How Russia Has Persecuted My Family

by John Sobieski, Hereditary King of Poland, Now in America

Col. John Sobieski, Sixth in direct line from King John III. of Poland

Mrs. Sobieski

SHOULD revolution in Russia result in that dream of Polish patriots, the freedom of their once-mighty land, one man more than any other, it would seem, is qualified to ascend the throne. He is Colonel John Sobieski, sixth in direct line from the famous old warrior ruler, King John III, now residing in Los Angelos, Cal.

Not only is Colonel Sobieski descended from probably the greatest hero ever known in Poland, but he is the son and grandson and nephew of Polish patriots as well. In the revolution of 1830-31 James Sobieski, his paternal grandfather, lost his life; in the insurrection of 1846-48 his father, Count John Sobieski, his maternal grandfather and two maternal uncles were taken by the Russians and all were executed the same day, after which his mother and he, deprived of their estate, were banished from the land.

Upon the death of his mother, hastened by her grief, young John Sobieski came to America. He served in the United States Army in the Mormon and Civil Wars, and afterward with the patriots against Maximilian in Mexico. Ever like his ancestors, he has been a soldier, cherishing undying hatred for the Czar.

While it is true that Poland elected her Kings, about the last act of her National Assembly was to amend the Constitution so as to establish the monarchy as hereditary, and it was generally conceded that the Sobieski family should reign.

The pathetic story of how Russia persecuted his family and his stirring adventures subsequent to his banishment are related here by Colonel Sobiesky.

BY COLONEL JOHN SOBIESKI.

I WAS born in Warsaw, Poland, September 10, 1842. My father was Count John Sobieski, the son of James Sobieski, who lost his life in the revolution in Poland of 1830-31, and a lineal descendant of King John Sobieski, known in history as John the Third, being myself the sixth in direct line through the oldest sons of that great warrior monarch. My mother's maiden name was Isabella Bem, of the celebrated Bem family, so noted for its patriotism. Her oldest half-brother served under the great Napoleon, and was in most all the struggles for liberty in Europe, from 1815 until his death in 1853.

My father was educated in Poland, France and Germany, graduating from the University of Heidelberg in 1840. Immediately upon his graduation he entered the Polish contingency of the Russian army with the rank of colonel. Here he was serving at the outbreak of the insurrection in 1846, which he entered into with all the enthusiasm of the Sobieski race. He participated in several battles, was wounded, captured and imprisoned, and finally executed on March 10, 1848.

The estate of my father was about 120 miles from Warsaw, and as soon as the insurrection broke out my mother and myself repaired there. My mother learned that my father had been captured, and supposed that he had been put to death, as she did not hear from him again for more than a year.

But all of this time my father was suffering from the horrors of a Russian prison. For some thirteen months he struggled for existence in that prison, without a bath or a change of clothing. One day he was visited by a Russian officer, who in[illegible] he must suffer death. The officer told my father that if he had any reasonable request to ask, it would be granted. His only request was that he might be privileged to see his wife and boy.

One day my mother was surprised by receiving a visit from a detachment of Cossack soldiers, who ordered her to follow them. Not knowing whither we were bound, in our own carriage, driven by our own servant, we proceeded with the soldiers. I remember the journey well. It was the first of March. We arrived in Warsaw at night.

The next morning we were ordered to appear before the Viceroy of Poland. He was a man noted for his savage nature; but, to my mother's astonishment, he seemed almost friendly. He informed my mother that my father was living, but would be executed the next morning, and that her father and her two younger brothers were in the same prison and would be executed also. He said that the Emperor had authorized him to make her this proposition: That if she would consent to have me taken from her that day, conveyed to an institution under the direction of the Greek Church, instructed and educated; if, further, she would take the oath of fidelity to the Emperor, she might return to the estate, she and her son would be expelled from Poland, upon a penalty of death should they return.

The Viceroy very kindly offered my mother proper time to consider the proposition, but without any hesitation she told him that she would not require time.

