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TROUBLE-THE-HOUSE. *(From Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.)* A LEGEND OF LIVONIA.

Once on a time there lived in the province of Livonia a certain peasant named Peter Letski. Peter had no relation that he knew of in this world but his mother. She and her husband had come to Courtland long ago, when they were married; but the man died five-and-twenty years before the time of our story, and old Roskin and her son lived on in the cabin of pine logs he had built on the lands of the boyar Nicklewitz. The boyar took rank with the high and ancient nobility of Russia. His ancestors had fought against the Mougols, and held office under Ivan the Terrible. They were said to have been rich, but little of their wealth had descended, for there was not a poorer estate nor a more prudently supplied *hof* in the province. Theodore Nicklewitz sowed his own hemp and rye, mowed his meadows, and set a good example to the reapers in harvest time; while his wife and two daughters brewed quass, baked rye loaves, preserved everything, from cranberries to caviare, against the winter, and spun with their maids great packs of yarn for sale to the eastern merchants.

In short, there was work for man and maid at the *hof*; but the quass was always strong, the holidays were well kept there, and most of the peasants thought a seat in the great hall worth having, when the snow was deep in Livonia. Somehow, Peter and his mother preferred their old cottage. It was built, as we have said, of pine logs, out of which were cut the door and window, the latter glazed, so to speak, with a sheet of thin mica; the roof was of wattles, overlaid a yard deep with turf and clay, and as green as a meadow in summer. Their property besides a cow and a patch of rye-ground, consisted of a loom, a stove, a spinning-wheel, and a chest, wherein were laid up the Sunday clothes which Peter's father had left him, and those which old Roskin inherited from her mother. They were free peasants of the old Germanic race, long settled in Courtland. No boyar owned or maintained them; but Roskin was a noble spinner, and Peter had few equals at the spade, ax or flail. Of schools, Peter Letski knew nothing; books he had never seen, except in church; and the only education his mother gave him was; "My son be honest and trust in God."

Under that brief and oft-repeated lesson, Peter grew up one of the best sons in the Province. It was his fixed opinion, that no woman on earth could equal his mother in knowledge, prudence and house keeping; besides, she had been friends, relations and all to him. Though poor, they had been happy together in the log cabin, whose rent, as well as that of the rye field, was paid in hard work to the thrifty boyar. In summer and harvest times Peter was bound to devote certain days to his fields; Roskin spun at the *hof* in winter evenings, while her son made baskets, nets and fishing tackle, always getting as near as he could to see the wheel turned by the pretty Niga, whose soft blue eyes and light golden hair had turned the heads of half the peasants in her neighborhood. Like Peter, Niga was an only child, but death had taken her mother. Her father, honest Ivan, as the peasants called him, was a stout old boor, who hewed wood in summer in the forest, and in winter at the *hof*; he and his ax belonged to the boyar. Niga, of course, was born a serf; but old Roskin said she would make a good wife. Peter thought so too, and the wedding crowns of guilt paper, kept in the neighboring church, would have been required, but for a scheme of their common master. His old nurse had died some years before, leaving an unmarried daughter, for whom the boyar had promised to provide; and, to do him justice, he tried to find her a husband; but Ratinka had become so notable for tongue and temper, throughout the parish, that neither serf nor freeman could be induced to take her for better or for worse, even with a promised portion of twenty silver rubles.

All his own serfs were, unfortunately, married. Theodore Nicklewitz had, therefore, fixed his eyes on Peter as the only chance for Ratinka; and, as neither he nor his mother liked to leave their old cottage, and they could not buy Niga's freedom, the young man was obliged to content himself with avoiding his intended spouse as far as possible. When things were in this state, a courier from St. Petersburg arrived one summer day at the *hof*, with great intelligence. A younger brother of the boyar's father, who, having no estate, not liking the church, and still less the army, had degraded himself in the eyes of his relations so far as to become a corn-merchant. Of course he was regarded as a blot on the escutcheon; no one spoke of him, even at Christmas; but the man lived long, gathered money, retired from business, and died in his country house near Riga, very old, rich and intestate.

