorn, prayerful depression would be of slight avail; I might as well be cheerful; so down I went from my mountain with a vague notion that having recourse to mountains when the worries of this world become overwhelming is a very old game, and some one whose name I have forgotten used to play at it—right away back there in the Old Testament.

"To him who contemplates a trait of natural beauty, no harm or disappointment can come," says Thoreau, with the serenity that I think he learned partly of big trees; and Yes, will say all who try it, at least, if they contemplate long enough.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE old figure—a Sir Walter Scott's character come roaming into the Karpathians—was that of the village schoolmaster, thin, lean, dried, and crinkled, with a sort of greyish bloom on him like a raisin's. He used to walk very fast into the village from his house—some two English miles distant—nearly every fine afternoon.

The interest he took in me was made plain to me by the postmaster, the Proszę Pani, and her husband the good old farmer fisherman, and finally by himself, when he left a French novel at the farmhouse, which I was to have the reading of. Would I be so kind as to return it? He was very fond of French novels, and there were few in the mountains. I took the novel, and the hint as well. In my knapsack there were some unconsidered trifles about which I was not particular, and I sent them along, though with misgivings as to how the atmosphere of the ascetic little cot in which the Dominie lived would suit “Fort

comme la Mort." A breezy Dumas I had no qualms about—no wind that blows could visit the cheeks of "The Three Musketeers" too roughly.

In an idle moment—I should say in an idle day—I plunged into the worn little volume he had sent me. Talk of the *ancien régime*—I don't know how many régimes ago that book must have been written; and how immensely I enjoyed the faint pressed pansy scents that its dear, dead, dry, artificial tales exhaled. There is only one that I remember, "La Dernière Feuille de Rose." It was a charming little story, full of the most exotic sentiment, and the contrast of it to the life I was living was irresistibly piquante. That may perhaps be called the flaw in living alone—you become so keenly conscious of yourself and the things that you are doing, and the effect that occurrences, incidents, aromas, atmospheres have on you, and the tone of your mind.

But, once in a way, it is as well to renounce the purely objective life of every day in favour of this other one. Ordinarily, you are scarcely on speaking terms with your real self; you catch hurried glimpses of it, darting before you, out of reach of touch and realisation, in the groves and alleys of commonplace concerns, among the brush and underwood of crowd-

ing "things to do," and you are barely acquaintances. But live alone for awhile, with no special pressing occupation, and how different it is. You have time to think over things that puzzled you, time to look into the conclusions you have had to jump at, leisure to unravel all the tangles that have pained you, opportunity to disinter the reason of your feelings for this and that. It is very good for man or woman to live alone, calmly and quietly, for a period, of whiles; to let their restlessness, their dissatisfaction, and their cares drop from them, "like the needles shaken from out the gusty pine."

A voice "from the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven" told Matthew Arnold that he "who finds himself loses his misery;" and if you are alone with Nature, it is not unreasonable to hope that you may find yourself. Never can you so absolutely return to Nature with a friend or "with a party"—you must be alone. That burr civilisation, and those other burrs of custom and habit, are bad enough to shake off; and if you have some one with you—some other who is also slave to them—it makes it harder: for that other person represents custom, habit, propriety, and civilised uses to you; and, in fact, you have taken the world's opinion with you into the wilderness.

It is better to imitate Nebuchadnezzar—if you must imitate any one, and some people certainly must—and go out to grass for six weeks at least by yourself. Give your whims a loose rein, follow the promptings of that queer live soul in you which always retains its affinity to simpleness and green-growing things, and be prepared to be thought very odd when you come back.

You will have acquired a calm smile, an ability to suffer fools gladly, which will stand you in good stead. For, though with slight comment, loneliness is permitted to a man, it seems the opportunity for immense chaff to a woman. A public resents fiercely the conclusion that a woman, a fairly light-hearted young woman more especially, is happy alone and from choice. A preference of Nature to human nature, of green trees to people, and of her own reflections to their witless comments, is an oddity, a whimsical eccentricity which may be smiled upon, but which requires solid demonstration and justification before it be accepted and believed in.

“Well, but why *did* you go alone?” people will say, having heard all my high-falutin arguments; and they say it with an air of “Come now, you’ll tell me, I know!” And I gaze at their indulgent, smiling

eyes, and their self-satisfied faces, and I dare not tell them that I do it from sheer bald preference. I couldn't have the heart to wound and shock them so, and I say, what is perhaps also true, that I am driven to it, for nobody cares to come to the places I care to go to.

Does all this seem a long way from "La Dernière Feuille de Rose"—it is not so in reality. Some books are made to read and think about; other books—the larger quantity—are made to read and think about something else all the time. There is a season for each of these two kinds.

I determined, having read the whole queer little volume, and inhaled all the pot-pourri and civet, to take it back myself and have a chat with the school-master. So one afternoon I rode along, slipped my bridle over a gate-post, and with a freshly gathered posy of orchids and the book in my hand, went in.

The poor old soul was lying on a little bed, across his single window; a fire was going, and before his ink-bottle, on the table, was a half-written sheet of manuscript. I came in, gave him my hand, and explained in French the object of my visit. He told me he was suffering from toothache and melancholia, had had no scholars that day, and considered my

arrival in the light of a direct interposition of Providence in his favour.

Without disputing this, I took a seat, and we fell a-talking about one thing and another. Very soon I got him upon legends and tales of the district, and discovered that he had turned many of them into poetry, some of which was published. He asked me to speak French, because he liked to hear it; but, as his own was rather rusty, he apologised for replying in German.

A long intricate biography of the last "hajdamak" (brigand) in the Karpathians followed. This heroic personage had possessed all the finest characteristics, of course, and had he lived to-day, would have been a social reformer, no doubt, and leader of trades unions: immense bravery, a keen sense of justice, brilliant intelligence, supreme powers of endurance, and the more-than-all popular quality of tenderness and chivalry towards women and children. I was told of his exploits, his hiding-holes, his escapes, his capture, and his death,—of course he had been hanged, and the site of his execution was well known to me. As to his treasure, his buried riches, the school-master was very mysterious; certainly these existed; certainly no one had found them, but——! In con-

clusion, he should feel honoured if I would accept a copy of his longest poem, which he would have the pleasure of leaving at the farm very shortly.

I am proud to be able to publish the title of that poem, which reached me in a small yellow paper copy, with a "Dedication and thanksgiving" in the poor Dominie's handwriting on the cover. "Świat księżycowy, Ziemi—losy przysze." Mellifluous, is it not? It was written in 1863, and the Dominie's name, which I now observe for the first time was Daniel Petrycki—pronounced "Petritski"—appeared at the end.

And here is the dedication, in somewhat remarkable German, and with the spelling slightly amended—

*"Eine Gräfin oder Fürstin,
Wunderschön und weise,
Sympl, wie bei den Dichtern Hirtin
Zur Zeit Ihrer Reise
Ins Gebirg' zu Pferd geritten
Und in meine Hütte,
Worin ich an Zahn gelitten,
Kam aus Ihrer Güte,
Einfach und unbefangen,
Ihr Händchen mir reicht
Mit Kuss hab' ich es empfangen
Und, dadurch vielleicht,
Denn kaum Händchen berührte,
Mein schmerz hafter Mund,
Ich mich gleich besser schon fühlte (sic.)
Mein Zahn ward gesund!"*

I spare myself the blushes to which the effort of translation would give rise—I leave these verses in their native simplicity. Of course I am glad that the old gentleman thought me a princess or a countess, and a scientific healer to boot. I shall always be certain I had a reputation in the village as a White Witch.

The poem itself, which, beyond the inspired recognition of a few nouns and adjectives, is a dead letter to me, is written in rhyming couplets. I have read some stanzas aloud to myself—the Polish pronunciation is familiar to me—and they sound well; but, then, Polish always does sound well, and always must, it is so pretty. It reminds me of Spanish and Italian, and yet it has more consonantal force than either. The pronunciation—to any one with a good ear—is very simple. Polish is pronounced as it is written, and each letter has a sound of its own; even the consonants are pronounced by and for themselves, and do not depend upon the vowels that follow them. Thus you can have a word beginning with five consonants quite easily, and you have got to say them all. It is a language of letters and not of syllables.

So far as orthography and pronunciation go, no one can throw a stone at Polish (in any case, *we* can't

aim so much as a crumb at any language upon any score); but it has—there is no doubt that it has—the great fault common to the better known European tongues—it has genders; it recognises sex in a table and a sack of potatoes. This curious habit is one I am unable to explain (no doubt some excuse for it could be found by a person who makes the apology for languages his profession); but its effects, while always disastrous, are peculiarly so to Polish, for the Poles have carried out the thing systematically, and to the bitter end.

Germans, who begin with the same blunder, at least confine it to their substantives and distinguishing pronouns, and let the adjectives go free. A man and a woman may be alike *schön* or *hässlich*. The French have not shown the same commendable self-restraint; they have left the adverbs and verbs alone, but worried at the adjectives. Poles have not even managed this. One sees how difficult it is to stop once you have begun that kind of thing. Heaven only knows what fortitude was exercised by the makers of the German language to pull up just when they did. The French were, naturally, a little weaker, and got a bite on their rope only at a later period. Poles, not out of weakness, but with a curious whole-

sale glee, attacked every part of speech, and even indulged in amazing declensions. They revelled in the subtlest differences of termination; an alphabet of forty-one letters (a book I have makes it fifty), picturesquely enhanced by commas, dots, and twirls, offered the greatest assistance. The ingenuity with which they combine their consonants, the kaleidoscopic feats they can perform with an *sz*, a *cz*, a *dz*, and an *rz*, these alone force a certain breathless admiration from the aspiring student and even the disinterested spectator; but, when you watch their careless and light-hearted feminisation of a verb, your eye is dazzled, and seems to lose its power of focus. In any case, the favourite build of a Polish word is four-masted and three-decked, with quite a heap of rigging; or, perhaps, it will be clearer if I say that it is panoramic. Positively, you cannot see the whole of it at once; you have to get pretty far away, and take a bird's-eye view, and even then I have found several over which I had a difficulty in grasping the beginning, the middle and its surroundings, and the end, all in the same glance. When reading, you have to draw a deep *singing* breath, and swallow it, keep yourself cool and well in hand, and move the eye steadily along the word.

It may well be believed, therefore, that Polish is singularly free from inflection, and does not depend, either for its force or its comprehensibility, upon varying emphases. No greater point of difference could be named between this language and our own. In English the substantive is nearly always marked out in the sentence by carrying the greatest stress; qualifying adjectives or adverbs of quantity will be of second importance, and verbs of less and sometimes of equal, while it is customary to sink, as far as possible, all the lesser parts of speech. (No fuller degree of truth than that common to hypotheses is claimed for the above; but it will be found helpful in so far as it arouses thought, and stimulating in so far as it encourages contradiction and negation.)

What struck me in Polish was, that I could never, in listening to it, have guessed the substantive in the sentence; at least, when I did, I was always wrong. I have tried this experiment with Norse, of which I know nothing, and been nearly always right; but in Polish, the verb marvellously and elaborately conjugated, would sound more striking, and have, as it were, *more body*, than any other part of speech in the sentence, while the merest fragment of an auxiliary would be fraught with sybillant and suggestive beauty.

There are alluring combinations of vowel sounds in some lovely sesquipedal adverb of time which we should dismiss with five letters and dower with no charms. Whence Polish is good to listen to.

A Polish printed page is like nothing but a frog-pond in spring—all tadpoles in various stages of development—some with, some without tails, and lots of queer, unknown, black, wriggly things that make one very nervous.

A Pole whom I spoke to—no less than the postmaster, who had lived all his life in Poland, and was forty years of age if he was a day—gave me his opinion of Polish grammar, an opinion I have often since heard endorsed. He told me of a little experience of his own. He said that last summer he determined to learn Polish (he'd been brought up to speak nothing else), so he went to a man, another Pole, who said he knew the language, and offered him ten guildens a month to come and give him half-an-hour a day; but after six weeks he gave it up in despair—not the teacher, who, no doubt, felt he had got an annuity for life—but the pupil. He has since made up his mind to go down to his grave without knowing his own language. From what I know of Polish, I sympathised with the postmaster. Polish is so rich.

You have choice of three terminations when you venture to decline a pluralised substantive, any of which will do. There are seven cases instead of four or five. Every tense of the verbs has a word of its own, often with no family likeness to the infinitive, and they disdain to let the participle alone, even when they use the auxiliary, *i.e.*, "I am going, He is going"—the participle remains though the auxiliary changes. Not so Polish. The sex of the person who is going affects the very participle!

When one considers these things, one feels that that Pole had a good deal before him if he wished to achieve a faultless diction, and was justified, if he had any organic weakness, in giving up the study.

Upon reflection, I cannot say that I think Polish a more difficult language than English (supposing one had to learn either, and taking no account of one's nationality to begin with). To begin at the beginning, there is no doubt you have in Polish a longer alphabet to learn, but having learnt it, you have learnt to spell at the same time, once and for ever, whereas the English alphabet is *perfectly valueless* except as regards turning up words in a dictionary. It doesn't teach you to spell, and it misleads you very gravely with regard to pronunciation.

I am referring to the English alphabet *as it is taught*. When I have had the pleasure of helping foreigners, especially Poles, with our language, I always begin by telling them that we have sixteen vowel sounds, while they, Poles, have only ten. Not having seen our sixteen given in any spelling or elementary book, I may be allowed to register them here :—

1. *A*, as in *make* ; 2. *ar*, as in *hard* ; 3. *aw*, as in *law* ; 4. *a*, as in *am* ; 5. *ai*, as in *air* ; 6. *o*, as in *go* ; 7. *oo*, as in *boot* ; 8. *o*, as in *on* ; 9. *ou*, as in *hour* ; 10. *oy*, as in *boy* ; 11. *u*, as in *Bute* ; 12. *u*, as in *Mull* ; 13. *i*, as in *high* ; 14. *i*, as in *if* ; 15. *ee*, as in *glee* ; and 16. *e*, as in *left*.

Of course there are various ways of spelling these sixteen distinct vowel sounds ; but it seems as well to mention the sixteen straight off to the ingenuous foreigner, instead of counting five upon our fingers, and telling him that we possess a few diphthongs to which he shall be introduced later.

He cannot then say quite so much about the whimsical irresponsibilities of our pronunciation, though he can still say a good deal. Ruthenian seemed to me easier to learn than Polish. I suppose that was because I heard it so much more frequently ;

in point of fact, I very rarely heard any Polish at all, which was a disappointment to me. Ruthenian, which is written with the Russian letters instead of the Latin, appeared to be a less refined, less subtle language than Polish, though fairly musical too. I never heard any Great Russian (or "Russian," as we call it), although I was so near the frontier.

If I had stayed months in Mikuliczyn (pronounced Mikulichin) I don't believe I should have learnt very much Ruthenian, because people were only too delighted to rub up their German at my expense, and I very rarely got a chance of hearing them speak anything else. I used to ask the Proszę Pani the names of things, and said them after her, but this sent her into apoplectic fits of laughter which made me fear for her health.

CHAPTER X.



THE arrangements for proceeding further seemed somehow to hang fire. I knew Mikuliczyn, and the roads, and hills, and river-currents of the neighbourhood, already very well. I was in a rude and savage state of health, firm and brown, having said good-bye to every trace of civilised delicacy of appearance;—it was only my keen dislike of any sort of change that prevented my ordering horses and picking out a village with an attractive name upon my magnificent Austrian ordnance map. There was a tendency in the conditions at the farm to make one fat, lazy, and well-liking. I was the sport of a woman with a considerable genius for cookery, and was being dreadfully over-fed on four and sometimes five meals a day.

Getting up at five, when you are sure some one else was up at half-past four, is no hardship; and finding a glass of half coffee and half thick boiled cream, with buttered slices of *semmel*, fine white

milk bread, waiting for you whenever you cared to shout across the yard, was luxury. At ten there was blackbread and *krimsen* (a peculiar crumbling, half-sour cheese); at 12.30, a four-course dinner, with *café noir* to follow; between four and five, another glass of coffee and cream, accompanied by bread and butter, and followed by strawberries and sour cream; at 9.30, *kolesha* (the maize porridge), and the tureen of sour milk, preceded excellent rissoles or trout *marinée* (that was something for a connoisseur), and these only heralded the advent of tea, of which one was supposed to drink an indefinite number of glasses.

Positively, I am shocked when I see these statistics on paper. Even in England, in London, the surplusage of food which it is thought necessary to face daily is not so very much in excess of this. No wonder I had the appearance of a cocoa advertisement.

Taking Polish cookery as a whole, I would say that it is remarkably varied and savoury. They appeared to go in largely for flavours. Though reminiscent of the French *cuisine*, it was cleaner, and not so greasy and thick-saucy; more refined than German, and, very naturally, lengths ahead of the average in England. Delightful compôtes of fruit, prepared sourly,

were among the specialities. Soups, sour and sweet, hot or cold, thick or thin, that outdid Scotland's best (who ever sees decent soup in England?—Aroint thee, O ox-tail and Julienne—I have no characters to give ye!) The delicacies at Mikuliczyn were after all only a mild foretaste of what I was to find when I got back to Kolomyja; but, before that, the “healthy monotony” previously referred to had to be dealt with and lived through.

I carried away with me a good many of the Proszę Pani's choicest recipes—in my head only; towards the last she was in the habit of calling me to witness the compounding of anything out of the common complicated and *recherché*. Also, I graduated in cold-water washing as regards clothes, a science I had known nothing of until I went to school in the current of the Prut; and I admit that I copied this plan from the painter, who was very methodical. Carrying a bundle of woollens, some handkerchiefs, and a piece of the very uninviting village soap, I used to go down to a convenient boulder in the stream about every week, and kneeling upon it, rubbed my soap on the garments, and hammered them with a flat-stone until clean; then the Prut rushed through them, bulging out my pink shirts, which I held by the collar,

and giving me a very fair idea of how I should look drowning. All afternoon, a fantastic row flaunted candidly upon the fence. I said nothing about my going away until the day before I intended starting: discussion and "talking things over" are peculiarly uncongenial to me. Finally, I did break it to the *Proszę Pani* one morning, and to the coffee-party in the afternoon. To give the naked truth, the *Proszę Pani* guessed it. I had been asking her if she would sell me the queerly-formed porraceous glass bottle in which she was wont to keep the splendid Galician paraffine. She was quite inclined to; but, when she told me its history, and gave me to understand that it was the sole remaining "piece" of that manufactured in the glass-blowing factory her husband had managed on the Prut's bank—the sole one, save for the big blue glass basin—then my dormant conscience awoke within me, and I refused to deprive her of it at any hazard. At the time, this renouncement cost me an immense moral effort, of a sort I am not well used to making; but later, in circumstances presently to be described, I used to ask myself faintly what on earth I could have done with that huge, preposterous, pale-green bottle added to my impedimenta?

The mention of the glass-factory rather cleared up

the question as to how they had earned their money, these comfortable retired people; for the goodman had explained proudly that his fields and garden and house were all his own, and that such and such eccentricities of construction were the result of his overweeningly confident amateur architecture.

On my second last night a circus appeared in the precincts of the village, and a thin, unduly agile, large-eyed child started up with the suddenness of a Corsican twin in my room, and showered leaflets upon which statements as to the pleasure and satisfaction in the performance expressed by the crowned heads of Europe were modestly set forth. I decided to go: if I had time, and some one else would be answerable for my support, I would do little else save go to circuses.

The occasion proved very interesting. All the village and large parts of several other villages were going. The postmaster hoped diffidently that he should be permitted the felicity of introducing to me the lady—the third lady—he had honoured with his choice.

I had no doubt heard of the ill-fortune that had attended his amours? Every one was familiar with the distressing details of their several elopements,

As it chanced, I had not heard. The consumptive lodger, as a stranger, did not know, and the painter was not a gossip.

The postmaster proceeded to give me the details minutely, and made elaborate efforts, not always perfectly successful, to disentangle the doings of the first and second ladies, for the histories became, in spite of his solicitude, inextricably confused. I had never tried to keep them separate. I couldn't, because the postmaster considered it safer not to mention names, and, owing to these scruples, I had blended the two "she's" from the first. But that didn't matter in the least. I lumped them both together, and declared their various actions to have been heinous, their conduct dishonourable in the extreme, and a disgrace to the name of woman; and these round terms induced a subdued sparkle in the postmaster's manner which nothing save chess—and winning chess—had previously seemed able to illumine.

It was a fine dark dusk when we repaired, individually, towards the canvas enclosure of the circus, which was set up, very properly, in the middle of the village.

I heard the consumptive lodger's hollow "hoosh-hoosh" of a cough behind me in the road, and he and

the painter came up just as I was paying my sevenpence to the glittering-eyed Jew boy who took the money for the best seat in the house—which proved to be a chair in the innermost circle, within easy reach of the horses' hoofs. As I was passing in I felt a hand at my girdle, on my watch chain or knife-handle; I had just time to note that it was the Jewish lad's, when a smothered word behind me, and the ringing sound of a "clout" on the side of his head, told me that the painter had protested against this impertinence. I explained in vain that the fellow had acted from the reasonless curiosity of his nation, and had not meant to steal. To the painter it was a "Frechheit," and he expressed deep satisfaction at having given him "what for." Then we went in.

The circus was a good one—the horses well fed, the children sharp, clever, and uncowed. But Mikuliczyn as assembled was more interesting by far. The Jewish womanhood was marvellous in summer-hats and thin pale-coloured dresses. A great many people I had never seen before were present. The naphtha lamps, flaring and sputtering weirdly, hung from posts. There was the postmaster, a brilliant light flickering upon his blue satin tie, paying courteous, if

angular, attentions to the third lady—a person of uncertain age. On the three-kreutzer portion of the ground were groups of delighted peasants in their sheepskins; behind them, against the black of the night, a row of heads was visible, with eager faces, white from the strain of hanging on to nothing at all. Near the ground, whispers and quick breaths were audible at certain rents and holes in the canvas. There was not a creature in Mikuliczyn, unless bedridden, who did not see the circus that night; and save for the forcible ejection of certain little lads for whose entrance I had paid, it was a successful and orderly performance.

I took my silent farewell of the villagers, just nodding to the handsome peasant who had assisted me, on my arrival, with that saddling business. He lived so far off among the mountains that I had never set eyes on him all the time of my stay. Then, it being all over about ten, we dispersed, and I went for a walk outside the village, as my custom was, before bedtime.

A white-faced moon had got up and flooded the valley with a broad radiance, "filling the gutters in front of the houses with silver, to vex the greedy Jews," if one may quote the only novelist who has

written, and so grandly, of this country. Before me, their long ridiculous shadows mingling farcically upon the white road, went the indefatigable postmaster and his third lady. My laugh was smothered discreetly as I stopped at my own gate, and turned a vague blessing loose upon the night.

CHAPTER XI.