"Sire," she said, "you can tell the Emperor that he can take our estate, banish me and my child from our native land, home and kindred. I will go, and will teach my boy that he is a Pole, to despise tyranny and to hate with undying hatred that nation and sovereign who murdered his father and Ian and despoiled his country and sent us into exile."

When my mother had spoken we were taken to see my father in that terrible prison dungeon. Though fifty-one years have elapsed since then, and I have passed through many scenes, yet that terrible picture has never been effaced from my memory.

In a small room, without a single ray of sunlight, we found my father. The filth was appalling—indescribable. How he had existed for more than thirteen months was beyond [illegible] we were permitted to be with him. Those six hours we spent in loving caresses and council. Promptly at the expiration of the time we were summoned forth. My mother at once made the request that she might be permitted to visit her father and brothers. This was refused. The next morning my father and grandfather and two uncles were executed.

Before leaving Warsaw my mother learned that her younger sister, who had been arrested some months before, had been sentenced to Siberia for twenty years. Later, we met with a bishop of the Greek Church, who saw my aunt chained to a gang of convicts, in whose company she was to march for 2,800 miles on foot. She never heard of her afterward.

IN AMERICA AT LAST.

Two or three days after my father's execution my mother and I were placed in a sleigh, and under an escort of Cossacks we started for the frontier. After days of journeying we arrived in Austria. There we were halted by the authorities, who informed us that our presence was not desirable. From there we went to the province of Posen, formerly a part of Poland. After sojourning there for a few weeks, we were one morning peremptorily ordered out of the country.

The reason for our ejection, both by the Austrian and the Prussian authorities was evident. Both of these countries were rent by revolutionary movements, and as we were political exiles, we were looked upon with suspicion.

From there we went to Brussels, and on to Berne, in Switzerland. Here we remained for more than a year, my mother teaching a school for young ladies in languages, music and painting.

In 1850 my mother's health had begun to fail her and she went to Milan, in Italy, where she had friends, and where it was thought her health would be better.

After living in Milan something over a year we were expelled by order of Archduke Maximilian, of Austria, who was a Viceroy of northern Italy, for joining a demonstration in honor of Captain Duncan N. Ingraham, of the United States Navy, who compelled the Austrians to surrender Captain Martin Koszta.

My mother now proceeded with me to England, that glorious old land of liberty. Some months after our arrival, Louis Kossuth, who had been liberated from his prison in Turkey, together with my uncle, General Joseph Bem, visited England. Kossuth was then in his prime. I remember his patting me on the cheek and telling me that some day I, too, would fight for liberty.

My uncle, Joseph Bem, who served under [illegible] cause of liberty was in peril. He returned to Turkey, as he saw unmistakable signs of a coming conflict between that country and Russia. He became naturalized as a Turk.

After living about six months in England, my mother's health failed rapidly, and in September, 1854, she died.

Shortly before my mother's death I was adopted into the family of Professor Kaloski, of Liverpool, who had been a patriot of the uprising of 1830. About this time I read a book, entitled "America and Her Patriots." It completely captivated me, so I determined to come to America.

Aided by a young midshipman, whom I had accidentally made acquaintance with in Liverpool, I succeeded in getting into a ship of war as a stowaway and reached this country safely, landing in New York February 22, 1855. I then lacked about six months of being 13 years of age. Under our present laws, I would have been promptly returned to England. Fortunately for me, perhaps, I was quite a proficient bugler, having learned it from an old countryman of mine, who used to visit my mother in Liverpool. Having come of a race of warriors, I earnestly desired to enter the army of the United States. The captain of the ship upon which I had come over kindly took charge of me, and to meet the requirements of law had himself appointed my guardian. I entered the United States service as a bugler April 26, 1855, on Governor's Island, New York.

AMONG THE MORMONS.

When trouble with the Mormons in Utah occurred, an expedition was fitted out under the command of General Albert Sidney Johnston, afterward the distinguished Confederate general, killed at Shiloh. I remember just before my battery left Jefferson Barracks, at St. Louis, that we were visited by Colonel Robert E. Lee, who was inspector general on the staff of General Scott. He was then about 45 or 50 years old and a very handsome man.