Theodore Nicklewitz was his nearest heir, and an honest lawyer (we are writing of olden

times) sent him word to come and take possession. It was an event in the boyar's life, for he had never been so far from home; but he sent for the priest, made his will, and took five stout men to guard him. Peter's master obtained his inheritance; but so much time was spent in proving himself the heir according to law, and in hunting up the old merchant's money where it lay in banks and bonds, that the corn was reaped and housed, the snow had fallen, the frost had set in, and there was safe travelling over lake and river, before Theodore Nicklewitz, with the goods and chattels of the discarded relative, gathered to the last rag, and packed on sundry sledges, drove home to his careful family.

Half his servants had been sent for to help in that home-bringing, and among the rest Peter Letski. The sledge he drove was a borrowed one, and somewhat crazy, on which account it was placed under his care, for Peter was a prudent driver. For the same reason the goods packed in it were the very gleanings of the merchant's country house—old coats, shattered crockery, and odds and ends of all sorts, which the boyar thought might be useful some day.—Peter's horse was borrowed also, and lazy with long service. Vigilance and exertion on the driver's part were required to keep up with the company. Night had fallen on them while far from the end of their journey; but master and man went merrily on through the keen frost and clear starlight. They were bringing goods and money to the *hof*; the boyar would be a rich man now; the serfs looked for most liberal house-keeping, and Peter began to speculate on the probabilities of Ratinka's getting married. The old horse was going steadily; he drew his wolf-skin closer round him, and one dream, may be, followed another through his brain, till a suitor was found, Ratinka disposed of, and Niga and himself dancing at her wedding.

Here a sound of somebody stepping into his sledge, among the rags and crockery, made Peter start up and rub his eyes. No one was there, but he had been asleep and dreaming. The horse, left to his own discretion, had been distanced by the whole company. Peter could not bear a sound of the sledge-bells, but he knew they were not three versts from home, for on his right lay a ruined castle, where, it is said, a covetous bishop had lived long ago, and oppressed the country by exacting tithes and dues. The Northern heathens took the castle and hanged him. Its roofless walls stood gray and lonely on the frozen plain. Peter urged his horse onward till they were fairly left behind; but, just as he drew his cloak once more, and settled himself to go home comfortably, a sharp, shrill voice, at his very side, said, "That's a fine night, Peter Letski!"

"It is," said Peter, his hair beginning to rise, for he could see nobody. "Who are you?"

"They call me Trouble-the-house," replied the voice.

"It is an odd name, friend," said Peter.—"Where did you come from?"

"Never mind where I came from," said the voice, in a still sharper tone. "I am going home to the *hof* with you and the last of this fine legacy."

Peter was frightened into silence by this statement; he would have jumped out, but the old horse had suddenly quickened its pace to a full gallop, and the sledge flew over the snow so fast that the lights of the *hof* were in sight, and in a minute more Peter was through the timber gate and in the yard, where the rest of the company were rapidly unloading.

Every man, from the boyar downward, inquired what had frightened his horse, for the creature stood trembling. Peter didn't care to tell them; but there was no sledge in the yard more quickly emptied than his own. Nothing but the rags and crockery could Peter see, tho' he thought there was a kind of a rustle in the rye straw as the last old pot came out, and a queer sound of stamping steps going in before them all to the great kitchen, where a supper, which satisfied even the serfs' expectations, awaited them.

There was no want of brown, sour cabbage, and hard cheese, on the long, rough table, at which, after old Livonian fashion, master and servant sat, according to rank; yet the feast did not go off as joyously as might have been anticipated. The youngest daughter broke a China bowl which had been in the family for fifty years—that upset the boyardeen; the boyar became so critical before the bottle of corn-brandy on his right was quite empty, that he found fault with everything said or done; and all agreed that Peter Letski did no justice to himself and the supper.