YES, it seemed the Proszę Pani had scented my intention of departing when I questioned her about the big green bottle. She wasted no time in regrets. I had shown her how to make a (to her) new and odd sort of pastry, I had cut and fitted upon Mathilde a pattern bodice in print of my own providing, I had given the old man three dozen trout flies. Having got this, and nothing more out of me, the excellent woman made up my bill—she did not even know my name to put at the top—and set herself to the cooking of an absolutely annihilating last dinner. All the horses in the village were known to me by that time. I think I had ridden everything with four feet, and the peasants had enjoyed hiring them out, for they knew I had a prejudice against taking a limping beast ten miles with only one shoe and a half to his feet, and would usually stop to get it righted at the blacksmith's in the village.

It only remained to make a choice of horses and a

man to take me on to Kosmacz, and I settled on the peasant Jasio, whose soul was in wood-carving, and whose hut I had visited. He was poor, and the Prut had an irresponsible way of leaving its bed on the slightest provocation and making a short cut to the weir by way of his garden, hen-house, and hut—all of which it swept through and cleansed of their contents. Jasio signed on for a gulden a day for each horse, and fifty kreutzers for himself—making a total of five shillings. I settled that he was to be in the farmyard at four next morning, whither a Jew was to bring the two best beasts in the village, to whose shoeing I had looked, and whose whimsicalities I knew.

This promised beautifully, and a final game of chess was going on at night, in the big keeping-room, when some gravel rattled on the window and I ran out to see what was afoot. In the gloom of the cart-shed the shamefaced Jasio was standing, turning his big black hat between his nervous hands. "Please, he was sorry, but he could not go," was what I immediately made out; and then, the chess party having hastened to the spot, a long tale was embarked on, which, summed up, amounted to this, that he was frightened of coming back through a

certain wood alone because there were known to be bears in it.

I was disgusted with the cowardly wretch, and he came in for some whole-souled chaff from the chess party, whose courage there had been no experience to prove or call in question. Finally, it was arranged that, if Jasio came up to time, he would be able on his return journey to reach a little village called Polonica (Polonitsa) before evening, spend the night there, and proceed cheerfully through the bear-wood by sunlight.

The consumptive lodger was sure he should be up to see me go in the morning, and went to bed on the top of this courteous promise; to the postmaster I said good-bye, and to the painter nothing, for he had always been up before me, and away off to his work. Owing to my happy foresight in ordering the horses at four, I was rejoiced to see them appear a little before six, saddle-less of course, and attended by their helpless Jew master. Him I despatched to find one saddle, and another man was sent off to find, possibly to wake, feed, wash, and dress the recreant Jasio. At length he came, bringing the pretty, double, home-woven saddle bags, which are used on and off the horses to transport meal, potatoes, and packages of all sorts,

I saw the luggage hung on the saddle horse, and attended to the weighting of it myself. On one side it had my leather knapsack, on the other my green hunting sack; in the middle my skirt was placed, and tied to the wood-work in front my sandals and my kiptar—the sheepskin jacket. The tartan cloak was bound with a rope on the second horse for me to ride, and both of them had on my bridles, one wearing the snaffle, the other the curb.

In the sack was half a loaf of black bread, two untouched German sausages, Salamis which I had had with me all the time, a jar full of the crumbly Krimscn cheese, and a *small piece of white bacon fat enclosed in a thin crust of cayenne pepper*. This last strange comestible was pressed on me by the painter, and I would have eaten it sooner than hurt his feelings by refusing.

He was sure we should meet again. He usually made the tour of the more interesting villages, Kosmacz being one of them (he had given me most valuable statistics with regard to obtaining shelter); and when his big picture was finished he should be upon the road. This big picture was a very fine thing: a figure subject painted *en plein air*—five women in their red and white stooping to the

weeds in a brilliant field of turnips and cabbages, a man upright scratching himself, and the Proszę Pani under her umbrella looking on and scolding them all. It was remarkably strong in conception, and the conditions were never long to wait for:—only it had to have the noonday glare upon it, the glistening, dripping skin of the peasants, and the women's hair escaped in wet streaks from their headkerchiefs.

He had turned himself a deep chestnut colour sitting unprotected on the ground working at this, his legs bare to the knee, and his arms from the top, so that he was incapacitated three days with sunburn in his muscles—a very painful thing indeed, as I knew well, from having had it so violently across my shoulders, that I could not bathe or take off my shirt for two or three days, having no one to help me.

Wishing him good luck with his picture, I got away. The little Iwan followed with tears in his eyes, a forlorn white figure upon the green side-way of the road; he had kissed my hands over and over again, and then, as I was riding, my feet, whether out of gratitude for the daily dinner I had secured to him in the Pani's kitchen, or because he was really sorry to see the last of me, I don't know.



He was a delicate little chap, and though I smiled and said "next year" to him, I cannot expect that he will have come through the snows of a thirteenth winter. My last sight of him was somewhere on the path on the first sparsely-treed hill; till then he had drifted mournfully in the rear.

"First through the wood, second through the water," was the motto for that journey, only that Jasio had an unconquerable dislike to going through the water. I would mount my horse, if I was walking, and drive or pull the other horse across by its bridle, if the stream were swift enough to make it nervous. Otherwise it came along at its own time and in its own way.

I implored Jasio to ride it over, and so make the fordings dryshod, if he was so particular about his feet. As to mine, unless I remembered to stick them out both in front of me, the water washed over them very pleasantly; but then mine were bare, and he, ridiculous creature, had his sandals on and a scrupulously white pair of trousers.

What a wonderful day it was. In the wood the little orange-spotted newts I caught seemed panting with the heat; they were *so* nervous and *so* startled, that they could not run away like lizards, and of course

not being so oily smooth, things stuck to their moist skin. One I terrified into sitting on the immense wreath of stag's-horn moss I had trailing on my shoulders for quite a long time, till when we were about crossing a field I knew the sun would be too much for him, and let him go. The young toads that I caught had lovely little dull red specks on their brown skins and reddish feet; some were only the size of my thumb nail. At one period there were so many that I had to go before the horses picking them up and putting them aside. "The poor snail my chance foot spurned," which Browning makes interesting, was nothing to them. Where the river came deep and green past a sheer rock, I decided to bathe, so went some twenty minutes past the place, then called a halt, and told the peasant to wait. It was about nine o'clock, and the water exquisite. I was fearfully hungry after my swim, and since the wood was still so moist, the provisions had to be unpacked and spread on the horse's back, as the one dry place for them.

Poor patient dears, both got crusts. Jasio had a forbidding-looking lump of maize porridge and some rancid butter in a wooden box; and not long after, coming to a lonely hut, we brought up, and I saw

him swallow a third of a big wooden jug full of their terrible water. I asked for milk. The woman had none sour; but after apologising, she heated some fresh to a minute within boiling point, and fetched it me. As it was ninety in the shade—at a guess—I could have desired something else; but it was a case of “choosing rather that things should happen as they do,” and I drank it. Then we got under weigh, and had the next two hours in the open, with a good deal of rivering. I conceived the idea of plaiting Jasio two grass garters with which



he could bind up those precious trousers, and the absurd fellow then became a little easier in his mind about the water. The path all the way was only sufficiently trodden for one to know it *was* a path, and nothing wheeled could have traversed it.

About three o'clock we came upon the top of the wooded hill where the bears were supposed to be. Certainly it was lonely; we never met a soul; but I could not imagine a brown bear coming towards me from among the trees. Once we heard something. Jasio was in front walking, and pulling up the "sumpter horse" (I remember that fascinating word in "Robin Hood," and never dreamed I should have a chance of using it), he stopped dead. I was riding the second horse, and soon came up with him.

He proceeded to tell me something at great length, which I did not understand. I shook my head, and he said "bear" in German. I laughed. It seemed preposterous, but to comfort him I fired my revolver twice, which, I decided, would either incline the bear to produce himself immediately—bears are said to be curious—or frighten him away. The snap of a little nickel-plated revolver in these great woods had a very quaint effect. I reloaded the two chambers as we went on, Jasio being beside me.

At five I felt tired; the milky way of living in Mikuliczyn had evidently not been so hardening as I supposed. We took three-quarters of an hour beneath some shady firs on a hilltop, and I slept the time out upon their brown needle-carpet. One of the

horses woke me by nosing at my arm in a friendly fashion. I sprang up, slipped the bit into his mouth, and we proceeded.

About six I came on another little river, so took a dip, and felt fresh as might be. At seven we descended the stoniest of rolling stony hills, and came into Kosmacz about half-past the hour.

Kosmacz was spread out upon a plateau, and surrounded by a circle of low hills—in fact, the open-tart pattern. It was a nice enough situation, and its villagers soon assembled to ask my opinion about it, which I gave in the one word *Dobry*, meaning good. They laughed, looked at one another, and went off, probably feeling that I was an idiot—an opinion that several people might be willing to share with them, especially after reading this unadventurous record of a lonely holiday.

Idiot or no, I have an enviable luck: positively, as I sat on a peasant's palings eating red currants from the branches his wife broke off and brought me, a young man appeared, in the most faultless linens and the nattiest of kiptars, and taking off his fine black felt and bowing like a courtier, he intimated that the Priest's—the Pope's—house was vacant just then, its owner being gone upon a journey.

That house might be mine to the length of my pleasure. I was in that good-humoured condition that a certain amount of bodily fatigue induces—a spiky paling was good enough for me, and I “didn’t seem ter kyare;” but I roused myself to cross the roadway with the smart young man, and enter, by the back door, a onc-storeyed, white, eight-roomed house. It was mine, and at no rental! For there was no means, of course, of remunerating its owner. I remembered a saying of the painter’s, “When nothing is to be had for money, one must just condescend to beg.” Here was a case in point. There was not a corner to let in the village, but there was a whole house I could have for nothing. I determined to leave a suitable offering in the poor-box or the plate, hoping that might after all be a roundabout way into the Pope’s pocket. The plan of the house was a front and back hall, with the rooms arranged three deep on each side. There was a gooseberry garden in front, a lettuce bed on the right, a farmyard at the back, and an oatfield on the left.

The first room contained, item, one table; one bed, with no mattress or fittings; one sofa, already apparently with two feet in the grave, for its forelegs were gone, and the seat took an interesting slant—all very well if you have spinal complaint, but likely to

give it you if you haven't; one crucifix, and one heavily tinselled, consistently tarnished priest's robe hanging against the wall. This apartment did not woo me very ardently.

In the next was a dilapidated wardrobe with books, and two beds both with the big, rough blankets, patterned in coloured diamonds, upon them—not attractive: I walked drearily through to the third.

This the last had three windows, which looked upon the garden, and I concluded at once that I would house myself there, throwing down what baggage I had on my shoulder in a castorless arm-chair of the "this suite greatly reduced" order. A settee against the wall, covered in faded rosed-over tapestry, upon which the moths were busy, and an *oval, rosewood what-not!* The character of an inventory, which the last few paragraphs have assumed, culminates here: an *oval, rosewood what-not*—I repeat the phrase, because I love this suggestive terminology. Let none confess that he does not recognise a table under the title of "what-not," for that would be to say he has never gone through the catalogue of a furnishing warehouse; and there is much matter worthy of remembrance in such.

Of the few piquant things that encourage one to

go on living, contrast is not the least noteworthy. How had that table come there? Where had it lived before, what were its antecedents, and had it in the faintest degree reconciled itself to its surroundings? How had it borne its separation from that near and dear relative, the "occasional" table? Did it regret the sympathetic companionship of the "chiffonier," the music-rack—I mean the "Canterbury!"—Why Canterbury?—and the fender-stool? For I knew that what-not belonged to the type of room in which a fender-stool, worked in black, grey, and white beads upon a red wool ground, is a prominent feature. As to the uses of a what-not, need one ask? It bears usually a waxen trophy under a glass shade, and various works, such as a floral birthday book and "Gems from Byron" (with Don Juan left out). In such a room, where fretwork brackets and crystal dangly things beam from every wall, where weak, woolly water-colours, and Landseer's dogs (in crayons) gleam from large margins of white, was that what-not intended to reside, and—but I had no time for reflections. I slung a hunting-sack on to this table, and unpacked a few needments; I drank some tea that the elegant Wasyl brought round from the kitchen, on the other side of the house, and I directed him where to spread the three

sweet-smelling armfuls of hay upon which I was going to sleep. Then something whispered to me of supper!

The kitchen was the place to go to. I made my way there. In the uncertain dusk, I could not see plainly, but there seemed to be a large number of people in the Pope's kitchen, and some one among them with the usual distressing cough, of course, tearing savagely at what I knew must be a bleeding lung.

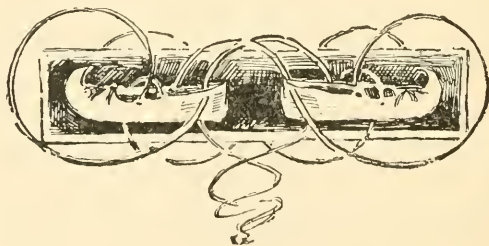
Wasy's father was the beadle, or whatever they call it—the sacristan; and Wasy's mother was the Pope's cook. To her I turned in my need, and instinct brought me opposite to an immense potful of potatoes, steaming and perfectly cooked, by the stove. I said I would have some, and some sour milk, and then I thought I'd look round the garden till they came.

An evil genius led my feet in the direction of the Pope's salad bed—lettuce and young onions, with a fringe of beetroot, grew there. I looked on for some time, and admired the perfection of the things even while my hand wandered towards the knife at my side. They were an excellent variety of lettuce, and they had been splendidly thinned, so that each had a chance of perfecting its growth. In a few days they would shoot up and go to seed. What a pity; and the Pope wasn't back! Visions of a salad, with

thick sour cream instead of oil, overcame my honesty, such as it is. I unshipped my dagger in a second, and cut the milky stems of some of the tightest, closest lettuces, consoling myself with the thought that I shouldn't have been able to ask for them, and quite certainly no one would grudge them to me. So all the days I was in Kosmacz, a diet of maize or potatoes, occasional eggs and sour milk, was relieved with salads which I gloried in concocting, and for which no one ever called me to account.

Hay is excellent sleeping, though hot. I tried to pretend I didn't mind the fleas so long as there was nothing "worse," but two million flea-bites hurt more and make you feel iller than all the onslaughts of the something worser, though these be the more disgusting.

In the morning, all that was left of me called the attractive Wasyl, and we went off to order new postoli of a man who was said to live down by the river-side.



CHAPTER XII.



DURING the day I tried to write and read in my room, but the way in which the peasants kept wandering in and sitting down, and having to be offered cigarettes, made study or amusement alike impossible. They had no idea of knocking at a door, or waiting for an invitation to be seated, and as I was not paying for my room, I did not see any way to keep them out.

On the whole, too, they were very *naif* and funny. Wasy I soon saw to be the village beauty *par excellence*. He was a slim, bent, lanky young man of peculiarly idle build, dressed in top boots, preternaturally unsullied linens, and a short sheepskin laid round his shoulders, his arms being rarely through the sleeve-holes.

From four in the morning till ten at night that

young man did nothing but loll round and chat with anybody who had the time to waste ; his sole occupation beyond this was to observe carefully the atmospheric conditions, and either slip his arms into

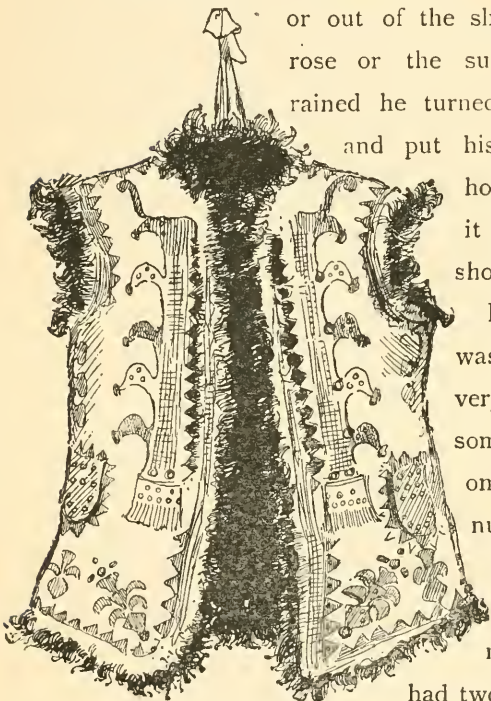
or out of the sheepskin as the wind rose or the sun shone. When it rained he turned the furry side out,

and put his arms through the holes, of course ; when it faired, he took it off, shook, and reversed it.

His pretty sister Ulusia was married to a bland, very bright-looking, handsome fellow, Andryj (the only approaching pronunciation of that would be Andreyee, the accent being on the middle syllable). They

had two or three neat, yellow-

headed little children since their marriage. A young man is not supposed to marry before he has served his three years, but Andryj had informally wedded his Ulusia, and their eldest child, the



little Anna, lived where it had ever lived, with its grandmother.

Andryj had learnt German very thoroughly, which few of the peasants have either the heart or the head to do when they're in barracks, and he was, of course, very useful to me in all sorts of ways.

Feeling his superiority to the others, he "called" very often, and brought his friends, his brother, his wife, and other relatives whose exact connection I lost sight of. They sat round admiringly in the evening, while he reeled off endless stories of his soldier days in Vienna. Into the ridiculous little white teapot, from which I had had a couple of glasses of tea, would be poured, time after time, more hot water, and after being allowed two minutes during which to acquaint itself with the flaccid tea-leaves, it would come out a fading primrose shade, and be handed about around the circle.

No one in the room could understand Andryj's German, save, of course, myself. I sat on the tapestry-covered settee, knocking the ash off my cigarette upon the lean geranium's weak stems; Ulusia leaned on the end of it, smoking too, and examining the very ordinary feather-stitching on my pink shirt (a garment she at once preferred to her

own beautiful white gowns with the red, green, and orange stitchery). Andryj took the arm of the arm-chair in a commanding position, and when he laughed at his own jokes, which he invariably did, the two castorless legs knocked rather weirdly upon the hollow-sounding wooden floor; if it was dusk, Ulusia would turn her head in the direction of the empty rooms, and wonder, probably, if the old Pope had returned of a sudden, and was going to interrupt the oddly assorted party.

Whenever Andryj came to a good bit he would translate it rapidly into Ruthenian for Wasyl's benefit, and Wasyl, leaning between the two front windows, his elegantly-booted feet crossed in front of him, would bend his curious concave body—it reminded me oddly of half a peapod, he was so very curved and thin—in long jarring laughs.

From the far side of the house came the sound of a measured tramp, tramp upon another wooden floor, and I knew very well it was the tall, grey-haired sacristan, whom I met sometimes if I went through to the kitchen. Always the same erect melancholy figure—always the same strange tragic eyes. He would have the little Anna, the eight-year-old Anna, whose cough was tearing her in pieces, in his strong

old arms, trying vainly to soothe her fretting. Often in the middle of the night I was wakened by the sound of the even, patient footsteps, and I knew that she had just had a terrible fit of coughing, that the blood had poured out upon her little night-dress, and that the good old grandfather had come to her bedside with the dim, smelling little oil-lamp, and hushed her, and taken her up, and was going to walk about till she was comforted, if not at ease—for there was to be no ease for her any more.

Sometimes for a whole hour the old man walked up and down that room, but there are some sounds by which one does not mind being held awake.

None of the others seemed to notice those occasional fits of coughing and the sound of the heavy boots that broke in upon our entertainment. Andryj would continue his not very reputable stories of how he spent his evenings in barracks making false coins out of soldiers' buttons—he was very good at brass engraving, which is a great Huculy (Hutzuli) art—and passed them upon chance acquaintances in the street as far from a gas-lamp as he could get. These and other adventures of an even more dishonest and abandoned nature he retailed with great talent, his mild blue eyes and fresh boyish face gleaming with fun and

merriment as he did so, and little conscious that stern moralists might have taken exception to his ongoings. Ulusia laughed too, showing her pretty teeth, and Wasyl rocked to and fro against the wall in his discordant, half-controlled boy's guffaws. As for myself, I didn't mind what they talked about or how long they laughed, for it was so odd to me—all of it; and I was not certain if I were in this world, or some one of all the others that I like to dream of.

So we spent our evening, till I said I was tired, and they got up to take their last cigarettes; Wasyl ruffled up the hay on the floor—a very coarse clean linen sheet had been laid on it because at first it had pricked me so—then they kissed my hand and made their beautiful bows, and walked out of the room, three figures most marvellously charming to look upon.

While in Kosmacz, I went to see the churches; there were two. It was a Sunday when Wasyl asked me if I wouldn't like to come and hear him sing—he was a tenor chanter in the church; and I decidedly thought I would. When he came for me I wasn't quite ready; I was thinking of putting on a tie (I trust this sign of grace in me may be appreciated); I believed I had a wisp of a tie somewhere,

and it had got to be hunted out, so I said I would follow.

The tie found, and distrustfully surveyed, and smoothed, and adjusted, I added a marigold for my button-hole, and felt that everything that could be done towards a Sunday toilet had been done. Strong in the consciousness of excellent intentions, I started off. That church, of the usual square cross pattern, with little glittering cupolas of wood and gilding in the middle, stood upon a slight eminence, and the road wound up to it: it was *surrounded* by some hundreds of brilliantly dressed peasants, all talking and posing in the most picturesque groups. At first I just feasted my eyes upon them as though they'd been a bed of annuals; but when it came to going up among them I felt vaguely in my eight pockets for a rag of courage, and, failing that, for the merest remnant of "cheek"—and found nothing. Positively, it could not be done. Would any humble cockchafer, all cased in dull and dusty browns, care to alight upon a patch of poppies white and red?

What costumes, what colours, what appearances, what groups, what poses, what figures, what heads! Though with no one to speak to, I felt myself both exclamatory and ecstatic—inside; it was quite uncom-

fortable! But I had approached a bit, and they had seen me, and after that it didn't matter what bell rang, what antimacassar the Pope wore, or what tenor Gregorians were warbled by the curled and dazzling Wasyl.

They moved slowly towards me, first single flowers, then, slowly still, but in a fearful mass, the whole poppy-bed. It was a terrible sort of moment, but it had the one possible effect. As they came on down the grass hill, gazing, and too surprised to make many comments, I tipped my Tam o' Shanter up at one side—it was tipped up before—flung my coat back from a very clean silk shirt and the tie, tucked my fingers into my belt, and pushing the little wicket open, came coolly up the hill. They made a pathway for me, and I ran the gauntlet of their eyes, while my skirt, flapping against the back of my knee, made me think of a poor frightened doggie's drooped tail.

I headed for an angle of the building, and thought I'd get round a corner, lean up against a wall, and gasp for a few moments, for I was too alarmed to walk into the church. I got round the corner, only to come upon about thirty young men; the other poppies had been principally women. They took less notice of me. I began to feel better. It was very

interesting to notice the differences in their sandals or their boots, proving that they came from different villages, for each village has and retains its own patterns for postoli and for kiptars. In Kosmacz my sheepskin and my sandals looked quite strange, and the peasants had known at once, on my arrival, that I came from Mikuliczyn.

A few of the trousers and linen blouses were stitched only in black, which was to me new, and looked very distinguished and refined. Some men wore red woollen trousers—a beautiful deep crimson red—others, black woollen. Nearly all had flowers in their hats, usually that chess-board patterned magenta-and-white double dahlia, the earwig variety.