The march of our little army to Utah and Fort Leavenworth was a memorable one. After we were a little over 100 miles on the way all signs of civilization disappeared. When we reached the Green River we were met by a deputation of Mormons from Brigham Young, saying that he regarded our advance as an act of hostility, and that he should resist it.

A few weeks later, Brigham Young, in addressing his people, told them that our army would never reach Salt Lake City, for some night while we slumbered the angel of death would visit us. But the angel of death didn't come our way, at least not to all of us. That winter we lay at Fort Bridger. In the spring we resumed our march and reached Salt Lake City in June. We had no trouble with the Mormons. In the spring of 1860 my battery was ordered back to Fort Leavenworth. Shortly after our arrival there I was ordered to join Lieutenant Armistead on the recruiting service, and spent the winter in New York, Brooklyn and Boston. In the latter part of February we were ordered to report in Washington.

My life during the period of the Civil War was that of the soldier of the Union army. I participated in all of the army of the Potomac's battles in Virginia, and once was wounded; mortally, the doctors thought, but I was back with my command in eight weeks.

At the close of our Civil War, having been discharged from the army, I determined to go to Mexico and enter the service of that republic in its struggle against Maximilian. My old friend, General Hancock, was at that time in Washington, and I asked him for a letter of introduction to the [illegible] received me warmly. He told me that he would give me any kind of a commission that I wanted; but I was modest, and only asked for one as a colonel. For pay, Romero said I would have to take my chances. I told him I didn't want any pay.

Immediately thereafter I caused to be put in a newspaper this announcement: "An excursion to Mexico! All who desire to make a visit to Mexico call at Roanoke Hotel, Room 20. No one except those who have served in the Union Army need apply."

In less than ten days I had one hundred men and over. It was arranged that we should meet about the middle of August in New Orleans. Being young men, we talked too much, and the government informed me that such an expedition would not be allowed. I went right on making preparations just the same. On the morning of our contemplated departure we were all arrested by the order of General Sheridan, under the Anti-filibustering act.

While our counsel was considering a process by which he could get us into court General Sheridan invited us to see him. He told us that we had violated no law, but said we must not go to Mexico, Maximilian, he remarked, could not exist one day in Mexico without the French soldiers, and our government had determined that the French soldiers must get out. If the French did not go, he, Sheridan, would drive them out. Then, if we wanted, we could fight all we wished. He stated that if we would give him assurance that we would return to our homes he would order our discharge. A few of us told him we would consider the matter; but we were all discharged the next morning. Ten of us considered it our duty to go to Mexico.

We arrived at the camp of the patriots October 16, 1865, just sixteen days after the so-called Emperor, Maximilian, had issued the celebated order that every man found fighting for the republic, if captured, should be shot. That order cost Maximilian his life.

I found the little band that I reached was comprised of about six hundred men; that is, when they were all in camp. They were without quartermaster, commissary, wagons or artillery, and were armed with all kinds of firearms. There were Americans, English, Germans, French, Canadians, Russians, Scotch, Irish, Grecians and pure Mexicans—that is, if there is such a thing as a pure Mexican.

Upon the day of my arrival I had a long talk with a young Englishman, who was on the staff of Colonel Conteena. He told me that the Greasers were very peculiar; that they were lazy, unreliable and treacherous, and that the only way to get along with them was to treat them as though they were dogs; that when I ordered one of them to do anything, and he didn't start ,to get right after him and kick him until he did start. When I was on the march with them, he said, I should never let them get behind me, for they would be apt to stab me in the back.

This was a gloomy outlook. They were the men that I had come so many thousand miles to fight for. I informed the young officer that I should treat the Mexicans as human beings, and that I had no fears as to the result.

And in the eighteen months that I was with them I did treat them kindly, trusted them implicitly, ate with them, slept with them, and never received anything but kindness and courtesy from them.

As we had no commissary, we lived on the country, literally. We learned to eat everything that flew in the air, or crept upon the earth.