Peter lost no time in relating the cause of that unwanted neglect to his mother when safe in their own cottage; and after minute inquiries touching what he had to drink on the road, old Roskin said she never heard of such a traveller in all the tales of Courtland—one didn't know what might come with a corn merchant's legacy;

but her advice was to keep the story between themselves till Father Michael, their priest, should return from visiting his brother in Upper Lithuania, which would certainly take place before Christmas. His mother's advice was Peter's law. He went on threshing, basket-making and sleeping, as in other winters; old Roskin, too, spun as usual at the *hof*, but the *hof* was not the place it had been. Its industrious quiet had been broken to bring home that legacy, and could not be restored. The servants grumbled for stronger quass; the daughters repined for new dresses; the boyardeen grew more careful than ever; and the boyar thought that every man was stealing. Then there were grand visitors, counts and barons, who came from leagues away, and had to be entertained in the great parlor, never before opened except for wedding-feasts. Among them was a certain Count Ratschoff, who would have married Theodore's eldest daughter, but the boyar and he could never come to an understanding on the subject of her dowry. However, the count had been in St. Petersburg seven years, looking after a legacy he did not get, and having some knowledge of the great world there, he undertook to instruct the whole house of Nicklewitz touching their dignity and interest.

Under his direction the peasants were not allowed to speak in the old familiar forms to their betters; the kitchen was obliged to wait till the parlor had finished, and got only broken victuals; the rye-bread was weighed, the quass was measured, and the boyar resolved to have Ratinka married without delay. His determination was signified the day before Christmas, when, one evening after dinner, Peter was summoned to the parlor door to see his master seated in great state, with his pipe, his tobacco-box, and a quart cup in the form of an eagle, filled to the brim with corn-brandy, before him. Peter had never beheld the splendors of that apartment. Its silver candlesticks, its walls covered with crimson leather, and its gilt ceiling, which shone on the wedding festivities of Theodore's great grandfather, overwhelmed the Courtland peasant; but his mind was relieved from the weight of its magnificence by his master demanding:

"Peter Letski, whom do you mean to marry Ratinka, my nurse's daughter? I will give her a portion of twenty silver rubles. Father Michael will be here in three days, and my will is that you make ready for the wedding."

"Master," said Peter, quietly, "it is my fear that Ratinka might not agree well with my mother."

"Your mother!" cried the boyar fiercely, for he had tried the brandy: "I'll have no such excuses. Either marry Ratinka or leave my land."

Peter had never seen the boyar so angry, and he stammered out in his confusion: "I knew how it would be when Trouble-the-house came after the legacy."

It so happened that Count Ratschoff, who sat drinking with the boyar, imagined, and not without private reasons, that Peter was speaking of him; so, with wrath in his eye and brandy in his brain, he made but one bound from the table to poor Peter, seized him by the collar of his sheepskin, and kicked him out of the *hof*.

Though a freeman, Peter was brought up in Livonia, and ran as fast as he could from the count's boots. The night was pitch dark, for moon and stars were hidden by a heavy mist;—neither the *hof* nor its dependencies could be seen. There was a red gleam on the plain before him, however, which he took to be the great pine torch shining through his mother's window. Old Roskin was at home that day nursing their cow, which had fallen sick, and Peter had sad intelligence for her. He knew it would break his mother's heart to leave the old cottage, and she didn't admire Ratinka more than himself; but the young man resolved to go home and take her advice any way. The light guided him steadily through the mist, but Peter never thought of the way so long. He quickened his pace; the light grew larger and stronger. It wasn't his mother's torch now, but the blaze of a huge fire, which, to Peter's amazement, rose from the bishops' ruined castle, at the entrance of which he found himself, while a dead horse and an upturned sledge lay close by in the snow.

Peter had a good conscience, but was frightened to the heart when the sharp, shrill voice once more saluted him with: "Peter Letski, that's a fine night."

"Middling," said Peter. "Who are you?" as, looking in that direction, he saw a dwarfish old man, clothed in rags, which had once been rich fur and velvet, and so thin that his bones seemed fleshless—straining and striving to raise the upturned sledge.

"I'm a brother of the traveller you took home with the corn merchant's legacy," said the dwarf.