At the long last they went into church. I did not. I listened outside for a while, and then, feeling I had got rid of the whole village, I went for a walk, determining to come back and “see the kirk skale,” as we say in Scotland.

The hay, which in Mikuliczyn had been cut and stacked before I left, was still untouched in Kosmacz, so I found all the flowers again—the purply-pink grasses spilled their seeds as I passed them, only with the wind of my going. Down near the river I came upon a little water-mill. It was, of course

Sabbath silent, but a web of brown blanket cloth was wound upon it ; and when I passed next day, a peasant, smoking his brass pipe, was watching it go round and round, "wauking" the cloth, and shrinking the loose weft closer and thicker. It was the kind of cloth that lasts easily three lifetimes, and would, I fancy, never wear out, but fall in pieces some day, like the wonderful one-hoss shay.

When I got back to the church the people had already left it. They were gathered in the road listening to the rasping proclamations of a person called the "Gemeindeschreiber" (Andryj gave me this information). The Gemeindeschreiber's wife was a large lady in a blue dress, who put me in my right place, and, indeed, nearly reduced me to ashes with a single passing glance, which told me, to my sorrow, that I had found civilisation again. A good deal of the sunshine went out of the day for me when I thought of her.

From a post of observation among the Pope's goose-berry bushes, all the men and maidens of the village were again to see, when a fight sprang up between some of the young fellows. Wasyl, who was in the garden with the little Anna in his arms, came running down the path to give her a sight of it. His was a not

unkindly heart, and he more than once tried, in his rough way, to amuse the poor little soul. This time it ended disastrously in a violent fit of coughing, and he had to take her back to the house, and leave her to the healing of the old grandfather's tendernesses.

I had got my new sandals, and was wearing them (I didn't go barefoot on Sunday) in the afternoon. Later, I encouraged Andryj to make inquiries about horses for the morrow, if it proved fine. He had better notions of promptitude than seemed common, and the same evening brought with him a big peasant called Hrycio—more usually Hryc (Hryts about gives the pronunciation)—who knew three different mountain ways to Żabie (I have tried to spell the pronunciation of that in English and *cannot*, but the *Z* is pronounced soft, like the *j* in the French words *jour* and *jardin*) as well as his own hat. Also he had two good horses. This seemed favourable to my chance of arriving, and I closed with him at much the same terms as I had paid Jasio. I was introducing him to my bridles, out in some stable at the back, when I heard voices in the yard, and the painter walked in.

He presented a really wonderful appearance. A straw hat, the shape of a soup-basin, was on the

back of his head ; his shirt sleeves were rolled to the shoulders and his trousers pushed above the knee and bound with grasses, for stream fording. On his back his marvellous baggage was strapped. The science with which it was put together amazed me— also one or two of the items that composed it. I picked up a translation of Herbert Spencer's "First Principles," and Zola's "Germinal," which fell out as he swung it to the ground. His canvases, taken off the stretchers, were heedlessly rolled and sticking together ; a pair of boots and his coat were tied with pieces of cotton string to the whole packery, and a rug bundle apparently contained his "wardrobe" (I believe this is the phrase).

As he leaned against a barn door smoking, I pointed to Hrycio and remarked that I was going on next day. Just then Andryj came up and offered him lodging for the night, and it seemed they were old acquaintances. Andryj had a very great deal to say (in Ruthenian) about me, but I forbore to listen to the gist of his remarks ; and a moment after, Wasyl called me in to supper. I invited every one in. There was always enough Kolesha and milk for a small middle-class family, and it seemed better fun to share it. Before the last cigarette-end was tossed

into the garden, the painter had decided to come on to Żabie next day, more particularly as I offered him a horse for his baggage, and "22 kilos." was not a light load with which to chamois across the high mountains.

The party amused itself by endeavouring to alarm me about the journey, its length, its hardships, and so on. The way was, it seemed, absolutely *set* with bears, otherwise lonely to the heart's desire. With the happy confidence of complete ignorance, I smiled upon them, and they bid me good-night, with all their affectionate civility, a little before ten o'clock, for we had to be up by four next morning.

CHAPTER XIII.



THE horses were loaded, standing in the yard near the well ; the painter and Andryj were talking together with Ruthenian enthusiasm and vivacity ; Ulusia was knitting at the orange and red border of a coarse sock—the kind they wear inside the sandals—and Wasyl I had left, draped rather in the manner of a limp “art-curtain,” against the lintel of the door, when I went into the kitchen to pay the modest sum that his old mother diffidently required of me.

She was not to be seen : the only person in the kitchen was little Anna, in a clean white linen gown, seated in the folds of a blanket upon the kitchen table ; obviously just as her grandfather had put her down. A sparsely-feathered chicken was making a hurried meal from the maize that was drying in the oven—already its crop was most indecently distended—but the child took no notice of it. She sat looking apathetically at a basin of milk, with a big wooden

spoon in it. Just then a boy ran in, and gave her a sort of bread-thing, twisted and made in a hollow ring. She tried forlornly once or twice, but could not break it.

With some small difficulty I cracked it up, dropped it in the warm milk, and snowed some sugar over it, which was for her a new idea. What a mournful little smile I got, how tiredly she nodded the white-fair, weary head!

Thinking not a little of the tragic misery of this fading life, I went out to the yard, said good-bye to the good grandmother—the old man was not about for some reason—and walked away beside my horse. There was an insolence in my own well-being, and my health was a discomfort and a reproach to me.

It was not quite six when we started. Wasyl took off his hat with a native grace that was quite foreign, and kissed my hand like a Charles Surface; Andryj shouted to me to “write something nice about him;” and Ulusia told me to “come back—to come back to Kosmacz!” The cortège consisted of the painter, Hryc, his pretty daughter Para, who, bare-foot, with a bit of embroidery under her arm, and a wooden pipe in her hand, on which she blew

snatches of tunes from time to time, came many miles of the way from sheer light-hearted inclination, and proved a very pleasant specimen of Ruthenian girlhood; and an old man whose name I did not gather, but who addressed me as Princess with extreme deference.

From the first, I must say that I suspected the horses of being rather weedy brutes, and refused to ride mine, so as to save him as much as possible. The way led, as usual, in and out of a river-bed, and I never saw creatures go slower than those horses went, although Hrycio, in the rear of both, shouted "Hui!" with great persistence.

After two hours of this we came upon a great wooded mountain—pines, of course, and great silver firs, with a moist groundwork of ferns and strawberries. Every sort of fern I know, save spleenwort, harts-tongue, and the three flowering ferns, grew in it—oh, and the little silver-backed polypody of Gloucestershire walls was absent, as was the Highland hard-fern; but it was a grand wood.

Now and then a big tree lay across the way, and though I had been riding to escape the marshy plunges that the path afforded, I had to get down and sometimes lift the horse's leg over the obstacles.

Hrycio had a very simple method. He took the reins of his horse in his hand, went in front of it, and with the beast's neck and the bridle both quite taut, and its brown lips pouting forward like a camel's, dragged it mercilessly along. The climb was a stiff one, and no English, no Devon horse even, would have cared to try it. When things were better, I rode a little; and though the small white mare was fairly clever with her feet, she fell more than once with me, and the wooden point of the saddle "went home" on my breast-bone somewhat too certainly. I understood why the saddle had a second high point behind; had it not been for that I should inevitably have slipped off over the tail, for gripping with the knees is quite impossible on these wooden saddles, which are put on over so many rugs, and often a hay-sack, that you cannot "find" the horse beneath it all.

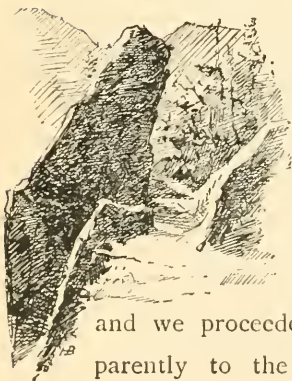
Nobody spoke during this ascent, except when my horse fell. We were all too engaged on getting up. At last the path gave suddenly, gaily, and hopefully upon a grassy clearing, set with whortle-berries ("hurts," "frochans," "blaeberries"—different persons will recognise them under these several names). The men flung themselves down without a word and pumped up long breaths with difficulty.

As I had ridden a good deal, of course I wasn't so tired; but the nimble-footed Paraska made nothing of it, and skipped about finding fruit for me, which she presented with the pretty "Proszę," and then sat down to look at my bracelet and rings.

She wore a very curious brass one on her left hand, and I communicated to the painter that I would like to buy one of the same kind. "Oh, buy hers," said he; "I'll arrange it." At first I demurred, but Para seemed quite pleased to part with it, and I handed over the equivalent of threepence in kreutzers, which was its price. The pattern upon it was wrought with the knife-point by a Ruthenian gipsy; and later, in another village, I bought a good many of the same nature, as well as other ornaments. The workmanship reminded me of etching in steel

point upon copper, and the effect produced was odd little scratches and lines which, in the case of certain brooches, had an amusing resemblance to ancient runes.

In half-an-hour the bits were slipped into the horses' mouths, and we proceeded up a rock-laid way that led apparently to the top of another mountain. Para



twittered on her pipe and supplied the place of all the song-birds very fairly, always hiding the instrument inside her dress and blushing if I looked round and smiled encouragement.

After the stress of this footpath more grass must have proved cooling to the horses' hacked frogs and bleeding cuts. This, then, was not the top of any mountain, but just a high-laid "polonina," as they call the grassy oases on these big pine-hills.

A peasant's hut, the refuge of the people engaged in cattle watching and sheep's-cheesemaking, promised milk and cheese perhaps, and we hurried on and unloaded the horses on a little knoll beside the hut, from which a young man immediately came out. The painter undertook to deal with him, and I got out the strange package formed by two dozen cold potatoes reposing in my Tam o' Shanter, the only object I could find before starting which would prevent them from mingling with the boots at the foot of my sack. In a few moments milk was forthcoming in a wooden pitcher, as well as what looked like a round flat milk-loaf that has been only ten minutes in the oven—this was a sheep's cheese, "bunsen" by name. We sat on the ground with the potatoes between us, and cut large slices from

the cheese. We also ventured on one of my Salami sausages.

“Are we half-way?” I asked.

“Nothing like,” answered the painter, and asked the time with a view to determining the length of our rest. I looked for my watch at my belt—it was gone! I felt all my pockets; I shook myself; searched the hunting-sack and the leather satchel; caught my horse after being kicked once or twice, and examined the folds of my tartan cloak which lay upon the saddle—it was nowhere to be found. I had lost it, my big gold turnip, on this tremendous journey.

The painter excited himself instantly, and insisted I should go back and look for it. The thing seemed rather hopeless. Nevertheless, having cut another bit of sausage, and taken two potatoes in my hand, I went. Paraska came with me. The thing had fallen out, I thought, when my horse fell; and I set off coolly, though raging inwardly at the trouble, to retrace my steps two miles. I looked back and saw the painter making cigarettes, the cheese beside him. It was infuriating!

But of course I should find it. I *always* found things. Nobody's accidents promised better than

mine, from a sensational point of view, but they resolved themselves in tame practical conclusions. Moderately confident, I hurried after Para down the slope.

We found the whortleberry bed and the tree that I had sat beside. I searched the place where I had tripped and fallen on my right side, and the place where I had tripped and fallen on my left side; the place where I had tripped and fallen on my back, as well as the place where I had tripped and fallen on my front, along with other places where I had fallen variously, for the hill was steep, and whortleberry bushes slippery to the feet.

Everywhere my *mädertl* searched also—nowhere could I find my watch. Somewhat dashed, we went down the further hill to the spot where my horse had fallen with me. Upon the rocks we could see the scars made by the horses' shoes. The watch had been very insecurely fastened, and I could readily see why it had gone loose; very easily it might have slipped up from my belt and gone amissing when my tiny white mare scrambled to keep her four tiny white feet.

One gets to know the sort of accident which occurs to one. I know mine perfectly. Nothing serious ever

comes of it. I emerge from the most threatening circumstances cheerful and unharmed in the smallest particular. Hairbreadth 'scapes are unknown to me, likewise moving accidents by flood and field. This is very disappointing, and would always stand in my light did I aspire to be a traveller.

Although I had not at once found my watch, I pictured it ticking calmly beneath a fern-frond near where the mare's cleverness had failed her. But every fern was lifted, every strawberry plant inquired of, and no watch came to light! I began to see that a different class of accident was going to happen to me in the future, and that the new series was to be inaugurated by the losing of my great-grandmother's magnificent old watch—a timepiece that several relations felt might have fallen into other hands with greater propriety. Still I took it calmly. It is a very poor sort of person who can't afford to lose a watch without howling. I had had it nearly a dozen years, and it was a marvel I had kept it so long. Now it was in a Polish mountain pass, romantically, if irretrievably lost.

We went back further, searching everywhere. Para broke out impressively in Ruthenian, but it proved no language to conjure with. I made her understand that

further search was, in my opinion, both a striving against the will of Providence and very hot work, so we returned sadly on our way.

Once again we raked the whortleberry hill, then heroic and resigned, made our way over a grass meadow, up and up the stone path at considerably slower time than we had come down it.

The painter met me with a severe brow and savage inquiry in his voice. The watch had to be found—if he stayed a week on that confounded mountain he would find it—that was the sum of what he put into the next hot ten minutes.

Nothing could persuade him otherwise. Let me remain with the baggage—he would search with Paraska, who would show him where I had been. “Make us late? Very likely. No doubt we should not reach *Žabie*; but we should arrive exactly where we should arrive!” In vain I explained the utter hopelessness of the whole thing, threatened to continue my journey with the man and horses, having offered a reward—to the empty air—of ten or twenty gulden to whomsoever found the dear turnip. All of no use. I said over and over again that it was my great-grandmother’s watch and not his, and that if I was reconciled to losing it, there was no reason why he

should not be, &c., &c. He raised his cap, begged me to go on, and said he should overtake me.

I sat down faint-hearted by the baggage, and drank a glass or two of warm milk. The wild-looking young fellow who brought it offered to play to me, and fetched out one of the remarkable ten-foot trumpets,—oddly enough, *trembit* is the Huculy name,—made of a young silver birch-tree. The pith is expressed from the saplings in some manner that I have never seen, so do not understand; and with apparently no other sort of preparation, they are blown through and made to call strange, irresponsible, fragmentary music phrases through the silent hills and down the river-fretted valleys.

For nearly two hours I sat there listening to the trumpet notes, whistling when they were still, and trying desperately to make neat cigarettes with one hand,—an inconceivably difficult undertaking. The afternoon was at its full heat. Somewhere there upon the mountain my watch was probably pointing to the half-hour after four. At length there came an “Urrahah!” It was the painter.

“Do you suppose I search without finding things?” he said, when he came up, in answer to my exclamation. “I search like a dog; I move every leaf and

grass-blade ; I went down flat on my face and listened ; I crawled forward like a serpent ; I heard it ticking a *mètre* from where I lay, and was a few moments ere I came on it. Here it is ; suppose you attach it to something in future."

So my sort of accident was still going to befriend me ? I knotted the grand old watch to my shirt cord, and to my handkerchief, and to my belt, dropped it into a knicker pocket, and put everything I could think of on the top. Then we got silently under way.

Here endeth the first and last adventure. Though not particularly exciting, it has still the necessary touch of the marvellous.

A very difficult and in some places steep pine-wood followed, and I knew we were ascending a mountain, as usual, only to come down the other side. The next ascent led through one or two streaks of grass-land, but was on the whole an arduous grind. A drove of oxen strayed over these *poloninas* ; the man who watched them lived in a very mysterious hut, whose walls were of the moist skin of a fir-tree, and which nestled at the foot of a monster pine.

He had the genuine "falcon-face" of the Huculs, and a wild, romantic appearance to which his way of life only added.

The poor fellow was all alone at his work, and saw no one, save at long intervals a chance passer-by. The previous day, a large bear had attacked and thrown one of his oxen. When he went to fire his pistol, the bear left the ox and came at *him*. He was just able to dash into his hut and barricade the slender door, while the bear, after hanging about a little, went back and finished the ox, and retired pleased and satisfied.

The herd bemoaned the fact that he had no slugs for his pistol—small use they would have been, except to ease his mind; but I suggested small stones, with a wad of dry moss on each side of them, and loaded the old-fashioned horse-pistol in this way, while the herd looked on with delight. He had a fair stock of caps and powder, so we fired a pebble charge or two into a tree, and he was able to follow the course of the improvised bullet with his pen-knife some few inches into the trunk of a big fir.

Getting away from his profuse gratitude as best we might, I examined my own revolver. In the "War-Trail" (one of the "Books which Influenced Me") I believe some one shoots a bear's eyes out; and although this is not a tasteful sort of act, if there be still a few things you wish to do in the

world, it may be as well to blind your bear (if you can) and get away and do them.

We proceeded to the very top of that mountain, and then along a fine ridge. Thick white rain blotted out the entire panorama, and came hissing down silver against the blackness of the pines. I put on my cloak as I rode, and shared it with my horse, like a cavalry officer. The painter was wet through in two minutes, and then the sun came out and smiled upon our discomfort and wretched appearances. My shoulders and knees were dripping. I don't speak of my feet, for they had been wet a long time; but I hung cloak and coat upon the crupper to dry. The painter spread his coat upon the hinders of the second horse, and, after inquiring my feelings, his soaked cotton jersey as well, and went cheerfully forward clad simply in a pair of trousers.

A not unduly moist spot was discovered, where we took a brief rest; and Hrycio, in return for many cigarettes, went off to find me strawberries. He came back shortly with a handful, and told of a bed he had discovered close by. I ran off to it, and got some of the best and largest I have ever seen. Here and there some peculiar *long foot-marks* were noticeable, and soon I came on a spot where all the plants were crushed flat.

At the same moment Hryc began shouting for the painter, and the word "bear" came in frequently. The bears too appreciate these little drops of scarlet nectar, and we had come upon the tracks, not over an hour old, of one of them.

Three steady hours followed of a breakneck scramble down the mountain side. Every now and then the horses went sliding forward down the sheer rock, or stopped altogether, and refused to be pushed or dragged a step further. Then it was a case of lifting up the whole trembling leg, and heaving it from one insecure foothold to another. It was slow and very tiring work. *We* could have got down like goats; but the horses had a terrible trial, which, since they were tired and hungry already, came the more hardly upon them. Three hours saw an end of it; and then came a winding way by a river, with the accustomed fording, and plenty of rock, and then an ascent through woods, where I saw and had under my stick a little hissing viper of the size of whipcord.

It was going on for eight o'clock. I had given up riding either horse some time back, and felt in splendid trim for walking, though a little odd in the head, from insufficient food, I fancy. A swim set me up, and then we swung along in silence through a valley, my

legs going automatically in the long steps that never tire. Short cuts through hayfields saved us the necessity of descending the river bank and crossing that sempiternal current where above the rush of the stream Hrycio's "Huis" could always be heard.

The night was coming on fast—already there was that grey-green dusk in the woods that makes it difficult to distinguish tree from tree; there was still a long way before us, the horses could only stand another two hours at most—how were we going to do it in the time?

Now and again my head failed me, and swam a trifle, and I took off coat and cap; but there was not an ache in all my body, and my muscles showed no signs of caving in. It was scarcely cheering to come within earshot of the painter's one remark, "Es ist noch ein ganz gemeines Stückerl!" but still we held on our way. The horses proved that when once thoroughly tired they can do more than the best horses I have ever ridden, and the whole procession went steadily forward towards where the yellow of the evening had previously disappeared.

The only living things besides my viper were one or two flocks of curly black sheep, never more than fifty or sixty—a white one is "the mistake" in a

Ruthenian flock, because his skin is not in such demand for kiptars—usually there was a wild witless being in attendance on these; and at long-last we were joined by a little company of five peasants walking also to Żabie.

The chatter of these persons, so little of which was comprehensible, irritated me; and I told the painter I must have a rest simply to get rid of them, and sat down beside the little white mare, who was rocking upon her feet like a fainting lady.

The peasants' voices and their persons were absorbed by the growing night ahead of us, then, quite silent and commentless, we did another steady hour. At last, "It's no good!" cried the painter. "You must put up somewhere! There is an hour and a half more, and these beasts can't manage it. Besides, you would arrive so late, you'd find no room!"

"But where am I to put up?" said I.

"Anywhere!" answered he, lighting and unconcernedly puffing at his thirty-second cigarette. We stopped by a wooden bridge to consider.

It was a coolish night, and I was somewhat sharp set, as the saying is, if not famished. I wouldn't have minded sleeping out if I could have got a good supper first, but without the supper ——? At this moment

a peasant rode up on an excellent springy little Hucul. Even in the almost dark I noticed the *white* leather reins, the headstall without a single bit of old rope or string in its construction ; the man's dark crimson-red trousers, much embroidered linen, and brown coat with an orange and red woollen decoration in the corners.

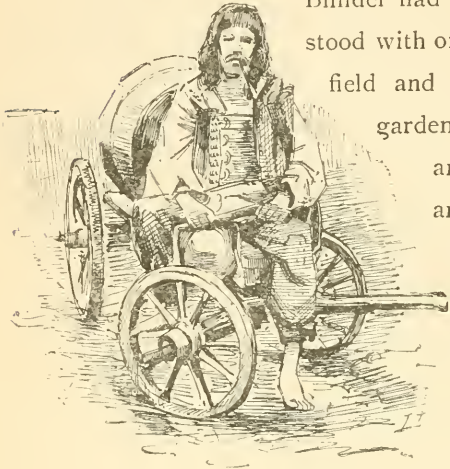
I was in a mood to think anybody who offered me assistance at this juncture both delightful and handsome, but I had enough sense left to see that this peasant was decidedly the latter.

He was effusively shaking hands with the painter as I observed him, and—what was he saying? Night—sleep—kolesha—his house? One of the long, breathlessly rapid, and, as usual, to all appearances startlingly interesting conversations went forward, which the painter always told me afterwards were "laute Dummheiten." Then he turned to me and said, "This is the richest man in the village; I know him well. They call him 'Blinder,' because one of his eyes was pawed out by a bear. He invites us to over-night at his house. Will you go?"

Would—I—go?

From somewhere in the gloom of the side-ways the peasant's wife appeared. The crawling horses

were turned, and we followed her to the enchanted hut some ten minutes from the bridge on which Blinder had found us. The house stood with one side to its rich hay-field and one to its productive garden, the third to the road, and the fourth facing an enclosed courtyard, which was walled in with stables, outhouses, and sheds.



We were left dully, peacefully, wordlessly grateful in the gallery.

Hryc saw to the horses, and those wonderful silver-grey wood ashes that lie always in a Polish stove were charmed to a crimson glow by the woman.

Girls with white-bleached hair and mahogany-brown feet and legs came and went; the hissing of the evening milking was heard in the outer yard; the idiot boy, who belonged to no one in particular, leaned in the doorway and appreciated cigarettes. We sat and looked straight in front of us with the sightless glance of tired beasts, till at length kolsha, breathing an inspiring essence over the scene, worked

on our leaden apathy, and awoke in us a savage passion of hunger.

O that little lighted room, with the mob of silly unknown saints' faces upon its walls, the row of carved spoons in the rack, the dried flowers taken from the church on a fête-day hanging above the crucifixes and crossed pistols; the table, solid, in two kinds of wood and "Blinder's" pride, half-decked with its red cover, and bearing the bowl of hot milk, not an hour from the cow, but still further warmed to within a minute of seething point in a big iron pot; the dish of kolesha, steaming, turned in a stiff square lump from the pan; the plate of hard-boiled eggs; finally, the whispered "Proszę" of the woman!

CHAPTER XIV.

I SLEPT comfortably enough upon the bed of hay which was spread for me in a corner of the open courtyard. Blinder had given me a great thick blanket—a blanket that utterly defies comparison with any other sort of blanket; so, only removing my postoli, and in a state of mind that led me to scorn watch-winding as a trivial practicality of which I might well be independent, I slept till four o'clock, when a refreshing drizzle and the opening informalities of the farmyard awoke me. Certainly they walked round me, both girls and men, but I feared the moment would arrive when they would walk through and over me—"regairdless," as we say in Scotland; and I preferred to get up.

Having turned some wading calves out of the stream, I washed and did my hair as Narcissus probably did his hair. Breakfast smiled upon that inspired table about six: kolesha again, and a strange mess of sliced eggs in a sea of butter which

was yet palatable. I said good-bye to Blinder, who had forever won my suffrages, and even forewent my principles so far as to vulgarise a rafter in the room by writing my name upon it at his instance.

One of the few regrets I have surrounds this incident. Why need I have been so English? If Żabie had not been the proposed destination it would have suited me well to have spent a while with this hospitable peasant, whose circumstances were those of comparative opulence, and whose fine horses would have been a revelation after the poor little rats of Mikuliczyn and Kosmacz. But the painter had assured me that Żabie was the show village of the whole district, and it was from there that I proposed to make an ascent into the high mountains.

Something after nine, we came into Żabie, and I paused in wonder at the door of a little house, half chalet-like in build, over which the colours of the Alpenverein waved cheerfully. "This is luxury," said I to the painter; "not a step further do I go!"

With Western assurance, and buoyed up by the impression that I had found an hotel, I ran up the steps, pushed open the door, and at once found myself in a very small front-room, in which were four beds, ten chairs, and a table. One bed was of

the ordinary wooden build, the others were on trestles. The inevitable fine, highly-embroidered, open-worked Polish pillow, with flashes of red through its lace, was much developed, as usual. It was possible, to a person of slight build, to edge sideways about this room among the furniture.

Since no one appeared, I allowed certain instincts to direct me to the kitchen; and the painter following, I was given to understand by the woman who had the charge of things that the hotel was mine for one night. Next day an excursion party was expected from Kossów, and as they would most likely be belated, the sleeping accommodation would have to be at their disposal.

“How many do you expect?” I asked.

“Between twenty and thirty,” came the answer. And when I went back to that little room, and surveyed further the tiny apartment, with two beds in it, that opened off, one of those rare moments occurred, in which I am left poignantly to regret that I never had any arithmetic in my head. For do what I would I could not apportion those beds to that excursion party, even irrespective of sex. It reminded me of that horrid Arab who died and tried to leave thirteen camels fairly and equally between six sons,

Has any one, I wonder, *ever* got even with that Arab?

But the upshot was that I had better be out of the way before that excursion party fought for the possession of those pillows. To facilitate this, the painter said that, as he knew the village, he would go out and see what accommodation I could have, and desired to know how long I should be in Żabie?

“Try and take me a whole house; there is no one clean enough to lodge with,” said I; “and say that anyway I’ll be here three weeks.”

This was arranged; but, first, I asked him to dinner, and went out to see what could be got. Bread came as luxury, for I had had none all the time in Kosmacz. The Jews there could have made it, but it would not have been clean enough to eat, so I was told. Cheese, my own Bunsen, bought on the journey, was still handsomely represented. Potatoes I dug in the garden, and also grubbed up a very bitter salad. While my preparations were going on, the painter sat in the porch smoking, with his feet upon the rail of the gallery.

The woman gave us coffee after this simple meal had been dealt with. I looked closely at my cup, an

upright pink thing, rather out of tone with the establishment, I thought.

Upon that cup was the printed picture of a building I knew well, and beneath it were these words—"The Winter Gardens, Southport." "Made in Bohemia" was very naturally stamped upon the foot. Oh, great Free Trade of the future, *with* a Protective Tariff, no doubt you will succeed in keeping many things "Made in Bohemia," "Lithographed in Bavaria," and "Printed in Germany" out of England, but will you also do some little to keep views of "The Winter Gardens, Southport," out of beautiful *Žabie*?

Meantime I hope to look in upon Bohemia next journey, and try and run to earth a few of our home manufactures.

That afternoon I was not sorry to sit upon a chair, and write and read. The clean wooden table, clean wooden floor, fresh whitewashed walls, and those tempting pillows, scarcely foretold the events of the next few hours, however.

At first I was merely irritated and interrupted; then I gradually became annoyed; then I rose to place a glass of water at my elbow, before proceeding stolidly with my letters. At every comma I paused, and lifted a flea from my instep or my ankle into that

glass. My feet were bare, so that made it the more easy. In an hour there were thirty-two, this not counting those I missed, and the innumerable ones I felt, but never even saw. It was a terrible preparation for the night—a fearful earnest of what was to be.

I went to bed; I really needed sleep, and I went early. Let any one who supposes it vulgar to talk of fleas, pass over the next few paragraphs. I have no understanding of those persons' minds, nor very probably they of mine. I would only say to them, that whosoever thinks of fleas as trifling, something not to be referred to, passes over one of the most powerful living forces—uncompromising, deadly, not to be gainsaid.

There are times when fleas occupy one's entire horizon—(it is chiefly when they people the foreground, and the middle distance, I'll admit). There are times when one's relatives, and one's old associations, one's career, one's creed, and one's immortal soul retire beyond the line of sight, become insignificant, are as nothing, and there is nothing of any moment, of any present or future interest save fleas. As I have hinted before, whole thousands of people go down to the grave without ever having

recognised fleas and their fell influences—happy, happy thousands!

I lay in those exquisitely pure, sweet-smelling Polish sheets, propped up by regal pillows, and I was strung up not to move a hand, not to think about them. I was nerved to endure. I said over softly to myself poetry of a restful nature, and the moonbeams came slipping down the big mountains that filled in the blue window squares, and played about the room.

“Abou Ben Adhem—may his tribe increase!
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace”—

I murmured to myself. He awoke; in his case it was not owing to—— Good Heavens! how was it that that beautiful poem could suggest fleas? He awoke, and saw, within the precincts of his room—no, a thousand times no! *not* FLEAS. He saw an angel—I would have given anything to see an angel! A good active angel at that moment, armed with a sledge-hammer and sprinkling Keating from a censer, would have been welcome.

That poem was no use! I couldn't have believed it would have been so vividly suggestive!

Tired as I was, burning beneath that desperately

pure and spotless sheet—I took out, so to say—took out of my memory another poem. I shut my eyes and thought of it a little. It is the only poem that Sleep cannot resist—has never resisted; it exercises the most perfect, the most potent of magic spells. With the deal floor, and those three empty white covered beds, all lying in pools of green and blue light, I whispered the opening lines of the Invocation :—

“ There is a rest for all things. On still nights
There is a folding of a million wings—
The swarming honey-bees in unknown woods,
The speckled butterflies, and downy broods
 In dizzy poplar heights :
Rest for innumerable nameless things,
Rest for the creatures of the Sea,
And in the Earth, and in the starry Air. . . .
Why will it not unburden me of care ?
It comes to meaner things than my despair.
O weary, weary night that brings no rest to me !

Spirit of dreams and silvern memories, Delicate Sleep ! ”

If there is any one good quality that man possesses in contradistinction to the brutes, it is self-control. There's nothing like self-control—nothing that excites so much admiration—nothing that—a flea had six legs I knew—how did it use them ? No one probably knew that. I was in a position to take the

most careful observations. I was sensitive enough to be able to trace the exact variations in a flea's action. On the morrow I decided to make diagrams, accurate diagrams of the "pattern" of a flea's feet when walking. To careless persons with slight interest in the strange phenomena of Nature, these things would come as a revelation! If the picture of a horse's four legs when in motion could excite so much controversy, in how much greater proportion would that controversy be excited by the picture of a flea's six legs?

What large feet fleas have! They seem to go tramping and thudding over you; you hear them as distinctly as the heavy footsteps of the night watchman below your window! And every flea's footprint is a prick—a sharp, deep stab that goes through you and leaves you shuddering—shuddering in a nervous ague.

I lay throbbing and listening to the steady thunder of the fleas walking on me. What a noise knocking in my head. How many hundreds were there? Would it be possible to fight them? What, single-handed and unarmed? Mad thought!

I would not raise a hand, not a hand against any one of them. I would endue myself with so cold and

vast an indifference that it would run like acid in my veins, and make me bitter to them! Aha! I had a recipe for that! What says the philosopher? "Of things that exist, some depend upon ourselves, others do not depend upon ourselves. Of things that depend upon ourselves are our opinions and impulses, desires and aversions, and, briefly, all that is of our own doing. Of things that do not depend upon ourselves"—well, one knows them, there are lots of them, yet not so many as we are inclined to suppose—"straightway, therefore, practise saying to every harsh-seeming phantasm" (fleas!), "*You are a phantasm, and not by any means the thing you appear to be.* Then realise it and test it according to the criterions you possess; but especially by this supreme criterion, whether it concerns anything that depends upon ourselves, or something that does not depend upon ourselves. And if the latter, then be the thought instantly at hand, *It is nothing to me.*"

There was the recipe—beautiful, quite as simple as "take a pound of butter and beat to a cream." But the thought that it—that they, were nothing to me—was *not* instantly at hand! Nothing to me? They were everything to me! They were the bed, and the room, and the night, and the whole world to me.

I jumped out upon the floor—I lit a match and a lamp. I caught every flea in that bed, and their number amounted to—but why challenge the ignorant disbelief of the public? I put out the lamp and got in again.

More self-control, more cavalry regiments walking on their spurs; more poetry, more fever, more philosophy, more human nature—the lamp again, and this time I buttered my entire person with moist black tar-soap which I had with me.

The same programme faithfully carried out resulted in the same performance. Lamp again. This time I got up and shook everything out of the window, then lay down on one of the other beds (this was silly and thoughtless, for if I had gone on I should have exhausted the fleas in that first bed, and as it was I simply entered upon a fresh reserve corps), soaked a sponge in Vodka, and applied it vigorously, then got in again.

A flea, I knew, must go to bed some time. If there is, on the word of one of the sweetest of all sweet singers, “rest for innumerable nameless things,” there must be for fleas also! I was glad to find from this reflection that my reason remained to me.

The flea's night—which is the “close-time” for

human beings—is between five and six. It is in that short hour that a flea snatches the brief moments of repose necessary to furnish it with strength for the campaign of twenty-three long ones. This is authoritative. I know it! I have proved it, and the fact is recorded in my life's blood. I opened the window, and stood by it looking out upon a dim, calm, grey world—a world without a flea-bite on all her rugged surface!

O but I was tired! I put my fingers in my eyes, and they were like jelly-fishes that the ebb-tide has forgotten—soft and squashy—ugh!

“I, in chilling twilight, stand and wait
At the portcullis, at thy castle gate.
Yearning to see the magic door of dreams
Turn on its noiseless hinges, Delicate Sleep!”

CHAPTER XV.



ABIE was, I think, as regarded scenery, the best that that country could do. The village was seven quadrate miles in extent—Austrian miles—positively almost a small country. It lay for the most part in a rich valley, through which a river came serpentine, washing the edges of as many hayfields as possible. The houses were, some of them, in elevated positions; others seemed to have rolled down like stones to the river's edge. The great hills, seeming to hold hands like children at play, stood in a circle to look on at what Żabie was doing. They verged from pine-black to the green of poloninas, and further to the greys and blues of the far mountains, the mountains where I was soon going—Czerna-góra.

Żabie was certainly the least Ruthenian and the most characteristically Hucul village of all that I saw. In explanation of this remark I will quote from the great Hungarian novelist, Leopold von Sacher

Masoch, than whom no one has more carefully observed and informed himself of the diversified customs of the various peoples inhabiting Red Russia. Since he is not translated into English, and since I desire to condense, it will be the gist of his descriptions, and not the form of them, that I shall retain.

“The Huculs” (Hutsuls), he first tells us, “are the only known tribe of riding mountaineers, save a certain people residing in the Caucasus, of whose various distinctive customs Huculy customs are very reminiscent: not only their customs, but the Hucul dress, *embroidery patterns*, and employment of colours are identical with those of their Caucasian brethren; and the breed of horses, swift, black, Arab-like, wiry, small and strong, with trailing tails—standing on the average about 13.2, but with no resemblance to the pony or cob about them—these also are pointedly akin to the horses found among the mountain race in the Caucasus.”

“Keeping all this in mind, it may be held with some show of reason that at the great wandering of the earth’s peoples, when the Slavs were in the van, the Huculs were early driven across the plains and penned in the Karpathians, while their neighbours of

the plains were split up, broken, and intermixed with the Germanic races, and later with Huns, Hungarians, Tartars, Mongolians, and Turks. Thus the Huculs, safe in their Karpathian fastnesses, preserve their character, the Slav, or, if you will admit it, the Caucasian character free, pure, and marked to this day."

They are a warlike race. The time is not so long since they walked at the plough-tail armed to the teeth, and neither their tall forms nor their falcon faces suggest a peaceful agricultural people. It is almost certain that at the date of the occupation of the Red Russian plains by the Romans—when Kolomyja was founded as a Roman colony—the Huculs were already in possession of the Eastern Karpathians. They refer to themselves continually as warriors, making use of the Latin word "Leginju" (Legionaire), and their favourite phrase is "Ej ware Leginju!"

Their oaths—those suggestive and pictorial adjuncts to a language—make familiar mention of the gods of Roman mythology, and, though Christianised as we know, there are odd signs and pagan doings extant among them, even to rites performed at far mountain burials, rites which are to propitiate "the other gods."

This, particularly the line of thought which con-

nects the Huculs with the Caucasus Mountains, whether all of it be true or not, serves to show an English reader that they are a very individual race, differing pointedly in appearance, temperament, manners, and morals from the Ruthene dwellers of the plains, from their conquering Polish neighbours, and the securely rooted German colonists to be found dotted about in both town and country.

From the difficulty I have had in getting words verified, even by Polish, Ruthene, and Russian scholars, I am inclined to think that the Huculs have had an effect on the language they use, and that it is by no means pure Ruthene. Throughout this book the Ruthenian spelling has been given when the word has been traced to be Ruthene, but Polish words, which I certainly came across, are also given. I have forborne to Anglicise and translate, even when I could easily do so; an approximate pronunciation has been given where possible, but, for my part, find the arbitrary Anglicising of every foreign word inartistic and unsatisfactory, taking much from the effect of the text.

To come back to *Żabie*, the river, the Black *Czere-mosz* (*Cheramoosh*), had a thick plaited skein of green silk for a current, and came banging the pine-

rafts mercilessly upon its rocks and boulders till, round a corner some miles lower down, it threw itself upon its sister, the White Czeremosz, and they fought further on their way together till the Dniester took them in hand a little above Czerniowce (Chernavitz), on the Russian frontier.

It was, after all, from my lodgment in a house beside the post-office, almost a mile from the hostelry to which the Alpenverein had accorded its countenance and its colours, that I went a-wandering and informed myself of the features of *Žabie* and her people. There were the blue-washed houses of the Jews, with the amazing suggestion of dirt and uncleanness in their very faces; the wooden houses of the peasants, each with its garden, its patch of maize lorded over by the big soldier-poppies, from whose sleepy heads an opiumy oil is made which the people, I was told, greatly delighted to consume.

There was the difference in the pattern of the sheepskins, the difference in the adjustment of the head-cloths, the difference in the make of the postoli, the difference in the fashion of the aprons; though, broadly speaking, the clothing was of course the same, and dealt in the same material and the same absolutely perfect colours.

There was the familiar picture of the men mowing in a long slantwise line across a field—twenty or thirty of them at a time, with an even rhythmic swing that must perforce be gazed at.

Suddenly each implement would go up in the air, and each man would stand at ease to watch. The sailors in a man-o'-war's cutter or a yacht's gig don't get their oars up quicker at the officer's word of command than did these men the oars with which they row through the sea of summer grasses. Human Curiosity was their officer, and Human Curiosity said "Scythes" as I went by.

The women, in their lively costumes, binding, turning, or raking, were dotted about freely. Every one worked well but leisurely. There seemed to be less of the acute strain so noticeable in our country at hay-making time. Truly, when a man has his house as his own, and can live on five pounds a year, there is no reason why hay, weather, or anything else should weigh upon his mind.

I saw three churches in Żabie: one in the part that I was living in—that was the middle church; and one some three or four miles up and down the valley. The Pope seemed to take a more active part in village affairs than he had done in Mikuliczyn. He lived on

a nice farm near the church with his wife and family, which appeared to me to consist chiefly of a forbidding-looking son, and two preternaturally sharp-eyed daughters; but I had reason to be grateful to this family before I left.

A person in independent position was a middle-aged gentleman, who drove a remarkably good pair of horses—the small Hucul horses, of course, but very well-bred ones. His house had a handsome site on the cliff above the Czeremosz, and commanded the centre of the village and the village street.

He had some very fine vegetables in his garden, some of which he sent me up, and I returned a grateful message. The servant who brought the basket was an Armenian (so he was kind enough to tell me), and knew a good deal of German. Standing in my room, and moving his eyes rapidly from one object to another in the most business-like scrutiny, he insisted on reeling off an account of the domestic relations existing between the middle-aged gentleman and his wife. She was a woman of extraordinary temper; and his master—well, he was perhaps a little gay! They found it impossible to live together, so she had a separate establishment in some town—Halicz, I think—and kept the children. But his master, being

a man of strong domestic affections, always invited her to stay in the summer in the hope that he should be able to put up with her (all this in the queerest German and most arbitrarily constructed sentences).

I interrupted my Armenian friend to suggest that perhaps they would not care to have these matters discussed before a stranger, feeling all the while that I had got into a Russian novel, and that no possible solution to the problem could occur to me any more than it ever does to the authors of these.

The Armenian, who had exhausted the external features of my leather knapsack, and was working steadily to assimilate the salient characteristics of my tweed coat flung on the bed, apologised, and said he had fancied these things would interest me as I was a stranger, and they would probably be new to me?

I said that they did interest me—deeply; my only fear was that his master and mistress would not appreciate the value of my judgment in a matter which could concern only themselves. This delicacy of feeling was lost upon the Armenian, who had made shy advances in the direction of my flask, and finally he asked me if it opened?

I opened it and explained the patent, then thanked him pointedly for the summer cabbages and peas, and

speeded him on his way. But his history—thrown in merely to fill out time while he inventoried my possessions, and given perhaps in the honest desire of leaving something as interesting as what he took away—his history did recur to me when I saw a stout, fiery-faced lady, with a red cotton parasol, sitting beside the fat, good-natured, heavy-jowled man in grey, who was the independent gentleman, and who drove the nice horses. And my sympathy was all his. I knew I couldn't have stood her, even in the summer.

One afternoon, sitting at my writing, I heard the sound of those large birch-wood trumpets from across the river, and I ran through the empty, floorless, half-built room into which my room opened, through the gallery and down the garden path into the road. This road was some thirty feet above the bed of the river, and from any part of it I had a good view of the flat lands on the far side of the stream, and of the great range of mountains I have spoken of. The flat land was stony, with a shrubby willow at intervals, showing that in winter the Czeremosz needed three times her summer portion. Then came the hayfields, with a ridge of flax at intervals; then a house or two, then the hills. In this very dry bed a small procession

was advancing towards a wooden bridge that leapt to the level of the highroad in a single arch.

It was a funeral procession. I could see the coffin of pine wood, with green crosses roughly painted on it, carried by four men. There was the Pope upon a horse, and wearing his magenta silk stole over his ordinary black coat and riding-boots. There were several banners and crosses carried by peasants, very gay in the colouring, and headed by a white and silver picture of the crucifixion. There was a person in plain clothes, who had "precentor" written all over him unmistakably, and, when he got nearer, the world-familiar cough of a person who sings in churches. There was a scatter of peasants, men and women, and the three trumpeters.

The trumpeters came first, then the banners, then the Pope, then the coffin, and lastly the crowd. Just where the bridge gripped the green cliff, there was a rough clump of ground, with a cross upon it. The trumpeters mounted this, and the coffin was set down beside the cross, while all the party knelt. The Pope alone sat upon his horse and looked up to the sky. A rude chant was gone through, the precentor thoroughly justifying my expectations with regard to his attainments; then the trumpeters raised their heavy instru-

ments, and, bent well backward, blew long notes of inconsequent music, which the Czeremosz caught in its voiceful waters, and tossed to the furthest peaks. I think that all made answer, though some so softly that it did not reach the ear. Thus all the hills were told that Iwan Drahyruk was dead!

Then, all of it, the trumpeters, the Pope upon his small red horse, the crowd, and the coffin, with four men to carry the dead weight, went on to the church, the creaky, yellow brown church, that seemed to have been set *upon* the ground and nowhere fastened into it. I followed unobtrusively—at least, I hoped it was unobtrusive. It struck me I had no right to infuse my horrid Western inquisitiveness into this holy little ceremonial; but I knew that I was not really inquisitive, that the pathos of the scene appealed sharply to me—although I speak lightly of some incidents—and I thought that I might dare to say a prayer of some vague sort.

In the centre, below the round mosque tower, the coffin was set down. Before the gable which was filled by altar and chancel, stood the Pope; in the side gables the peasants crowded; and the tail-gable, so to say, was empty, save for one little peasant woman, in a very bright orange head-cloth. I took up a retired

position in her neighbourhood, having no leanings towards proximity to a rancid crowd : poor people, I deplore the term ; but why *did* they dress their hair with that bad butter ?

The ceremony began by the Pope wrestling into a red damask canopy, and then going to a little table—a table covered with a common towel—on which was a big red velvet Bible, with four china medallions of saints' faces glued upon the four corners.

Just as he began to read from the Book, a woman ran towards the coffin, and thumbed two brown bees-wax candles upon the head of it in the form of a cross : it was the little woman in the orange head-cloth.

Whenever the Pope paused in his reading—(how fine it sounded to my strange ears!)—the precentor “gave him as good” with considerable ardour, and the peasants crossed themselves, knocked on their breasts with one fist, and flung themselves forward on their hands to kiss the floor, all kneeling reverently, as they were. I had a good deal of difficulty in following these evolutions ; but when incense had been swung, and we all got up, the Pope moved round, and continued the service at the other end of the coffin, I keeping carefully in the rear of the little woman with the orange head-cloth.