"Are there many of you?" inquired Peter.

"A great family, and like to be great," replied the dwarf. "Come and help me to raise this sledge."

lifted, and he saw it was richly lined and gaily painted.

"Everything is ours," cried the dwarf, thrusting his hand under the crimson cushion, and drawing out a leathern money-bag. "Take this," he continued, clinking it at Peter's ear, and I'll go home with you. What are you thinking of, man?" as Peter held both his hands. "This would buy the land your cottage stands on; and the boyar will be glad enough to sell it before my brother's done with him?"

"I'm thinking how my mother would like it," said Peter.

"Your mother!" cried the dwarf, "what can she do for you and Niga?"

"She taught me to be honest and trust in God," said Peter.

At the last word he felt a heavy bag of rubles thrown on his feet. The red fire-light sank, and with it the old dwarf vanished, and a long moan sounded through the ruins. Peter knelt down in the darkness and said his prayers. Before he finished the rising moon was scattering the mist, and by its light he saw what the fire had not shown him—a traveller, lying at no great distance, as if he had fallen from the sledge. Peter ran to him; he was sound asleep, and covered with a good fur mantle. So, carefully replacing the money-bag under the cushion, he ran for help to the nearest cottage. Five strong peasants assisted Peter to carry the traveller home; his sledge, with all it contained, also found room in the log-cabin, for the poor horse had broken its neck by falling on the slippery snow. Old Roskin said she never heard such snoring as the stranger practiced that night; but next morning he awoke well and much astonished. Peter explained how their acquaintance had commenced, presented him with all his travelling chattels, safe and entire, even to the empty flask, which had contained three pints of Livonian brandy.

The traveller's own story set forth that he was a Lithuanian merchant, on his journey to collect debts and purchase linen-yarn in the province; that the mist or the brandy had bewildered him; and that of the ragged dwarf he knew nothing. No hospitable invitations of its lord, however, could induce him to take rest and refreshment at the *hof*; but he presented forty rubles to Peter, half that sum to the parish church, purchased a peasant's horse, and took his departure. It must have been through that Lithuanian merchant the tale of Peter's adventures oozed out, even before the arrival of Father Michael; but, far from being warned, the boyar swore Peter had slandered his noble house, refused all offers for his cottage ground, and vowed to take great revenge, by marrying him to Ratinka the day after Christmas. Old Roskin had made up her mind to retire unincumbered with their forty rubles—for Father Michael's pleadings on their behalf had failed; but on Christmas night festivities ran so high that the *hof* was set on fire, and before morning burnt to the ground. Very little of goods or legacy was saved; but stamping steps were heard to go in before the family to the hunting lodge, on the edge of the forest, where they took refuge.

Theodore Nicklewitz sold the Letskis their cottage ground, for he was in want of rubles; and a pitch-gatherer, who came to help at the fire, and was a stranger, having consented to marry Ratinka, Peter and Niga did dance at her wedding, which preceded their own a whole week, to eschew the remnants of the boyar's displeasure. The peasants, of course, rebuilt their lord's house; but the wealth and dignity of it was over, and Count Ratschoff was seen there no more. It was believed, however, that the guest who came in Peter's sledge was happily transferred, with a quantity of old clothes and utensils, in which the boyar paid Ratinka's promised portion, to the cottage of the pitch-gatherer, where the peasantry asserted peace was never after known. Regarding its precise nature neither Peter nor his neighbors could ever be certain; the question foiled Father Michael himself; but when abundant harvests or profits of any kind are gathered in, the good people of Livonia still hope that none of the sledges may bring home Trouble-the-house.

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON THE REFUGEE QUESTION. *(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)*

If England insist with so much ardor to grant the right of asylum within her shores to foreigners expelled from their country for the offences of revolution and treason, surely she ought to extend at least the same friendliness to the neighboring monarchs, and to assist them in enjoying the asylum of their own palaces free from revolvers made in London, and from grenades executed in Birmingham. If our laws are so protective of the liberties of some few notorious political incendiaries, why not bestow equal protection on the liberties of an entire neighboring nation: and if England will not permit in her me-

ropolis one hair to be molested in the head of Mazzini, how comes it that she refuses to do all in her power to protect the lives of the Emperor and the Empress of France? Ministries are dissolved sooner than change the laws which protect the known guilty, while not a legislative move is made to save the innocent. France only demands that "conspiracy to murder" be made felony in England in the case of a foreigner; but England refuses. How inconsistent is her legislation when it is remembered that this crime is felony in Ireland! So that misdemeanor in Bath is felony in Donegal; or in other words, ten pounds fine or a year's imprisonment for an Englishman in Kent is a just equivalent for the transportation or the death of an Irishman in Tipperary. Since England, therefore, refuses to punish foreign conspirators by the provisions of her Irish laws, she clearly encourages additional chances against the lives of the neighboring kings; and if the Austrian, the Neapolitan, and the French press be a just criterion on this point of the southern Continental feeling, no enemy of England could have desired any event more damaging, more degrading to the English name and English influence abroad than the late Parliamentary combination in favor of the foreign cut-throats.

The late Mr. O'Connell used to say that whatever tended to lessen the power of England in her foreign relations contributed in the same ratio to increase the liberties of Ireland; and the late Mr. Sheil, in one of his brilliant speeches, compared Ireland, in her political claims, to an unjustly-sentenced convict, on his voyage to Botany Bay, "Whose only hope of escape lay in the wreck of the ship." Indeed, Ireland is so accustomed for centuries to receive harsh treatment when England is strong; and to have some of her burdens lightened when England is weak, that almost by an involuntary impulse we raise our heads in hope and in expectation for some advantages to our nation and our faith whenever England is likely to receive a blow detrimental to her national name. This Irish feeling is not the result of Irish malice: it is rather the effect of English injustice; and as we have seldom received a favor which was not wrung from an English necessity, the mass of the people are thus taught by English policy to rejoice in English calamity, and to feel no gratitude for a boon which necessarily and not kindness had conferred. The late events, therefore, which have raised the indignation of France, and in fact of all Southern Europe, against the conduct of England in patrolling the very scum of the infidel and the revolutionary outcasts of the Continent, have raised the hopes of Ireland in two essential points of our national happiness—namely, when France threatens, we fancy that our services may be soon wanted in the field, and therefore our political status, as usual, may be advanced: and again, for the same reason, we hope that our religion may breathe, for a season, free from Souper persecution, and thus our faithful, enduring poor, may be relieved, in the same proportion, from extermination and banishment.

As Ireland, in her individual character, has not only lost her former national power; but in addition she is loaded with the chains of an exclusive policy, which fetters her social and commercial motion, and almost forbids advancement in a wide section of her resources. Having thus small hopes in the full justice of her legislators at home, Ireland constantly appeals to the sympathies of public opinion abroad; and has long expected that the reaction of the public censure on the injustice of England would move her shame if not her sympathy, to raise our country from her prostrate and helpless condition. But the policy of England since the year 1815 has ever been to annihilate this public opinion; and to place each Catholic nation in such a position of anarchy and disorganization, as to render them unable to defend themselves, much less to extend their patronising pity to a foreign country. The two thrones of Spain and Portugal have been overturned and remodelled by this English influence; and Spanish Catholicity has been deprived of its revenues, its conventual establishments, almost its hierarchy, by this wasting destructive policy of England. The Empire of Austria has been shaken to its centre; Naples has been held up to the knife of the assassin: the Popedom has been threatened; and France has been convulsed by successive storms of revolution, aided by this revolutionary scheme of England. Ireland was thus surrounded by deadly enemies at home, and could have no useful friend abroad. When heretofore, therefore, we petitioned England for equality at home, she pointed to our rebellious institutions abroad; and when we exhibited the morality, the loyalty, and the exaltation of our ancient faith at home, she answered by quoting from the *Times* the national disorganization of all Catholic states abroad. England created the very actual disorders which she censured in all foreign Catholic policy; and she then produced the very caricatured picture of our creed which she herself had slanderously