Finally the precentor expended himself in a peculiarly sonorous passage, and then the peasants loosed themselves upon the big Bible, which still stood, shut and quiet, on the common little table. There was some undisguised scuffling to get at the faces of the china saints on those medallions; but I skipped the formality of kissing them, and nerved myself to go gravely forward after the rest, and kiss the gold and silver painted cross which the Pope held sideways in the air.

I had my cap in my hand—(I can't keep a flippant thing like a Tam o' Shanter on my head. If I enter a church, I have taken it off by instinct before ever I know)—and I watched the peasants snatch the Pope's rather puffy hand and kiss it as well. I knew want of practice would cause me to blur that ceremony. I recognised my limitations, and only kissed the cross, which the worthy man held calmly and steadily. Even that kiss didn't quite please me—it seemed to belong to some other sort of scene and set of circumstances, and to be a little out of tone somehow; but it was honestly and religiously intended, and it was the best I knew.

Then we went out of the church, and the coffin was taken up by the bearers. The three trumpets

had been left, like leaping-poles, leaning against the church. The men had these upon their shoulders again by the time the Pope came out—this time in a green panoply. (I don't know if it is panoply or canopy; I've been uncertain from the first. I tried canopy, and it didn't seem to ring quite; but I'm not sure, now I say it, that panoply is any better.)

We proceeded through the farmyard and across some very dewy clover-fields, short and thick with the coming of their second crops, in the direction of the Czeremosz, to the last field of all—for the peasants who lay there indeed the very last field! There a clay grave was dug. The Pope and precentor gave strophe and antistrophe when all had gathered round, and the little woman in the orange head-cloth buried her face in an old red shawl, from whose time-blackened folds high piercing wails (very artificial wails) slipped out and mingled grotesquely with the chanted words. Then the coffin was lowered, and a wooden spade given to the Pope. He made the sign of the cross over it, where it lay only some three feet deep, and drew earth from the sides.

That hard dull rattle on the resounding pine, so pitiful, so conclusive, so unsympathetically final a sound, was the signal for a fresh burst of squeals

from the little woman. None noticed her or her crying, and when Pope and precentor moved away, quite a bundle of spades seemed to distribute themselves, and the grave was rapidly filled in.

Always the forced shrieks of the little woman were a first feature in the strange scene; and at last I gathered that she was the only surviving relative, and that, in the church, I had occupied the place reserved for members of the family!

As they threw in the earth, the peasants talked and laughed together; but when the last spade smoothed over the flat mound, a solemnity again possessed them. The three trumpeters got ready the long, speaking birch saplings, and in the saddest voices in the world these told the hills that Iwan Drahyruk was buried.

CHAPTER XVI.



Y house requires, perhaps, a word or two to present it clearly to the reader. It was semi-detached, and consisted of two rooms only. The front one, as I have hinted, was merely the shell of a room, and had no flooring and no plaster on the walls. From this, three steps, crazy wooden things, led up to the back room in which I actually lived. Here there was a good deal of furniture. A sideboard, covered with small unused glassware; several pictures of the saints upon the walls (one that I especially liked; a coloured print of a lady in blue with a lamb and a great many large pink cabbage-roses. The expression of her highly unintellectual face was amiability itself, and her fat pousy lips widened a little in the contented smile peculiar to persons of bovine temperaments in easy circumstances. I liked her because I had met her a good deal in England, and she made me feel at home). There was a table, a sofa, and two chairs,

besides a charming bed with at least five spare pillows upon it. This was more than comfort.

My "next door" was the "Postamt." There lived the postmaster, a small wizened person, very different from my friend in Mikuliczyn.

His wife was a little dark woman of rapid movements, and with a head like a seal or a skull, whichever you like. By a roundabout sequence of doors she brought me my dinner every day, and coffee when she had any; but often I went in and made *kolesha* for myself, for hers was not up to much.

She first approached me on the subject of hair-dressing. She had an immense quantity of thick black stuff like a horse's tail, which she heaped formlessly upon her head. My first proposition that she should wash it she hailed as a peculiarly amusing and original suggestion, and that very day I saw her in a scarlet chemise standing in the Czeremosz, and letting that odd seaweed float down the stream. The Czeremosz was so wild that I wonder it wasn't torn off her head. The two or three bathes I had were each upon raft-days, and the current was so potent that it nearly saved me the expense of the journey home. But preliminaries done with, I arranged an amazing *coiffure* on the little woman's funny round head, and

she hurried to her husband, her arms spread out to balance the new queer weight, crying out something in Armenian with great pleasure and excitement.

She had told me her history with much frankness. She was Armenian, had been a well-off widow with a house and garden full of *such* currant-bushes, when for some reason that she never could explain to herself, she had married this spineless person, broken him of his drinking habits, and found herself obliged to "cook and do" for a husband who wasn't fit to tie the shoe-laces of her first one. I had heard that sort of story before; but the *naïveté* of the woman's surprise at herself made me laugh.

There was a neighbour on my left, living in a little house within its own garden, whose personality and way of living were not without interest. He was an escaped political prisoner, had been a person of family and consequence, and sufficient brains to object to the administration of justice—or rather of injustice, which is more frequent in those parts—in Russian Poland.

He had created a fine sensation in his day, and a gallows was still creaking for him; yet here he lived in the happy valley, and I saw him moving furtively among his raspberry bushes, or standing quiet beside his dog-kennel. The fence between my garden and

his was not very high, and as I had a custom of sitting reading and smoking on my gallery looking over to the hills, I could often see him; but having heard of his shy habits, and his hatred of strange faces, I kept a shoulder studiously raised, and never turned my head his way save by accident.

Of course he rather interested me, as I had never seen his face. For me he was not human at all: he was escaped from between the boards of a Stepniak or Dostoievsky's novel, and I felt there was more of him to come before I reached the last page, had been more of him before, and that I had opened the book in the middle. There was a good deal more of him.

The painter, of whom I saw almost nothing in Żabie, came along one afternoon with rather more of his remote strange manner than usual. I offered him coffee, made him a cigarette, and asked what he had been so busy with since his arrival?

He had a great many friends in Żabie, he said, and he had been making the round of them. He knew the independent gentleman, but he had not ventured to call because his wife and daughters were with him, and perhaps I had heard that she—? I *had* heard.

Then he knew the Pope. The Pope's son was a

very interesting young man. He had told the painter that I was obviously of their religion, because I had been attending a burial service, and had seemed familiar with their forms.

The painter had said he fancied that my creed was something different, that I was not of their religion. He looked at me inquiringly, though he knew I did not belong to the Greek Church.

"I am of every one's religion, if they'll allow me!" I answered; and the painter made a note of that to tell the Pope's son.

A few questions about my Nihilist followed. To me he was a Nihilist, and I liked him all the better for it. The painter became nervous.

"I am executing a little commission for him," he replied.

"And what is it?"

"Let me tell you about him before I answer that, and you will see how curious it is. My friend—*nu*, his name is of no consequence, for it is not his name—my friend has a very sad history."

"So I have understood," I interrupted. "Poor fellow, he was taken prisoner, and they wanted——"

"*Tak!*" the painter broke in, "that is so; but that is not all his history. He was, in his youth, a

very handsome and attractive man, and he had many—that is, he was beloved by——”

“Exactly—he fell in love!” said I, sweeping up the painter’s confused phrases into our neat Western conclusion. I looked straight in front of me, waiting for the rest of the story; but I was much amused by the trouble the painter had in splicing it to the words I had put into his mouth.

“*Nu*, it was all very unhappy! And when he was obliged to fly——”

“Well, wouldn’t she fly too?” I inquired, interested, but conscious that I was speaking of them as if they’d been pigeons, and fearfully inclined to laugh at the painter’s embarrassed face.

“Ah, you mistake; there wasn’t any—at least! Here, you know; now that he is here he hates women!”

“There is not a large number to hate!” I put in, thinking this might be one of the advantages of the situation.

“That is it! And of course he feels——”

I burst out laughing. “Positively that is very good. You present an entirely new view to me. He is annoyed that there are not more of them to hate! Well, do you know I never should have thought of

that! but it is quite rational. How is it possible to be actively a misogynist, and to take a real pleasure in it, if the very elements of the thing are lacking?" The painter glanced at me despairingly. "And now what is the commission?"

"It is the head of a woman, to be painted on one of those wooden boxes that the peasants make."

I laughed. "He has an inventive faculty, your friend. And so you are going to paint a woman's head for him to hate."

"I was going to ask if you would give me a sitting: he wants yellow hair. Is it too much trouble for you? Half-an-hour——"

The innocent whimsicality of the proposition delighted me. I sat, and the painter worked away at his wooden box-lid, and transformed me into a houri with any amount of yellow hair, and wings, and clouds, and queer devices. It grew quite late. The painter apologised; he only wanted a few more moments, and the light was going. I had nothing to do. I sat on in the gallery, rarely moving my head. At length it was done. He had made me beautiful, and I was properly grateful. Naturally, there was no resemblance, for that was not what had been aimed at. I jerked my head round quickly;

it was cool enough in the early evening, and I was stiff. Looking over the fence was the strange white face of the political prisoner gazing intently.

“He has been there all the time,” said the painter; but even as he said this the face disappeared.

I looked at the yellow-haired houri in disgust. Although it did not any wise resemble me, I was annoyed to have sat for it. “A houri couldn’t have yellow hair,” I said with decision; “it is absurd—you must alter it. Make it all dark, and cloudy, and beautiful.”

With a little pressure I got him to alter it. Then he said he would go round and present the box.

“Come to the gate after and give me a description of the scene, will you? I want so much to know what form his rage will take when he sees the chocolate-box lady.”

The painter, who, as I had discovered, had no idea of describing a scene or repeating exactly what people had said, thanked me and went off.

I walked up and down the garden-path, along the road in front of the house, and back again till I was tired. Finally, he came—came, bringing me a beautiful walking-stick, all covered with *etching*—pen etching following in the line of a pen-knife on

the soft white willow wood—and a big dish of what I call thimble raspberries. Those are the perfect ones, the size of a cook's thimble nearly. These were presents from the misogynist!

“He's not so very far gone in his misogyny after all!” I found time to say to the painter, after my twentieth raspberry, and picking up the beautiful stick, done by a peasant, and resembling in style Chinese and Japanese stroky pen-work.

“I told him you had kindly allowed me to get an idea of the proportions of the houri from your head.”

“You should have suppressed that; he would merely have thought I was sitting by you as you worked. Have some raspberries, do! No? And why were you so long?”

“He made me paint the hair over again and alter it back to yellow,” said the painter simply.

After that I said good-night, and went into the house with the consciousness of having been bowled out by a misogynist refugee!

CHAPTER XVII.

JUST before my long looking at the great hills led me most to yearn for the ascending of them, I accepted an invitation of the painter's to spend the day with some peasant friends of his, the family of Soriuk.

Very often two or three friendly-disposed *Žabiens* had come through the floorless room and knocked upon the glass-filled panels of my door, and I had nodded encouragement to the kind curious faces, pushed my papers to a heap, and sat at the receipt of company in my whilom temple.

Always we went through just the same ceremonies. Young men with their sisters or sweethearts, fathers accompanied by their sons—they would approach with their gentle "Slawa," their graceful hat-doffings and hand-kissings.

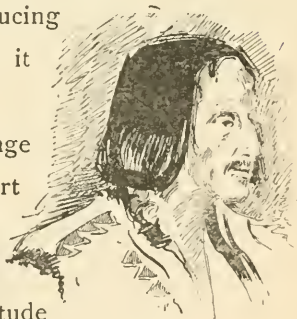
They looked at my shiny belongings—I inspected their tobacco-pouches, aprons, or embroideries; and the satisfaction was large and mutual, and feebly expressed,

That belt of mine—what a treasure of interest it had proved!—with its clasp made in imitation of a horse's bit. I remember I had thought it serviceable, but "bad art," the day I bought it for six francs in the Rue de Rivoli, simply because it *was* an imitation of a horse's bit. Well, they loved it. I would like to have given it to any dozen of them, only I had no other to take its place, and it would have been terrible to risk their wearing such an object. The first sentence was always a eulogy of it, and when I knew hardly a syllable of their language I could pick out the word "Końi," which meant belonging to a horse. And they put it always as a question.

"*Nu*, did it belong to a horse?"

In Żabie my knowledge had advanced somewhat, and I was able to reply, introducing the word "Zrebię," and say that it belonged perhaps to a foal?

How they enjoyed that strange evidence of intelligence on the part of the "Panna," the young lady! Among the people who had taken pity on my most congenial solitude was Feodor Soriuk; and it was with great pleasure that I accompanied the painter one early morning



to the hut of the family, a hut that nestled in the shadow of the opposite hills.

Ah, I would like Pierre Loti and Thoreau to come and tell me how to describe that hut and these people : Loti to paint delicately, in light washes that need no retouching, the scene, the man, the women and the spinning, weaving and shuttle-filling, with which all were busy ; and Thoreau, with firm pencil, to mark in the thoughts, the deep ideas, the final resulting worth, the life value of it all. I can only write round it, or give a naked starved description of each object in the room ; rather than that perhaps it would be better to leave unrecorded my impressions, to remember only the long unconscious stares, and feel again the web of half-dreamed dreams that blew past me like cobwebs hanging from a rafter.

The hut was a small one, with the usual outer room, in which no one lived, and which had the cold, inanimate effect of a store-place where only "things are kept ;" but the one little keeping room was warm with the wealth of quiet living that went forward inside its pine-lined walls.

From my seat upon the whitened stove-shelf I faced the outer side of the house, with its two small windows, at one of which Maryjka Soriuk sat upon her

leg, the high pointed rock wound with wiry white wool bound on with a strip of red cloth, and the spindle twirling and chattering about the floor.

Some secret instinct teaches the people of that country to combine continually their white and red: one can barely trace it to a conscious intention—it is an instinct only; but nature and circumstance conspire to give it force. Her linen *Hemd* or dress was clean and beautiful: the flax that made it grew last year upon a ridge of clay beside the slow stream in the garden, just where the flax was growing this year. As I passed it the blue flowers were opening, for it is the sun before eleven that is the persuasive flower-opener—at noon he only blinks straight into their bright eyes.

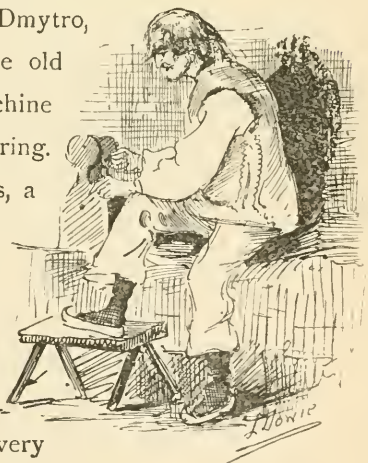


Her aprons were darker than in the other villages of my sipping; they had a green thread instead of the erst-familiar tinsel. Herself she had embroidered, in an ornamental button-hole stitch, the edges with orange. Her fair and very pretty head was bound *Żabie-*

manner—which is conspicuously Byzantine in suggestion—with a red and orange shawl; and she wore round Turkish beads on her neck, infinitely prettier, simpler, though less characteristic and striking than the confused cascades of pearls, green glass, coral, and amber that obtained in Mikuliczyn. The simplicity of the necklaces had in all probability something to say to the fact that Żabie water was healthier, and did not produce those growths in the throat to which my eyes had grown nearly accustomed and reconciled. The hand movements which the spindle imposed were charming and very various. When the wool ran thick, she leaned forward and gripped it neatly with her fine rows of white teeth or her subtle little lips to thin it out again, spitting out with a certain cachet the threads and fluff that remained in her mouth.

She was the second wife of the handsome Feodor, had been married in the spring, and was only one-and-twenty. All the housework was done by her; but then—there were no beds to make, there was no sweeping or washing of the springy stamped earth floor, and no washing up of cups or plates. When the family assembled for meals they sat round a couple of wooden bowls, one containing *kolesha*, or potatoes,

the other sour milk ; and wooden spoons to the number of the party were dealt out. But Maryjka was only a delightful accessory, not the central figure in the room ; that was her old grandmother, Feodor's mother, sitting at the hand-loom, weaving in three colours, white, black, and grey, with a big shining shuttle, one of the barred blankets, whose fellows, loose to begin with, but thickened upon such a water-mill as I had seen, hung from the rafters beside the spiky ropes of the maize-cobs, plaited together with their own leaves. Upon the bed-bench in the darker corner by the stove sat Dmytro, the grandfather, working the old blackened shuttle-filling machine with a stick and a piece of string. What a fine figure his was, a figure made fine by a fine character, a character built up by a sound, sane, and simple life.



Although it was warm, he wore his sheepskin. Every now and then he got up and carried a roughly-wound shuttle to the loom. It was an easy business his ; he could pause very often, for the loom worked

slowly with a grave equality to slow majestic time. That was one of its grandest features. I think its dignified assurance resulted from a consciousness of absoluteness. Nothing could proceed without it ; all the growing, shearing, washing, carding, spinning, and spooling must come to it at last, must go through it. It was a First Necessity—against it there was no appeal. It lumbered solemnly through its business, and the note of the shuttle travelling through the warp was that of the shuttle travelling back again, and that was as the note of the wooden shift that closed the threads at every journey—*must*.

The woman, the good grandmother Varvara, gripped the treadles with her bare feet, every toe stretched to its duty ; and the hours slipped over calmly, quietly, and happily to the loom's rough useful music, while the blanket on the floor added heavy fold to fold.

Both Dmytro and Varvara had faces lined and carved like some tree-trunk, and their thin grey hair hung round in strands as the fine grey-green lichen hangs from the oldest pines. Both were remarkably fine faces—the eyes that clear water-hazel colour, the colour of the streams that climb down the Highland hills among the nut bushes—it is the colour that best

harmonises with the mountains. In every way these people were the best samples I came across. Always I have been ready, anxious to respect and admire the peasant, and have felt that if he made use of his enviable lack of opportunities to be trivial, artificial, and superfluous, he would be a person to be envied, he would be good, he would be ideal. He would live almost as fine a life as an animal; he could be almost as great, effective, simple, and one-purpose-serving as a forest tree.

These people touched the basis of my pedestal; and, if I had known them better, I might have dared to put them upon it.

I did not leave that hut without recognising that the "Stimmung" of themselves and all that scene was owed to the wool. No other sort of work gives the calm, the patience, the inspired monotony, the felicitous amplex that results from all business with wool.

In England I know a household where, after the eight o'clock breakfast, it is usual to behandle one's skeins, find one's knitting, and continue the long even rounds of the stocking begun yesterday, or copy patiently the completed gusset in the sleeve of a spencer. The "click" of the steel pins, and the

“clock” of the wooden ones, makes the most perfect accompaniment for me as I read. I like to read theorists—not criticasters, philosophers—not controversialists; and they may be never so deep, never so intricate, the sound of these needles, the regular interlooping of that soft even wool, and the endless continuity with which it slips from the ball upon the floor, soothes, cheers, and stimulates me to my best efforts.

Towards eleven, some one rises and goes to see after dinner, but soon comes back to the work again. Neither dinner nor aught else could be a trouble or a difficulty in a house where so much wool has taught its lesson of long patience.

Although the high perfection of all woolly occupations is found in the eternal eventlessness of their processes, still there is much to be learned when accident, in the shape of human fallibility, creeps in and prepares a knot or tangle. This happened sometimes with the loom, and I have often seen it among my English friends. The long-suffering and endurance of the wool seems to call out a corresponding quality in the workers; and, if this be strong enough, both emerge unharmed, strong, soft, and pliable as ever for the work that is their use, and end, and aim.

I dearly like to dream of those long colourless days spent with my knitting family. I think we count the hours by "rounds," and "purl and plain" or "rig and fur" tick off the seconds. I can sit a long time looking at the sock that I began when last I saw them, and I tell myself that I would give £5 to know that I might honestly spend a London day, broken only by very simple meals, with that pretty "mixture" and my four steel pins. But oh, a London day is serious and bristling with demands. There's not a moment to wind a skein off the backs of two chairs, and very little leisure to reflect upon a long-gone fortnight's visit when I was seized with a passion of plain sewing, and sat the hour through at my seam.

Well, it is not every one who yearns for quiet dulness as the eager cow yearns for the clover-field on the far side of the fence, and there is no reason why I should bore the reader with what I care for: let me tell rather of Maryjka's strange cookery, which she engaged in when her rock was spun out, and the spindle so bloated it could scarce buzz on the floor.

A fine wood fire was going, and a pot of potatoes had been boiled. These she turned into a wooden trough, long, perfect in form, hollowed from a tree,

where they were kneaded to a stiff plastic mass—a few handfuls of maize-meal and young onions—leaf, root, and all chopped up—being added. This she welded into two formidable cannon balls of an almost alarming strength and cohesiveness. Then a long wooden stick, with a round flat piece of wood at its end, was produced, and upon this she flattened each ball, turning with one hand, shaping with the other. Having cleared the lighted wood-ash from two spots in the long white fire-hole, she shook a bannock carefully from the spud-shaped spade to bake, and, using a small wood-rake to gather it, drew the still glowing wood-ash round their edges.

My whole soul swelled with the poetry of this process—the manner of it, the girl's direct way, the ingredients, the tools, the delicate rose-grey flakes of the wood-ash;—all seemed epic to me, and I sat watching the steam drying off those ideally real bannocks, as the heat stole into them, I hardly daring to breathe.

Outside, the daylight had gone home, and within the hut it was dim enough—just that dusk, pregnant moment after which something fine might happen. Whether I was hungry, had been thinking too much, or was over uplifted by the influence of that room or

that loom needs not to say ; but the twenty minutes of waiting, before those bannocks "happened," was a nearly prayerful ecstasy to me.

As they stood cooling, browned, dry of skin, white-dusty, or a trifle blackened where the ash had been too ardent, I looked at them and wondered that they made so little impression on the painter and the rest.

Finally, when the bowl of milk was brought in, and the kolesha was ready, they bade me break a bit off one of those elemental bannocks.

The loom was still ; upon the wall above it the crucifix flanked by two pistols had familiar place. Varvara had been pacifying a calf, but came in and sat down beside the row of shelves that held the earthen dishes, patterned in yellow and green. All the shelves sloped, not from a failure to be straight, but from matured purpose ; still they were just as useful, and the dishes did not mind.


Maryjka passed spoons to the painter and me. Dmytro, for some reason or other, had taken off his kiptar and sat beside me on the stove-shelf. For my part, I was wondering that some noble line of verse or Scripture did not come to me as I held the bit of bannock. None occurring, nor yet a grace, I con-

ceived eating to be in itself a sacrament, and essayed a bite.

Food so prepared from such material should have had a finer taste!—if it had been cold, perhaps—or it may have been the onions that were amiss; and yet I liked onions—it was perplexing. There was no handy solution of the fact, and yet—that bannock was *not nice*.

My bitter sorrow! I tried a second bit; but no, I could not eat it; and from that moment the communion of this charming family went by me and said no word. I was absent-minded over my *kolsha*, and ate more than I wanted. The painter wondered at my silence, my abstraction, my depression when he prompted me with sentences of thanks and good-night. I was quite silent during the walk to the post-office. How could I have explained to him my disappointment, or the rudeness of that disillusioning?

CHAPTER XVIII.

N the finest morning of all time, I set out for the high mountains. All the pale iridescent blues and pinks and yellows of a pearl played down the long distances, and the valley was drunk with sunshine. Between the eye and every object there was a pale golden quiver in the air which made the commonest things a trifle unreal; and though the day was still, and every wind at pause, the wayside poplars had a silver twitter all of their own, and said things to me as I passed; while in the hayfields the grasshoppers were going like a nail-factory.

In the singeing heat of ten o'clock I trotted through the length of Żabie, turned a corner out of the village, and keeping the Czeremosz always on my left, wound my way among the bases of the hills.

My young peasant Jura (Yura), Feodor's brother-in-law, had come for the pure love of coming—so he said. The horses were capable, and the packs

seemed evenly balanced upon them. I was moderately certain that the things left behind in the charge of the post-mistress would not be touched, and I was prepared not to care if they were. A lump of bread and some of the friable Krimsen cheese was in my sack ; also, some tea, maize-meal, and potatoes. My temper was even, and the sun at his best. The weather and the world were with us, and little by little as we approached them, the big mountains lifted corners of their delicate veils and allowed their rough old features to show through.

To be alone with a great deal of scenery is intoxicating ; I had to sing when the solitudes grew quite assured. I was sorry, because the little snakes and lizards were asleep, sweltering on the grey rock faces, and I daresay it annoyed them ; but I had to.

Then it came that I must get off my horse, and feel the ground myself at first-hand. As I walked, there was a springy resistance to my feet—was it that the earth heaved itself beneath my sandals, and impelled me forwards ?

Next I had to take my cap and coat off, so as to have as little as might be between me and the hot gold air. When I pinched my arm to see if “this be I !” the pain which I felt seemed far away, and as

though it were felt by some one else that I had sense of. I was sure that a light dry champagne was running in my veins—or only the sunshine made fluent ; and I knew that whatever happened, nothing would matter, nothing would affect me so long as those big conditions of sky and air remained what they were.

About twelve or one I rolled and fell down the cliff front, that the river's years and tempers had left so jagged, and lay about in the milder whirlpools of the stream. It wasn't a river to drown you. There may have been many holes over my depth, but none but what I might have warsled out of. It was rather a river to beat you to death ; callously, and in about five minutes.

I had left Jura sitting about among the lizards away up there on the path, turning his little tobacco-pouch, with its leather strings and tassels ornamented by brass thimbles, inside out and back again, in the hope of collating dust enough for a cigarette. Mindful that he was to be with me several days, I did not immediately offer him any, and disregarded his wistful face with coolly comprehending smiles and nods. When I got back the horses had had time for a light meal—a very light meal !—upon the spaces among the little fir-trees. I caught a lizard or two for diversion's

sake. They were not emerald green, but just the common olive-yellow-brown fellows that I have found everywhere, only larger, and in very fine condition. I expect they would have been good to eat, and half thought of trying them if things grew anyways urgent, and the food question rankled too practically. It would have hurt me to kill them, though, for once I had a merry little lizard to friend for some months, since when every lizard is my brother and my playmate.

Passing by the banks of a stream, we found a peasant fishing, and exchanged gladly fifteen kreutzers for his catch of four or five trout, wrapped moistly in a dock-leaf. Every few yards there were strawberries set ready; and Jura, clinging terribly to my hand, would let himself down precipices in quest of the yet more adventurous raspberry, whole bushes of which he retrieved, so that when riding I set them in the horse's head-stall, and picked the berries at my leisure.

At one point we were met by a peasant and five horses, black and white piebalds, coming down from the polonina; they were the finest I saw of the famous Huculy Arabs, and I could scarcely get by for admiration and delight. Beyond this, the way would have been lonely save for the flowers; all

were out—every flower that had a bud at all had burst it and spread its petals to the sun. There were the usual wonderful blue, and violet, and pink things that England and Scotland offer, besides all the blue, violet, and pink things that they do not; and there was the yellow elecampane, the plant that sprung from Helen's tears, and has all the sweetness of her at its root. But I gathered nothing save a nodding scabius for my button-hole, and a great silver ground-thistle for my cap. We rested nowhere long, for the path became ever more arduous, and only between four and five did we find ourselves upon a sort of avenue half a mile wide, and laid with the vivid bushes of the whortleberry, upon a hill which Czerna-hora had chained like a buttress to her side.

Any likeness to Scotland and to Switzerland, to the Austrian Tyrol, to any high places I have seen, was left out of the landscape, and I was glad. Karpathian scenery in all its rough disregard of the canons of beauty elected by the tourist swelled round me in a sea of grey-green mountain waves; and away in the front one could detect the black patches of creeping fir, and the lighter one of the little rose-flowered rhododendron—two shrubs that have ac-

cepted an exclusive contract for the clothing of the furthest hills.

I ate a great deal of fruit, principally because there was nothing else, and finer whortleberries were never milked from whortle bushes; a combination handful of rasp, straw, and whortle berries—Jura's unaided discovery—was sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

About five o'clock we sighted a hut beneath a polonina, and I knew it for the place the painter had described to me. It was there that I was to ask a night's shelter. For a long time, indeed, till we were close upon it, I could not make out what the brilliant shining green vegetation might be that surrounded it, upon the top of which it appeared to be set—grass I saw it could not be. Cabbages? no, absurd! the idea of cabbages in such a situation. But at a hundred yards it lay declared, the common nettle-docken, the stuff that no creature will eat, that grows where sheep have pastured, and that is for no use except to relieve a nettle-sting on the hand of a little child. A wonderful silence brooded over all the scene, a silence so ample that certain sounds of wood-cutting from within the hut, slight as they were, seemed to shriek upon the air. I walked up

the little mound in front of the horses and Jura, pushed open the door, and turned on my right into a room that was empty. Barely glancing round it, I crossed the entrance passage towards the room whence came the sound of listless cooping, took off my cap, and entered with the sign of the cross and "Slawa."

An old man was sitting at a rough lathe, and round him were the white shavings of the wooden pitchers he was fashioning. I don't know if he felt surprised by the strangeness of my appearance; he did not look so. No doubt many a light-footed *Majka*, a Karpathanian oread or mountain nymph, with cloud for covering and hair made of the mist, had put her head in at that doorway; still, he replied to my greeting, and my "Dobry Dzień, Gazda," which I followed up with "Bożé pomahaj!" (God help the work)—a phrase common in Ruthenia, as it is also in some parts of Ireland.

He was bending over his mandrel again, but nodded a "Diakuvati," and I sat upon the bench and watched a band of wood smoothed and bent skilfully round the pitcher. It was natural that he should care little for the casual stranger. He looked neither for news—what could news be to him?—tobacco, nor aught else. There he worked without haste and without zest

while the daylight was with him, perhaps because he was too old to go out herding the cattle or tending the sheep. Round him were the big empty hills, friendly to him no doubt, and speaking of whiles with the voice of a cracked cow-bell or the tinkle from the neck of a black bell-wether. In the evening would come in the herds from their long watch on the windy poloninas, and the women who milk the sheep and make the cheese.

They had left him enough cold *kolesha* on a dish, and a lump of bannock—the elemental bannock of my lost dreams and dead enthusiasm!—water stood by in one of his own pitchers; milk was in the second room for the fetching. He did not smoke, as I soon found; and for company there were two little kids, one black and one grey, which ran in and out, and were the charge of a black-eyed boy who preferred the sunny slopes and the berry-bushes.

Loneliness is a foreign thing in these desolate places; the word has no meaning, and seems to die out; I cannot explain how, but so it is, for this too came to me. There remains only the immense companionable solitude of the broad grass-covered shoulders and the pine-tree stretches; even villages would be tame to a soul thus accustomed. What could he

want with people about him—society? “There is no scent in it so wholesome as that of the pines, nor any fragrance so penetrating and restorative as the life everlasting on high pastures.”

When Jura came up, having tied the disgusted horses among the green dockens, all barren of any sustenance as these were, there was a little desultory conversation, and it transpired that from ten to a dozen people, as well as odds and ends of children, shared the hut at night.

With the rashness of the unexperienced and foolhardy young person, I glanced round the dimensions of the rooms, and then looked up upon the brilliant sky. It was early—there would be three more hours of light and one of navigable twilight before the luminant star-freaked dark.

Shavings would be fine sleeping, but—all those people, and no stream big enough to cleanse me in the morning! I preferred not to face it, so unhitched the horses, rubbed the kids’ soft noses for the last time, got a drink of water, nodded to the solemn unconcerned old cooper, and got upon my way.

This was rash, and should have resulted worse than it did, in order to teach me my lesson, which reads thus: “When, at end of a day’s travel, you

come upon a seat, and that seat has a shelter over it, remain seated thereupon." Sufficient unto the day is the hill-tramping thereof.

Turning upon our right, we crossed a stony, half-hearted streamlet, and just ahead of us Czerna-góra shrugged a big green shoulder; "awound the wugged wocks," as we used to say a good many years ago. I was rejoiced to understand that a cattle-herd occupied a shelter; cheerfully I ascended, in front of the horses, among the scrub and raspberry tangles.

From a little distance a path will appear as clear as the proverbial pike-staff (I have often wondered what a pike-staff was); proceed along said path for half-an-hour and try to look round you, and you will make the discovery that you are lost. We did. Things were no longer a question of handfuls of this or that fruit, and flicking gad-flies from the bellies of the horses with a fern frond or a raspberry twig; a pavement of grey rock fragments, equally rough and impassable everywhere, filled in among the roots of the black crawling firs.

These were a man and a half high, not to be climbed, therefore useless as far as prospecting went, and furnished with a developed springiness in their

resinous boughs which enabled them to slap you in the face as you passed better than any other tree I know. There was a white starry flower of a very lovely pattern sprinkled about at their feet, but I was getting past starry flowers and other decorative matters, for I knew that I had lost my way, and that Jura had lost his way, and that the horses and all of us had lost our way.

There was nothing for it—I had to send Jura back to get that lazy urchin who had been playing with his kids; he knew the path and could set us on it; so leaving me with the bewildered horses, Jura set off back to the hut. At first I excursed in various directions, thinking to light upon a track, and the horses whinnied to me from time to time when I called to them, but I gave this up soon enough, and came back to where they were rock-fast like any sheep, and watched them nosing at the starry white flower, waiting hopefully and cheerfully for the bear that would have made such a big thing of it if he had happened along.

In not much more than an hour Jura returned with the urchin, who might have brought the path in his pocket, it seemed so near hand when he came.

We could only thank him as he slipped off through

the dusky scrub, back to his two kids ; and then, with neither singing nor whistling, nor any other live soul-sign, I tramped along unmindful of the way, till we came out on the bushy verges of a polonina, where the wild bluebell made homely signals to my tartan, and got never a word in reply.

Fortunately the light had held, and through the first films of twilight that spread between me and all that was ahead I sighted a quantity of grazing oxen, and was well assured I should find the herd in their neighbourhood.

Upon a grassy outline I did indeed descry the figure of a man, dark against the silver-grey and gold of the evening, beside a leaning cross.

These crosses were a great and never-ceasing wonder to me. In the valley they meant only one thing, they were a reminder to the peasant of his Christ ; in the mountains they had a choice of significances, all inclining towards the practical.

“That cross,” the painter had said to me, as we went through a big green wood near Kosmacz, “that cross means that somebody has died or been murdered and buried here.” I loosed my imagination to the impression produced by the explanation, and built a phrase upon it which I have since forgotten. But,

some hours later, we saw a gaunt wooden one erect upon a rocky hill.

“Aha! there’s a cross,” the painter cried; “now you will get something to drink; they always put them up when there’s a spring of good water close at hand!” While he was finding the spring, and later, when he was lying on his face drinking in long breaths like a tired horse, I tried to disentangle my mind from the confusion into which it had fallen, with the connecting of a murderer’s—no, a murdered man’s grave and a pure water spring; but thirst overcame me, and I did not get far with it.

Then it was upon one of the many occasions that we got hopelessly lost in Czerna-góra that Jura sighted the blessed emblem.

“*Nu!*” he shouted, “there’s a cross at last; that must be Szpyci!” I was sitting down awaiting events. “Some one else murdered!” I wondered vaguely, “and was he called Szpyci;” but Jura was explaining that the higher peaks were indicated by a cross, and I gathered that those that had been geographically measured were thus distinguished. Not long after, I acquired the habit of passing a cross in reflective silence.

Meantime Jura had gone up to the herd, and they

were talking together. I lay upon my face, thoughtfully eating whortleberries; be it remembered I had had no meal that day, and though fruit be limitless, it is not satisfying. I was glad when the fellow came back with the intelligence that we could have the hut for the night; the herd himself would only stay behind to cut pine-boughs for the Pani to sleep on, then he would follow, and make us supper. I determined I would make his supper on that occasion, and hoped inwardly there would be some milk to be had. There was none; with half a hundred head of cattle idling about, not one of them was a cow to be of service.

We had to go down the polonina to the beginning of a great black wood in whose highest corner was the shelter. The approach was a damp enclosure, stamped by the feet of many oxen. My heart was so sore for my postoli that I thought of making Jura carry me over to the door, but I judged he wasn't strong enough, so sat down and took them off, counting upon a stream within the wood to wash my feet in.

The hut was loosely built, with a profound recognition of the value of "fresh air in the dwelling," as the health-pamphlets have it. Between the pine-logs was a handsome inch of space where whatever was

outside in the way of weather could come in ; in the roof two large holes served—the one as chimney, the other as window. Upon the bench running round the wall were various dishes ; some with a remnant of the herd's simple meals, others with medicaments or common salt for the cattle. In the middle of the floor a white heap of ash and two charred logs were kicked into a fire by Jura in two minutes. Then the burly herd, a fine black-curled fellow, wearing towards forty, came in with an armful of fir-branches which he piled in a corner to be spread later as my bed.

While Jura unloaded the tired horses and turned them loose in a sparse paddock, the herd unwound the paper from a cigarette-end and stuffed the remnant into his brass-headed pipe. Of the long history he unfolded to me, with much gesture and many eye-flashings, I only gathered that that ubiquitous bear which never showed himself, but was always within a mile of me, had been giving a great deal of trouble lately, and obliged the herd to sleep up the polonina among his beasts.

While I fried the five small fishes in some extremely rancid butter, Jura and the herd, whose name I never knew, attempted to explain the latest bear incidents with much laughter and vivid pantomime.

I understood a good deal too much of it for my comfort, but my fish needed my whole mind. Fortunately, you may cook with very bad butter without destroying your *plat*; the point would seem to be that the butter should have been good to begin with, it doesn't matter how long ago that was.

When we sat round, each with a fish, which we held tail and head, passing our teeth along it backwards and forwards like a child playing upon a comb, I listened open-eyed to the herd's bear statistics, literally skin-clamming as these were. By the time *kolesha*, made from the meal I had brought, was before us in the one-eared iron pot, I was hearing how two nights ago that bear had knocked upon the door, long, suggestively, with a muffled forepaw, and then padded round the house at his long swinging gait, murmuring in a fashion very unpleasant to hear.

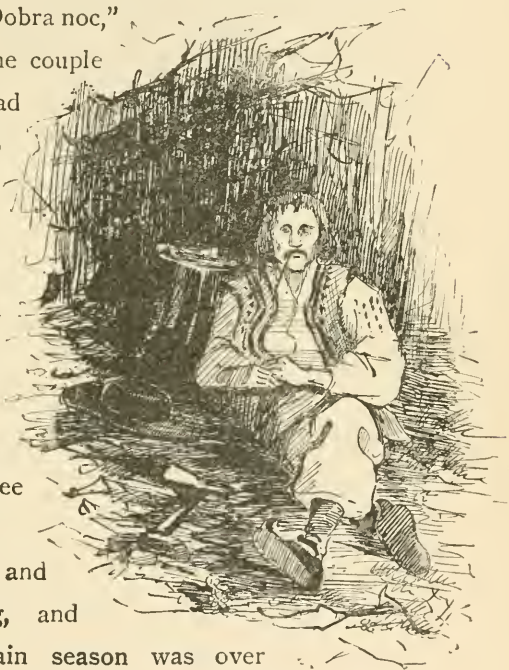
Each night the herd had gone forth with a burning pine-knot, howling dismally to remind him that he was there and wakeful. Sometimes a bear, denied legitimate admittance, would sit upon the roof the night long. These were merry fables!

But the sum of them was that a fire should be kept up and a burning pine-knot carried round the precincts at intervals by a person who could howl. I

promised that Jura, who was fetching in more wood, should do this, and the herd decided that we had a fair chance of being undisturbed.

With that, and a last draught of water from a pitcher, he said "Dobra noc," and went off to the couple of boards he had up the polonina to serve him as bed, taking a lump of scalding kolesha in his hand to be supper for his boy or runner.

This herd got thirty gulden (three pounds) for fourteen weeks' night and day cattle-tending, and when the mountain season was over went down to one of the villages where he had his belongings and his home. It was early when I lay down, feet to the fire, upon my pine-branch bed. Jura rolled himself in his blanket and fell a-snoring on the bench. Thus the night went



over. He slept with an exquisite continuity quite pleasant to see, and I lay listening for that bear. At intervals I made the fire up, and two or three times set a convenient brand burning, unbarred the door and circled through the wood with lugubrious howls, to which the herd, away up the polonina, politely responded.

It seemed to me I was giving that bear every chance. If he had come I should have thrown the fire in his face (which would have maddened him) and made a break for the hut, where, as it was, I expected to find him engaged on Jura each time I came back.

Returning from my last round, I did see something through the half-opened doorway—a large white furry something. With the silly suggestiveness of a brain that outjumps one's thoughts, it struck me that this was a white bear—a Polish . . . no, a Polar . . . but before I could tell myself what a fool I was, the great big sheep dog had his nose in my hand, and was speaking to me. He had left his master, and come in search of breakfast.

It was nearly four, so I woke up Jura by throwing soft hot wood ash in his face, made the fire blaze, and hung my pot by its ear from the blackened chain.

While the lazy fellow went out to his horses, I washed in the stream, and by five we had had some food, left the horses tethered on a fresh patch of grass, and promising to be back that night, started for the top of Hovella, the highest peak in all that district.

CHAPTER XIX.

SPEAKING largely, there is a similarity in mountains and in mountain-climbing. Conscious that I do not speak with the knowledge of an experienced, nor yet with the enthusiasm of an instinctive climber, I propose to mass the records of the next few days regardlessly together, and say that I went up some six different points. For the better pleasure of persons who revere accuracy, no matter by whom and how unfitly manifested, the names of these may be mentioned: Howella, Pop Iwan, Szpyci (Shpitcee), Grópi—across the frontier, therefore in Hungary—Smotriz, Dziembronia, and others.

To “climbers,” mine, in its fulness, would be a very poor tale. What is a mountain if one may come to its summit without cutting every foothold in the solid snow, without hanging by a mere rope over chasms to which the frozen glacier is an accommodating avenue? “Es schmeckt Einem nicht!”

Yet were these Karpathian peaks made only of the rough-hewn limestone, basalt, dolomite, schiste, or whatever it was, and a wiry grass waved between the fragments which you might crawl over as you listed. Some ill-advised scant flowers dried and crisped among it. I saw the Alpine harebell and one or two other plants common to high altitudes.

To the "climber," again, 8000 feet is as nothing, and neither Howella nor Pop Iwan quite reach this, though they are the most aspiring of the Czerna-góra group. They are not perennially snow-crowned; truly, the fissures are full of a greyish dirty substance—snow, in good faith—itself surprised to be there in August, but quite unable to get away. That snow saved my life.

The ardour with which I raced the final fifty yards to the top of Pop Iwan, after a somewhat rigorous experience lasting through four hours, set me in a fearful glow. I flung myself down upon the rounded summit—(summits are all so round! there is too much of them; the ideal summit will have room for but two feet at once)—I flung myself down, very hot and curious feeling. There was a searching, skinning wind which nowise cooled me; my blood

boiled, but my skin was dry, as though scratched over with a red-hot curry comb. I realised in the next few minutes that something had happened to me, though I did not immediately grasp what it was.

It was blood fever, induced by the burning of a million flea-bites and—other bites. Every morning in the mountains I had awakened to remove lice from the inside of my shirt. No doubt this is very revolting, and there are readers who will wish it had been passed over in silence. Why? They are no worse than fleas or bugs, for they do not bite as much, and they are much easier captured, and—well, I won't expatiate, but, in effect, they have their advantages, and it is well to look upon them with equanimity, for sooner or later the peasants' blankets and persons will provide a few.

Any way, I had a skin and blood fever. It crept gradually upward, and my heart surprised me by pausing and doing cannon-thuds at odd moments. I reflected a good deal upon these symptoms, and realised a new sensation in lying grievous sick upon a mountain-top with such a wealth of space around me. It would have been a very good place to die in, I thought, and lay back against a rock with my

hands upon my breast. Up above two great eagles were kind enough to circle; whether an eagle really is a very tremendous bird or not, I do not know; these seemed a fabulous size to me. Dying in that position the wind could not have reached and blown me away, I was so well sheltered; everything would have decayed in due order, clothes too; finally, my sleeve-links, sparkling still, would have fallen through my bare rib-bones, and be lying in the crevices of my vertebræ as though it had been mended with gold. This stupid phantasy amused and occupied me, and I got through painful minutes by elaborating and filling it out as I need not do here, from which I saw that I was more than a little light-headed, and had best sound the roll-call of my wits. Reassembled, they suggested snow as a fine external application: will it be believed, I had no water-bottle nor aught in a flask with me? The obliging Jura was soon descending impossible places in the search of snow. He brought me up three or four hatfuls, which I shovelled naively inside my shirt, and in an hour I was well and able to go on. Here endeth the second lesson, which I ever afterwards applied, carrying always a few leaves next my skin, and never hurrying when a trifle over-heated.

To such poor practicalities do one's experiences boil down at last.

If, perforce, I must talk of scenery, I would say that what met the eye—(it is thus that one may write around the word "view" when he will not employ it)—from the top of Szpyci was most characteristic, in that it differed most from all rock I have seen elsewhere.

Two immense jagged walls, not more than three feet in thickness, ran down from the ridge on which I sat to a lonely desolate hollow where was a small polonina, with three drinking pools for cattle cut in it. The ridge itself was a genuine sky-line; you could have fallen into the blue on either side of it—at least such was the impression that it made. Upon it the little rhododendron made rich cover, and I picked a few of the then withered rose-scarlet flowers. Those walls were like the broken shell of some old castle, and any one with a light, trivial fancy, who cares "to let it hop a little from her hand," could picture some immense pattern building of Nature's own, from which men, earlier far than the Vikings, copied strong towers and forts to weld upon the mountain sides.

It was in that hollow, where the horses and cattle

seemed to move like torpid ants, and at which I sat long looking, that the painter had proposed to have a hut for a summer studio. Certainly it was a wonderful little Kettle, but—what was there for an artist? Lonely, unknown, far from the madding crowd truly; but what was there to catch hold of? Well, if I do not know that one could paint great pictures there, I am very sure that one could dream great dreams.

The lack of water weighed and preyed upon me very much. I suppose the snow was "all right," but it was not so refreshing, however much you ate of it, as a single cup—I had a silver quaich with me—of pure water would have been, and we could not be certain of bringing up near a spring at evening.

As to sleeping out o' nights, I can only plead that this is to me no hardship, so long as it does not rain too much: it does not require colossal fortitude, or courage, or any of these big words. By the way, what may courage be? and what fortitude? A set of circumstances presents itself, and you, in the middle of those circumstances, which are partly of your own bringing about, take the one simple sensible course open to you. Among mountains which are strange to you, with whose resources you are not

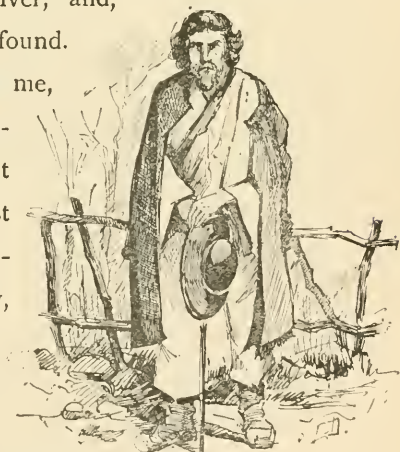
acquaint, there is nothing else to be done when night comes on, except lie down in the shadow of a sun-warmed rock. Bears were so absurdly problematical that I could not consider them, and people there were none, save the overtired and weedy Jura. Beasts are too safely herded at night to come straying over the top of you, even if their instinct might not be trusted to make them blow a moist snuffle of inquiry should they chance upon your neighbourhood. Possibly I do not understand the obstacles and difficulties over which people have shaken their wise heads since I came home, but not appreciating, nor having any knowledge of them, I have been given absurdly too much credit for doing what was most easy and most congenial to me. The cold was never excessive, and though the mountain wind was sometimes such as you could lean upon, it blew, for the most part, lightly enough. If you are to feel frightened of anything when you sleep out (in an uncivilised country such as Czerna-góra), it must be of the mystery of the coming of the day among the hills. All has been said by great poets that might be said of this, and no adjectives would stead me; besides, it is a service and sacrament that is to worship at, not to speak aloud of; but I will grant that what inspires to wide-eyed marvel, im-

potent humility, and even a bowed head, may grow akin to fear when the pale, glistening morning waits among the mysterious angles of the mountains, and then steals greenly, goldly downwards to the valleys.

The cold, as all know who have been abroad at three and four, is bitterest in this time, and fear is cold, and cold is fearsome: the little hour of dawn was the hour I longed most for, dreamed most of, and liked least.

Upon Dziembronja we descended with the horses; here was a village, a river, and, of course, a shelter to be found.

A herd who fell in with me, but whose strange Hungarian speech I could not understand, made the last journey alongside me, principally out of curiosity, and because he liked my tobacco, I imagine. My potatoes were done, my meal would not have lasted



much longer, the tea was finished, and other provisions "had I nane," so was almost forced to reapproach my fellow-man and sister-woman.

'Twas at a large hut on the really lovely Dziem-bronia plateau that I halted, bought hay for the horses, and craved supper for myself and Jura. I will not deny the presence of a certain sense of luxury when I lay down in a roofed, but wall-less shed, for the night.

The Gazdynia (hostess) was a woman with a temper, a mother-in-law and a tyrant, I could see. I am culpably frightened of scolding people, and at once falling in with the habits of the family, kept beautifully out of the way. It made me jump to hear her vociferating in the milk-house. When she came out of the keeping-room hounding the children before her, I slipped round the nearest corner, put my hands in my pockets, and whistled unconcernedly into space.

Having but little language, I knew I was no match for her, and preferred to avoid possible collisions; so pressing a gulden into the hand of the child she seemed to whip least, I laughed and rode away. The Dziembronja river was treated no better than all the others; it was dammed up in a big reservoir among the woods till a sufficiency of rafts had been constructed from the mass of waiting pine-trees, then it was let loose upon them, and went seething down to

the Czeremosz, whose tributary it was. The Czeremosz had been loosed two hours later, so that the Dzymbronia should join its greatest force, and they could pound the rafts forward together.

A like principle was pursued with the Biszczic (Bishchits approximately !), thus, when the Czeremosz, with these and others, drove through Żabie, it went at a good pace and took much with it.

Of course I had a bathe in the Dziembronia's reservoir, which was deep and still, with golden beech leaves dropping into it, and certain sham airs of being "an ornamental lake" in a nobleman's park about it. Below the lock the pines tarried in vast quantity. If I minded much seeing what is called a waste of good material—which I don't—I should have been pained many times in the mountains by the sight of grand trees cut down and rotting.

But what of it? What would the people do with them that might be better than what they do with those they have? And for all common purposes wood is still plentiful. The wreckage of it looks grand among the mountains, and the young trees spring up among the pine-corpses to be favoured with mad transit to Czerniowce, or go to wreck in their turn. This rafting had a fascination for me; surely

it would be simple to send Jura and the horses back to Žabie, and go there myself upon a raft? From the moment this idea presented itself to the moment at which I started its fulfilment was somewhat short of one hour.

What is raft travelling like? Well, nothing that I can think of! There are twelve or ten trees lopped, stripped, and tied together with withes of their own bark; the slimmer ends of the trees naturally make the bow, the thicker the stern, and there is fastened what may for clearness sake be called a rudder. It is a stake of pine wood, that catches eternally in the river's bottom, and, save in the bigger streams, is no use at all; as it is, commonly speaking, rived off at an early period, replaced once or twice, and finally washed away, no account need be taken of it. Two men manage one raft, to which are attached from three to eight other rafts; each man has a rough oar—of the sempiternal pine wood—with which he may stave off himself and his lumber from a rocky ruin. A stake is driven in between two trees, and upon this coats, sacks, or other luggage, are hung; then you step aboard, and having taken off socks and postoli you wait for the lock gates to be loosened, when you see “how the water comes down at Lodore.”

The rush, the bang, the excitement, the shouting, the yellow foam—churned, curdled, lashing, and bubbling, snatching at obstacles and bearing them away impotent, resistless; the continuous rumble of displaced rocks, the rattle of chased gravel, pebbles, and sand! Then, indeed, you may hear “the boulders talking together in the bed of the river.” Suddenly there is a snap and a shock, and you fall promptly upon your face, humbled before an unknown power; arisen, you will see one goodly tree torn from your flotilla, and you wring ruefully the water from your clothing.

If not upon the first raft, you may be stuck for hours across the stream, the water washing over you; for it is the first volley of the water that works the best miracle of speed and safety. In the changes and chances of this mode of transit your ship may strike upon a rock and fly in pieces; then, indeed, you will be in the river, and death, in the shape of other ships, may wait upon your heels; but, with the fortune that attends the unsolicitous, you may arrive, wet, shaken, hot, laughing, amused, and conscious of having had a thorough “lark!”—the word is imperative in this connection.

It was, after all, upon my horse that I re-entered

Żabie. The sun dried me to an appearance of external respectability again before I faced the village. But, after leaving the rafts and their vagaries, there was an Incident—may I be allowed, in consideration of the infrequency of their occurrence, to use a capital I? The Incident assailed me in a Jewish half-way house where I proposed eating “a little something,” and awaiting the passing of Jura and the horses. The woman had brought me sour milk, and I sat in a small deal-lined room drinking it with closed teeth—an instinctive though futile precaution—while she was fetching me some butter and a small brown bread. I hunted out a corner of sheep’s cheese, bought in Dziembronia, which was knocking about in the bottom of my sack, and took a common little plate from a shelf to set it on.

The fury of that woman when she returned and saw me with that plate was something piquant to witness. In a little while I gathered that she considered me “unclean.” Me! I looked round the room in undisguised scorn, and finished with my eyes upon her indescribably dirty person. It seemed a conclusive comment—to myself, but her views were otherwise. In her estimation, and, despite everything I could affirm to the contrary, I was a

Christian. This meant that I was "unclean," and never again could she or any of her household use that plate! Argument was, of course, superfluous, so I offered to buy the thing, and handed her the twenty-five kreutzers she swore she had paid for it. When she had left me, growlingly, I addressed myself to my meal and glanced at the little dish. It was neat enough, of coarse pottery, with an unimaginative flower in colours at its centre. She came back to know if I wanted more milk just as I was slipping it into my sack. I had paid for the bread and milk beforehand and was preparing to go, thinking that Jura was about due.

"What!—I was going to carry off that plate—her plate? That was vastly unfair!"

"My good woman," I answered, "you sold it me—it is mine now; and, besides, you said it was no longer any use to you?" Right was obviously on my side, and I could laugh as I shouldered my sack and walked out, turning a deaf ear to her anger and her sneer of "Christian" and "unexampled robbery," &c.

Come once more to Žabie, I dashed up the garden-path by the post-office and into my room, with the feeling that there might be something in padded

chairs and the like after all. It was the work of a moment to discover that my things were as I had left them, and the work of the next moment to realise the odd silence in the whole place.

The post-mistress's abominably stupid servant trailed in from the neighbourhood of the pig-styes to tell me that my landlady and her husband had departed that day in the post-cart, a long wooden peasant cart of the ordinary pattern, to Kossów, where she desired to pick the currants in her garden, or some such trifle.

So I was alone in my glory!

The village soon got wind of my re-arrival, and the painter came round to hear of my adventures, and to tell me that he had succeeded in buying, for twenty-five gulden, the immense coloured blanket which I had admired in the house of a peasant some days before my start for Czerna-góra. A moment or two later a man staggered in with the thing on his shoulders, threw it on the floor, and offered me twenty-seven gulden for it on the spot, since he had never seen a handsomer, or one wrought in a greater variety of vivid colours.

I gave him two gulden for his pains, but would not part with the blanket, which was, and is, magni-

ficent, and not to be equalled for solid worth and woolliness.

Then, over some very thick coffee which the servant resuscitated from somewhere, I told the painter of all that had not happened to me, and arranged briefly for my departure from Žabie within the next few days.

CHAPTER XX.

It was at this time that the Pope's family came in handy. Without them, I should have starved where I sat; for, knowing that the post-mistress was away, the people did not send the usual supplies of eggs, milk, and butter, nor was there any one to bake bread. A large basket, therefore, sent over by this humane family, containing many nice things, and including the very smallest roast of mutton I had ever seen, was more than welcome, and I had much ado to know how to express my thanks. Scarce content with laying me under so important an obligation, the Pope's daughters, who had heard that the native art of the country much interested me, sent two bead necklaces—not strung beads, but beads worked in charming patterns upon no background at all; and allowed the painter to bid for the beautifully embroidered dress that their farm-girl wore. As these girls rarely had more than one dress—so far as I was able to ascertain—I could conceive that certain inconveniences

might result to her employers; and I appreciated the attention the more in consequence.

There were many articles of dress and other little matters I could have wished to buy, but the honesty of offering the peasants money for what they had seemed to me questionable, and I refrained as far as possible from doing it. Money, even if one give more than the original price, does not represent the queer brass ornament that Feodor has worn at his belt for ten years, nor the tobacco-pouch that has stuck to him in sunshine and in rain; nor to Jewdocha (Yevdocha) could it be the equivalent of the gown she has embroidered in a long winter—the gown that he told her she looked so pretty in: as well buy the smiles from their faces, or the laughter from their eyes, if that were possible; and that they would gladly sell you the lot is no argument in your favour. I have never been very clear as to the nature of conscience and the worth of it, or its proper place in one's moral economy, but it seems to come in here as well as anywhere.

“In Kossów,” said the painter to me, “you will find everything in a shop; you will be robbing no one—rather will the Jews you deal with be robbing you.” Well, yes, I was fairly certain of that!

Now Kossów (Kossouff) was said to be a town. When I had asked where the peasants sold their produce, where they bought their meal when the maize failed them, as it often did, the answer had been invariably Kossów. The little Maryjka Soriuk, when showing me her three spare pairs of aprons—one for Sundays, with a silver and a gold thread woven in it alternately—had referred to her visit to Kossów just prior to her marriage. She had come to Feodor with two dresses and four pairs of aprons—three that had never been worn at all; and as yet he had not had to give her a single thing. Proud little woman!

It may be imagined that I looked forward to Kossów, and agreed readily that I had better drive there with a certain ostentation, in a peasant's cart. Positively, there was a Casino (hotel) at Kossów, where I might lodge at my own charges once more if a room chanced to be vacant; if not, I was to assail the home of the local doctor, who was a man far above the average and possessed of wisdom—so the painter said. The continued heat was the principal incident of my drive. It was so exquisitely violent that the silver ground thistles opened and shone like diamonds on the hill-sides, and I cut a magnificent

one, finer than the brooch of Lorne, to wear in the side of my Tam o' Shanter. Being a Saturday, an air of silence and peacefulness hung about the little "Karczma" in Jaworów (Yavorouf), where I halted for some beer, and a table at which to eat the remnants of the Pope's bounty. I have since had the feeling that nothing should have been served or sold me, since it was their Sabbath; but at the time this did not occur to me, and it would not, in any case, have been my business to remind the host of the "Karczma" of his religious obligations.

A piece further on the road we lost the pin of a wheel, came handsomely to the ground, and skirred along in the white dust. No damage was done, however, and after wasting three-quarters of an hour trying to find it, we made shift with a nail and a bit of string. I have never come across the road accident that cannot be made good through the employment of one or other, or both of these mediums.

A mile outside the town, according to my custom, I pulled up and bathed. The water, though that of a hill-river, was quite flat and warm, and *fade*, offering small refreshment. Thereafter, in the incurious twilight, we rattled into Kossów.

For all I then knew and had seen of the people and

the villages, Kossów was something quite new for me. It lay at that point where the hills and the flat lands touched hands upon a sequence of slopes and rising ground, rich with fruit and maize-gardens, having an atmosphere that wed the freshness of the mountain air with the balmy mildness of the valley ; having, further, a river, a backing of woodland, and fine shelter : in short, a group of natural advantages such as it is peculiarly rare to discover.

It was a Jew's town, and its inhabitants waxed fat by reason of the influx of far village people, who voyage thither with their two horses and the guildens that would assuredly burn to ashes the red Ruthenian pocket that all wear. The long street, which was the vertebræ of Kossów, was set on each side with the familiar blue-washed Jewish houses, all of which were shops. In the middle came the Ringplatz, the square round which it was decreed all Polish and Ruthenian towns should gather themselves, and then the street continued itself ; this time the houses were not shops, but sturdy, white, single-storied dwellings of a better class. Through this street, black with Jews in their Sabbath black gaberdines or caftans, and squealing with chivied, lop-eared pigs, we drove to the Casino. There, if one

is a Kossów lady, one may enter in and consume polite draughts of raspberry vinegar and other cloying syrups, as I learned later, and there we stopped while my man went in and made inquiry.

Passing always up and down was the crowd of Jews: women, in too long, dragging skirts, pink bodices of print, and a white or lemon muslin handkerchief laid three-corner wise upon their heads and tied once beneath the chin; men, with the detestable long, narrow robes or coats (I don't know what to call them, but they resemble the black cassock of a High Church clergyman), white cotton stockings showing to mid-calf, and black fore-shoes covering the foot to the instep and having no heel; on their heads large round velvet hats, bordered with brown lux-fur—repulsive Shylocks every one of them; and, speaking quite without prejudice, uniformly repellent of expression.

Their habit, noticed by me on the Kolomyja platform, of standing inconceivably close-packed, and the readiness with which they formed a group to see all they could of me, was amusingly apparent as I waited outside the Casino. Vultures do not gather quicker above the yet warm corpse than hooded Jews about the quite cool stranger.

But I was roused from my reflections by the coming of mine host, a civil Pole, and the mob pressed closer to hear what he had to say.

It seemed there was a room, only one room vacant, and though to him it would have been a rapture to receive the most noble Herrschaft, his conscience required that he should impart to her one thing—the mattress on the bed was filled with *goat's hair!*

Nu! Every one in the town, the other Herrschaft, would be honoured in the tarrying of the by him for ever to be respected noble lady, but—his best rooms, his two superb rooms, were occupied by mining engineers, and it was with heart's sorrow that he confided that the mattress upon the bed in the third remaining room *was filled with goat's hair!*

For myself I had not, and have never had, any case against goat's hair, but I observed immediately from the tone in which the excellent creature spoke, that it was something to be avoided; so I nodded intelligently, tuned my voice to his own mysterious but regretful key, and having decided to exploit the doctor's, we parted with tears in our eyes.

Everybody knew the doctor's house, and my rattly cart drew up infallibly at the closed door of a sheet-white cottage, of the French suburban villa type. All

was dark in the front, as I say, and it grew no lighter despite my suggestive bell-ringing, and still more persuasive knocking, so I sent the peasant round to the back, and was delighted to find that Madame, the doctor's cheerful maiden sister, was at home. All the finery of the house was at the front, and all the life and character at the back ; but, in a moment, candles were lit, doors were opened to me, I was received into the family, and allowed to share, or rather begged to take, the whole of what they could offer.

The doctor was a bachelor on the treacherous brink of forty, his sister a pleasant homely lady of about the same age, with a genius for the concoction of food, which probably excelled his for the concoction of physic. They were as hospitable and as reasonlessly friendly as all the Poles I have seen, and they appeared to discern a compliment and an honour in the fact that a total stranger condescended to come down like a wolf on the fold, and make a tariffless hotel of their house for as long as it suited his or her convenience. I took an early opportunity of explaining my attempt and my desire to find lodging at the Casino, and retailed, with a certain tremulous diffidence, the reason of my failure to obtain it. So supreme an expression of sympathetic disgust came

into the faces of my host and hostess, that I actually did not feel able to question them about it. It struck me that the inquiry would be wanting in delicacy, and I found myself blushing and regretting the gaucherie of my reference to those goat's-hair mattresses. At any rate they assured me that I had followed the *only possible* course! They were thankful that I had decided so promptly and saved myself an experience . . . a night upon a goat's-hair mattress. . . . I had indeed done wisely! . . . The result of this very singular maze is, that I am sealed to sleep upon a goat's-hair mattress at the next opportunity. I go about asking for them everywhere, but nobody keeps them. I am thinking of inquiring through the medium of the correspondence column in a lady's paper how this luxury may be obtained, and if anybody would agree to send it me in return for "Sloper's Weekly," posted a week after date of issue, for six months?

Life at the doctor's was infinitely pleasant for a few days. But there is nothing one wearies of sooner than meals; and meals, continuous, successive, surprising, perfectly cooked and served Polish meals, were one of the great attractions of this hospitable household.

To madame I could speak very little, for she knew only Polish. German and French she understood fairly well, although she would never say one word in either language. But the doctor was a fluent German scholar in the jerky Polish manner, and was also a remarkably well-informed man, able to discuss all subjects of present interest, and with views alike developed about philosophy and recipes for spirit distilled from roses.

All day, as I say, there were meals, with little delicate gulps of Vodka before or after them, and wonderful fruit syrups, and imitation ports and champagnes of the doctor's own invention in between. Continual offerings of the first ripe plums, the only two apricots as yet meítow, and the most especial apples found their way to my room, and the doctor's friends dropped in with pleasing frequency and talked of many things.

It was in Kossów that two strange ladies, wives of important officials, asked me to their at-homes, or garden fêtes. One of them sent her carriage for me, though neither could have had time to ascertain that I was not a maniac or a Manichee. There was something too civilised in the idea of these entertainments, and the recollection of such things at home, when the Punch and Judy show is hired from the town and set

up in the shrubbery as a surprise and diversion to guests, suggested too forcibly a comparison. It was more amusing to sit under the oleanders and discourse fustian with the doctor, while consuming the relays of dainties exceeding delicate sent out by the doctor's sister. A mining engineer joined the party, and placed his horse—a beautiful bay Hucul mare—at my disposal, and the manager of a small weaving factory called in. The proposal that I should inspect this factory, and see how it tallied with the great and marvellous factories of my country, met with my approval, and we sallied forth adown the curious street. That little factory is a fitting finish to my chronicle of the mountains, and what obtains among them.

Thus had the place arisen: the doctor, having leisure and a good brain (people cannot very well be ill in these latitudes; they can but die and be born; and these things are so easy to them that there is little room for a doctor's interference)—having these things, the doctor had decided to employ the talent that was running waste among the village people; he, and the mining engineer, and a certain consumptive young man to whom he had given five or six extra years of life, decided to devote themselves to

the business of running up a building and importing machinery from Germany.

I am not quite sure how long this had been going on before I made my visit, but already it was in admirable working order, and the light airy rooms were filled with the hum of looms every working day. I was surprised and amused to hear what a short day the people claimed. Since a Ruthenian rises at four and turns in not much before ten, having no settled moment of rest in all those hours, I had supposed that our sweating system would be the congenial habit of his choice. Not so! They seemed to know, these young men and girls, that working among beasts and green things at your own whim and fancy is very different from standing before a clicking loom that has to be watched and fed eternally, and is so regular in its movements, so irritatingly assured in its output, so exact in its consumption, and clacks so certainly for "more;" and whereas one may do sixteen hours of the one and not feel it, twelve hours of the other makes tired both head and feet.

Linens of a surprising strength, firmness, and variety were turned out in the little factory, but with their woollen achievements I was not so content. In the first place, the "kornopie" (I think this must be a

Polish word meaning "jute") and the flax are grown within a stone's throw of the looms; in the second, they are not using the produce of their fine curly black sheep, but—yarn spun in Bradford, known as mohair, and bought through the expensive medium of some merchant in Vienna.

Of course the leading principle of the whole enterprise falters and goes astray here. Still, if the result had been good—if they had, with their supreme originality and cunning fancy done that with the Bradford yarns which Bradford cannot do—some excuse might have been pleaded, and some object served. As it was, they did not: they did worse a good deal than Bradford would have done, and the thing was largely Bradford's fault. In the storeroom I was shown curtains and aprons woven in bars of differing colours—and what combinations did I not see!

"Do you deal out the colours to your workers, or how do you arrange?" I asked, with misgiving.

"No; we recognise that we have nothing to teach these people," replied the manager and the doctor. "Look at their native handiwork! No; we allow them to use what they fancy, confident that the result will be——"

"But you do not admire this apron?" the engineer

broke in, having studied my face. "What! this olive green and magenta stripe on a groundwork of royal blue and French grey—does it not please you? But have you ever seen it before? Confess that it is original?"

Dear, worthy people, I could have cried sooner than disillusion them, but it had to be!

"It is original!" I admitted sadly; "but it is the originality of a brain unhinged, of a fancy disordered, of a taste vitiated, groping, and at fault! Bradford has evidently—— My dear sir, these people are magnificent when left with the red, orange, green, and yellow which God gave them at the beginning of the world—they can contrive nothing but what is perfect with these; but—magenta, of *that* tone, French grey, olive green—that sickly, bilious olive-green—is only suited to the upholstery of our Channel steamers, and I have long wondered that we do not use it: please leave it to us, it has a place with us!"

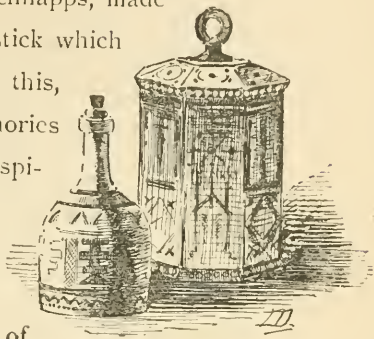
I handled certain hanks and skeins as I spoke. The manager stood by with others in his hands; the doctor and the mining engineer seemed to be pausing breathlessly. There was an awful tragedy in the situation.

"Face to face with such a—such a varied assort-

ment of colours, the faithful taste that has guided them through all their lives, the wonderful insight, or perhaps the unconscious genius, stands baffled," I continued, pouring out a flood of impassioned German, and wishing I was safe at home, and not called out upon this iconoclastic errand. "But," feeling that it might be mine to soothe and cement, as it had been mine to slay and break in pieces, "what if you were to select certain colours which might be used in consort? Why should I not now venture to place these reds together, and suggest that a thin flash of that odd blue, or this lightning yellow, might traverse them to no mean advantage? Here, with this pink, grey, and lemon, you have a cool, subdued blending. Let us add weight to it with either of these darker tones, or throw it up by a background of this green." While they hung over me and watched me pile the skeins more harmoniously upon the shelves, peace and happiness were restored to the factory, and the poor consumptive manager—so energetic, so handsome, so intelligent, but, alas! so delicate—was able to breathe more freely when he had promised that these combinations should be used in the future.

From Kossów I took away some specimens of the

Ruthenian carved work in the shape of an octagonal tobacco-box, beautifully picked out with brass and studded; a neat bottle for Schnapps, made all of wood; and a walking-stick which the doctor gave me. Besides this, let me say that I took memories of the most consummate hospitality and kindness.



I left the little town hiding among its plum-orchards, where that amazing shade of greenish-purple—the only colour that has never been reproduced by art in textile fabrics—blushed upon cluster after cluster of immense plums; by the river the lengths of grey linen were drying; daily the women came to splash them with water; daily the sun came to kill the colour that remained; in the gardens the maize-cobs were ripening; already I had eaten these, prepared in some inspired manner by the doctor's sister. What an autumn I was leaving behind me! The drive to Kolomyja in the phaeton of a Jew, and at the pace of his lame, napless white horse, was, somehow, an intense pleasure. There is much enjoyment to be found in not arriving, even though you be hungry and hot, though you have sat upright for all

an afternoon "on a low-backed car, upon a truss of hay," behind a Jew, and the poor beast that he burns to ill-use, though you have no one to speak to—particularly *because* you have no one to speak to perhaps:—there is the curious infinitude of the white road to be wondered over, the voices of a million parched frogs—what long, soft, melancholy notes are theirs sometimes—in the place where the marshes ought to be, the coy winking of the little star that heralds Venus, to such as notice it, the "warm moon-birth," and the "long evening end."

As ten o'clock went over, and still we did not come into Kolomyja, I was happy; for all these enumerated things and many others, sweeter and smaller still, were with me.

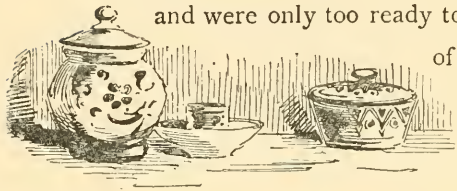
CHAPTER XXI.

KOLOMYJA again, and this time under very different circumstances. While still in Żabie, an invitation, in English, had reached me from the brother and sister-in-law of the painter. It would give them so much pleasure if I would stay with them, instead of going to a hotel, &c. Kind people, they even apologised for asking me, and I need not say that after small consideration I had accepted in the most cordial terms. Thus it was that the few remaining days of my time in Galicia were spent in yet another hospitable Polish household.

My valise had been rescued from the guardianship of the head waiter ; all honour to him, every seal was intact ; and as I arrived to find nobody at home, having announced only vaguely the hour of my arrival, I had time to make myself presentable before meeting my host and hostess. They were a charming, newly-married couple ; and though to madame I could only smile, since she was a Little Russian, and did not

converse in French or German, with monsieur there was a choice of three languages, for he knew English as well—had, indeed, taught himself.

I wished very much that I was not due in England upon a certain date, for they proposed every sort of delightful excursion, even a trip into the Bukowina,



and were only too ready to drive me to all places of interest within twenty miles ; but so it was, and I was obliged to content myself with

churches, gardens, shops, a visit to the most original of potteries, &c. Had there been time, I should have visited the petroleum wells of Sloboda, and doubtless seen much of moment ; but there was not time.

What I did do was to frequent a certain shop where peasant manufactures and all sorts of Huculy oddities were on sale, and to investigate the second-hand shops of the Jews that line one side of the market square. Purchase was made very difficult to me, from the groups that immediately formed about the door, blocking out the air and the daylight, and irritating and enraging me beyond bounds. It was not, however, carried to such a pitch as in Kossów, where at least fifty people would gather at

the door, children in front, grown up people behind, looking on as they would at the performance of a street tumbler; not only looking on, but making remarks, assisting you in your choice, or recommending you to abandon the affair entirely and come to *their* shop, where, naturally, everything was infinitely better and cheaper.

The Kolomyja market, too, was not so piquant as that in the Square at Kossów: there the embroideries had been richer, the distinctive types more marked, the evidences of increased civilisation fewer and further between. Still everything was ten days further forward as to season; plums and pears were plentiful, the heat was that of mid-August, the air flat, crude, and tasteless; wanting in the marvellous quality that ensures vigour to you even though the sun be singeing.

The air in the Karpathians was such as I have never breathed the equal of. Elsewhere I have referred to it as "so pure, so sun-filtered, so pine-scented and fine-spun," and I find at present no words to serve me better for its description.

If I missed the air, I missed also the large disregard of ordinary custom into which, during all those weeks among the peasants, I had naturally fallen.

To begin with, coming back to shoes and stockings was a terrible discomfort in itself; and even the nicest silk stockings, and the lightest, prettiest French shoes, are dreadful after the postoli and rough socks that had been my portion. Postoli had been such an amusement, had provided such engrossing occupation. First, there had been the fun of buying them new in each village in order to mark the little differences of their build; then, threading the woollen cord or the white thongs through their holes (here again every village had had its own manners); then, putting them in a shallow pool to get soaked through, and sitting down upon the river shore and elaborately binding them upon your feet, with many and many an over and under, through, and round, and back again; finally, holding the foot in the air, and laying coil after coil evenly above the ankle bone, neither too tight nor too loose, and tucking the end coyly out of sight. That was, with the exception of putting them in the water, which was merely to soften the leather at first, so that it might take the form of the foot—that was a ceremony of every day; and if time hung heavy upon your hands, you could sit down beside a pine-tree, having imagined or felt a slight discomfort, to undo and do up again the whole affair. Quite twenty

minutes could be agreeably passed in this way. Now and then, if you were wearing the woollen cords, these would get thin and break; then, of course, it would be all to undo and re-thread, and half-an-hour was not too much time for that process.

All this was over then; four turns of a button-hook and I was shod in the morning! How commonplace, how unimaginative!

My mountain clothes I did not regret so much, for I have nothing to complain of in what I daily wear, but there was a second hardship in having to *pin* a hat on to your head and keep it there, however inclined you might be to pluck it off and ram it in your pocket, in order to let the noonday sun simmer and shimmer in your hair.

But the day came when I had to leave my kind friends and return to civilised inconveniences other than hats and shoes. They drove me in a landau drawn by two white horses—which made me feel, somehow, that we were a country wedding-party—to the station, by that very long rutty road which I had traversed on the blue night of my arrival nearly three months ago; and after many farewells, and the heartiest invitations to me to return “soen” and stay “much longer,” the train carried me off out of sight

of monsieur's hand-waving and the flutter of madame's dainty green muslin gown.

It was about three in the afternoon, and I was delighted to see the country in daylight. We slipped over the marvellously even plain in the middle of which Kolomyja seemed to cower beneath her poplars, fearful of that unsparing sun. On every hand were the groves of absurdly productive plum-trees, here far more purple than green to look at, and the blueish-pink patches of clover for fodder; the waiting-corn, in light red tracts, whispering for the sickle, and the tall luxuriance of the maize-gardens, fringed, usually, by the very stumpiest of pollarded willows. The Prut was shrunk to a languid thread, grey and lack-lustre as a dead cod's eye, and the arch of the sky above all seemed miles and miles higher than it is everywhere else.

Upon a shallow slope I saw a green field in which some hundreds of peasants seemed to be sitting or standing about in their white linen costume: as we got nearer I perceived that I had mistaken the upright narrow white stones in a cemetery for people; but it was not such a big mistake after all; the peasants were there—only they were lying down, not standing up.

After a time we ran through a country sodden with rain, hot, thick, tropic rain; above it the thunder clouds, ripped every now and then with red lightning, were lowering: around the station in which we drew up there lay a tideless sea of clay-coloured water upon which lumber, unmindful of the neat formalities of its piles, floated resistlessly in irresponsible little companies. A white mist, thick, in the soon-twilight to be impenetrable, rose some four feet above the surface, and now and then a squelch or a bump told of some wandering log that had fouled its fellows in their aimless course.

When the train had waited ten minutes, I began to wonder if it was unable to get on, until I recollected that in Austria the time specified in the guides for the journey is always longer than the train actually takes, and that therefore the engine-driver might only be filling in time, ashamed of turning up in Lemberg so long before he was due.

So there the train stood. If I looked out, I got no comfort of the surroundings; the sun had gone behind a huge bank of moist dove-grey cloud, and was setting gloomily all to himself, while a copper glow of satisfaction tipped the edges of his vanquishers—the rain gods.

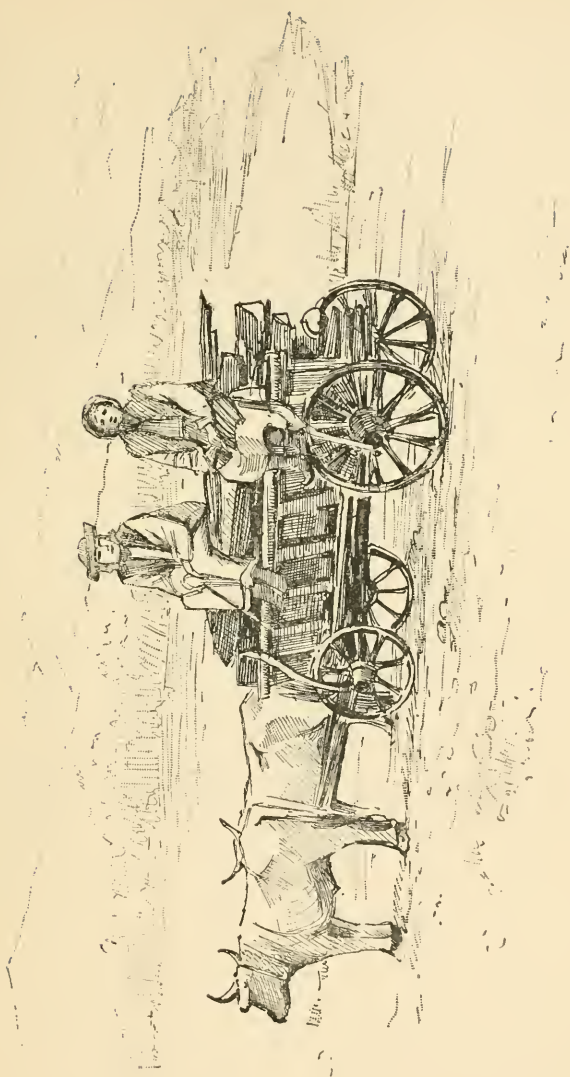
In three-quarters of an hour I had extracted every crumb of mental sustenance from the situation. It was no longer possible to see out of the windows, and as I had the carriage to myself, there was no fellow-passenger to tell lies to. (This may perhaps be felt to require a little explanation or apology. I would only suggest that confiding long, thrilling, imaginary histories to a fellow traveller is an excellent way of relieving the tedium of a journey. I cannot, alas, claim it as my own idea; in a long course of railway travelling I have been taught it by chance companions in a third-class carriage. I used to hearken to them and their histories till it was borne in upon me that these *could not* by any possibility be true, yet, both to the teller, and to myself listening, they were infinitely refreshing and grateful. Since when, I have profited by the notion, and spun fiction myself, for by far the most satisfaction results to the inventor in such cases.) Well, there was no one. Shakespeare admits the possibility of gathering honey from the weed, but even he would not demand that we should distil amusement from the blind fog. I could only reflect uncomfortably on the journey before me. Such a weary waste of stations, such a long endurance of bang-banging, such a nauseating

eternity of stuffed cushions, finishing up with a horrid reeking steamer before I got to London. I jumped out of that train ; I went to the little clacking telegraph office. There was an old official sitting there in an office chair ; he was a white-haired person, with a sufficiently benevolent face ; I did not fancy that he would willingly deceive me.

Yet this is what he said. The floods were out, the line under water for the next five miles, and partly washed away ; no train could pass over it. Another train had been telegraphed for to Lemberg, and this would come as far as it might to meet us. That would be in six or seven hours, or in the morning ; till which time we had best sit in the carriages and whistle—well, no, he didn't say that, but I saw at once that it was my sole perspective. Four men being hustled into the carriage, despite my pointing to the announcement "For Ladies only," did not improve either my temper or my comfort ; but I cheered up—as who will not ?—over supper. Having made a friend of the stoker, he brought me three eggs, cooked by the steam of the boiler in his hat ; with some delicate bread and butter, and other trifles from my leather knapsack, I was well enough provided. Between 2 and 3 A.M., word came that the other

train was out there, somewhere beyond the waste of waters, and only wanted getting to; it was well that my saddle-box was being sent home by sea, for I had to carry my own luggage, consisting of the black valise and the hunting- and knap- sacks, until I caught a wandering peasant by his collar and compelled his help. In the stress of the moment it can be understood that I dropped my revolver, and never saw it again. If this had been all that was lost, but, unfortunately, a parcel of walking-sticks, including the willow one, with its decorations of etching, and two examples of Huculy sticks, with the axe-shaped, brass-engraved heads, were left in one of those atrocious racks "for light articles only," and it was with bitter sorrow that I awoke to this misfortune on my arrival in Lemberg.

I have since regretted that I did not pause in Lemberg (Lwów), big modern garrison town though it be, and with none of the quaintness of Kolomyja, nor the dreamy, sorrowful beauty of Cracow about it. Lemberg seems to represent the new spirit of to-day in Austrian Poland; the hopeful sturdy feeling of a hopeful sturdy middle-class whose watchwords may be Enterprise, Trade, and Progress. Cracow, old, tired, and dispirited, speaks and thinks only of the ruinous past.



When you drive into Cracow from the station for the first time, you are breathless, smiling, and tearful all at once: in the great Ring-platz—a mass of old buildings—Cracow seems to hold out her arms to you—those long sides that open from the corner where the cab drives in. You do not have time to notice separately the row of small trees down one side, beneath which bright-coloured women-figures control their weekly market; you do not notice the sort of courthouse in the middle with its red roof, cream-coloured galleries and shops beneath; you do not notice the great tall church at one side of brick and stone most perfectly time-reconciled, or the houses, or the crazed paving, or the innocent little groups of cabs—you only see Cracow holding out her arms to you, and you may lean down your head and weep from pure instinctive sympathy. Suddenly a choir of trumpets breaks out into a chorale from the big church tower; the melancholy of it I shall never forget—the very melody seemed so old and tired, so worn and sweet and patient, like Cracow. Those trumpet notes have mourned in that tower for hundreds of years. It is the Hymn of Timeless Sorrow that they play, and the key to which they are attuned is Cracow's long despair. Hush! that is her voice, the

old town's voice, high and sad—she is speaking to you.

Dear Cracow! Never, never again it seems to me, shall I come so near to the deathless hidden sentiment of Poland as in those first moments.

It would be no use to tell her to take heart, that there may be brighter days coming, and so forth: Lemberg may feel so, Lemberg that has the feelings of any other big new town, the strength and the determination; but Cracow's day was in the long ago, as a gay capital, a brilliant university town full of princes, of daring, of culture, of *esprit*. She has outlived her day, and can only mourn over what has been and the times that she has seen; she may be always proud of her character, of the brave blood that has made scarlet her streets, but she can never be happy remodelled as an Austrian garrison town, and in the new Poland—the Poland whose foundation stones are laid in the hearts of her people, and that may yet be built some day—in that new Poland, there will be no place for aristocratic, high-bred Cracow.

During my stay in the beautiful butter-coloured palace that is now a hotel, I went round the museums, galleries, and universities, most if not all of which are free to the public. It would be unfair to give the idea

that Cracow has completely fallen to decay. This is not the case. Austria has erected some very handsome buildings; and a town with such fine pictures, good museums, and two universities, cannot be complained of as moribund. At the same time, I can only record faithfully my impression, and that was that everything new, everything modern, was hopelessly out of tone in Cracow: progress, which, though desirable, may be a vulgar thing, would not suit her, and does not seem at home in her streets.

About the Florian's Thor, with its round towers of old, sorrel-coloured pink brick, and the Czartoryski Museum, there is nothing to say that the guide-book would not say better. In the museum, a tattered Polish flag of red silk, with the white eagle, a cheerful bird with curled tail, opened mouth, chirping defiantly to the left, impressed me, and a portrait of Szopen (Chopin) in fine profile when laid out dead. For amusement, there was a Paul Potter bull beside a Paul Potter willow, delightfully unconscious of a coming Paul Potter thunderstorm, and a miniature of Shakespeare which did not resemble any of the portraits of him that I am familiar with. Any amount of Turkish trappings and reminiscences of Potocki and Kosciuszko, of course. As I had no guide-book, I am quite pre-

pared to learn that I overlooked the most important relics.

In the cathedral, away up on the hill of Wawel, above the river Vistula (Wisla), I prowled about among the crypts with a curious specimen of beardedness who ran off long unintelligible histories in atrocious Viennese patois about every solemn tomb by which we stood. So far as I was concerned it might just as well have been the functionary who herds small droves of visitors in Westminster Abbey. I never listen to these people, because (1) I do not care to be informed; and (2) since I should never remember what they said, it is useless my even letting it in at one ear. The kindly, cobwebby old person who piloted me among those wonderful kings' graves in Cracow was personally not uninteresting, indeed a fine study, and his rigmaroles brought up infallibly upon three words which I could not fail to notice: these were "silberner Sarg vergoldet" (silver coffin, gilded). It had an odd fascination for me this phrase, as I stood always waiting for it; why, I wondered, should anybody want to gild a good solid silver coffin?

At the time of my first visit, the excavation necessary to form the crypt for the resting-place of Mickiewicz was in progress, and I went in among the limey, dusty

workmen, with their tallow candles, and looked round. In return for my gulden, the beadle gave me a few immortelles from Sobieski's tomb, and some laurel leaves from Kosciuszko's; and remembering friends at home of refinedly ghoulish tastes, I determined to preserve those poor mouldering fragments for them.

Most of my days and evenings I spent wandering by the Vistula and in and out of the hundred churches. My plan was to sight a spire, and then walk to the root of it, so to speak. In this manner I saw the town very well. The houses were of brick and plaster, the rich carmine-red brick that has made Cracow so beautiful. On each was a beautiful façade, and pediments in renaissance, bas-relief work of cupids, and classic figures with ribands and roses tying among them, seeming to speak, somehow, of the dead princes and the mighty aristocracy which had cost Cracow so dear. In the Jews' quarter that loud lifelong market of theirs was going forward, which required seemingly only some small basinsful of sour Gurken and a few spoonsful of beans for its stock-in-trade. Mingling among the Jews were the peasants, of course; the men in tightly fitting trousers of white blanket cloth, rich embroidered on the upper part and down the seams in blue and red; the women wearing pink printed muslin skirts, often

with a pale blue muslin apron and a lemon-coloured fine wool cloth, spotted in pink, upon the head. They manifested a great appreciation of colour, but none of form, and after the free dress of the Hucul women, these people, mummied in their red tartan shawls—all hybrid Stewarts, they seemed to me—were merely bright bundles in the sunshine.

In the shops in Cracow, French was nearly always the language of attack, and a good deal was spoken in the hotel. I had occasion to buy a great many things, but, according to my custom, not a photograph was among them; therefore, when I go back, I shall receive perfectly new and fresh impressions of the place, and can cherish no vague memories, encouraged by an album at home, in which the nameless cathedrals of many countries confuse themselves, and only the Coliseum at Rome stands forth, not to be contradicted or misnamed.

But it became necessary to put a period to my wandering, unless I wished to find myself stranded in Vienna with "neither cross nor pile." The references to money-matters have been designedly slight throughout these pages. It is not my habit to keep accounts. I have never found that you get any money back by knowing just how you have spent it, and a conscience-

pricking record of expenses is very ungrateful reading. So, when a certain beautiful evening came, I felt that I had to look upon it as my last. Being too early for the train, I bid the man drive about in the early summer dark for three-quarters of an hour.

To such as do not care for precise information and statistics in foreign places, but appreciate rather atmosphere and impression, I can recommend this course. In and out among the pretty garden woods, outside the town, we drove. Buildings loomed majestically out of the night; sometimes it was the tower of an unknown church, sometimes it was the house of some forgotten family that sprang suggestively to the eye, and I was grateful that I was left to suppose the indefinite type of Austrian bureau, which occupied, in all probability, the first floor. Then we came to the river, and later, Wawel stood up massed out black upon the blue, the glorious gravestone of a fallen Power.

All the stars were shining, and little red yellow lights in the castle windows were not much bigger. Above the whisper of the willows on its bank came the deep, quiet murmur of the Vistula, and every now and then, over the several towers of the solemn old palaces and the spires of the church where Poland

has laid her kings, and so recently the king of the poets, the stars were dropping from their places, like sudden spiders, letting themselves down into the vast by faint yellow threads that showed a moment after the star itself was gone.

Later, as I looked from the open gallery of the train that was taking me away, I could not help thinking that, just a hundred years ago, Wawel's star was shining with a light bright enough for all Europe to see; but even as the stars fell that night and left their places empty, so Wawel's star has fallen and Poland's star has fallen too.

With this superficial last impression of Cracow I propose to close my chronicle: there is nothing further to say. If some amusing things occurred upon the journey, and things more amusing still in Vienna, I am not called upon to describe them, for I have been writing of Ruthenia and my experiences among the peasant folk, and having quitted that *milieu*, my doings cease to be of any import.

The impertinence of thus compelling my readers to see me off at the train, although I have spared them the *banalités* too commonly attendant upon a platform-parting, may possibly be called in question on the

score of good taste? It would, perhaps, seem to suggest a measure of conceit on my part, and certainly it was a bold move; but, whatever my shortcomings (and these have not been hidden under a bushel), an undue sense of my importance is not conspicuously one of them, for, whatever the last words of these readers might be—and, down the wind, I seem to catch echo of some of them—I do not for a moment flatter myself that they would bid me “write often”!



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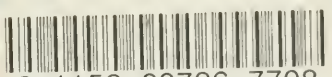
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