During the time I served in the Mexican army I had many adventures. On one occasion word was brought to us that a small French force had captured a sugar ranch down in the valley. I took twenty-five men and started out to sweep them off the face of the earth. I think most every one has heard the old adage of the one who went out for wool and came home shorn. It was fully exemplified in our case.

A path through the thicket had been described to us by which we could easily reach the enemy unobserved. There was no moon that night. As we approached the enemy, we saw where the men had lain themselves down on their blankets. Evidently they had built a fire, and had thrown green cane over it to make a smudge so as to keep off the mosquitoes. I directed my men to creep as close to the enemy as possible, and then I gave the signal to fire. They did so—but JERUSALEM! Instead of the little party that we were to annihilate, we discovered the woods were full of Frenchmen; they rose up everywhere. Finding that if we remained it meant massacre, I ordered my men to escape as best they could. In my haste I ran behind a cane factory, stumbled and fell, and the ground cane falling down covered me com[illegible] me. I thought there must be a thousand of them.

After they had passed I came to the conclusion that it would be better to lie still until the French returned, and then, if possible, sneak out and get to the thicket. Soon they returned, very much excited and noisy, and I crept away.

I was the only one of the company that ever returned to camp. We learned afterward that after dark a whole regiment of French soldiers had arrived at the plantation, and this was the force that our little band had got into.

In January, 1867, General Escobeco took command of our force. We were now ordered to Queretaro. There I met President Juarez and General Diaz, now President of Mexico, and other leaders of the republican forces. I saw again a regular army, one of forty thousand men. I had been on Escobedo's staff, but now I was to lead a brigade in the assault. We lay upon our faces waiting for daylight, to attack, but Maximilian was sold out by Lopez, one of his Mexican generals, and I was told about two o'clock that there would be no battle. Instead, General Escobedo entered the city and relieved the imperial guards while the Emperor was sound asleep. He awoke only to find himself a prisoner.

One day when I had charge of Maximilian, I said: "Your Majesty remembers, no doubt, that while Viceroy of Italy you ordered expulsion from all of your domain of political refugees who had taken part in the demonstration in honor of Captain Ingraham."

TIME BRINGS GREAT CHANGES.

"Yes," he replied, without raising his head.

"Your Majesty," I went on, "I was one of those refugees." For the first time he raised his head.

"That is impossible," he declared, as that was many years ago, and you are a very young man."

"Yes, that was sixteen [illegible] and I was a very small bo[illegible] orders excluded me."

After a moment [illegible] doomed Emperor said [illegible] times brings great cha[illegible]

The last three or four [illegible] ximilian's life were spent al[illegible] ly with a priest. On the mo[illegible] his execution, June 19, 1867—[illegible] tiful, bright morning—he wa[illegible] from the old convent where [illegible] captured, and driven outside [illegible] near an old fortress, when [illegible] tion took place.

Arriving on the grou[illegible] were formed in line. [illegible] men were placed in pos[illegible] lian standing on the ri[illegible] party consisting of t[illegible] formed into two comp[illegible] diers to one prisoner. [illegible] diers had rifles loaded [illegible] one in each squad, wh[illegible] cartridge. I was selec[illegible] the reserve firing part[illegible]

When everything w[illegible] of the prisoners was a[illegible] anything to say, Maxi[illegible] Spanish. He loved Mex[illegible] desired its welfare, an[illegible] ding of his blood woul[illegible] of bringing peace and [illegible] he was willing to die.

Generals Mejia and [illegible] spoke a few words. [illegible] asked that the comma[illegible] ing party might advan[illegible] he delivered to that o[illegible] gold equivalent to abo[illegible] of our money, requesti[illegible] be delivered to each m[illegible] ing squad.

At the first fire t[illegible] dead. Maximilian w[illegible] wounded.

At once the comman[illegible] instructed one of his [illegible] and drawing his own [illegible] him to put it to the e[illegible] and fire. Thus the ca[illegible] duke was ended.

Col. Sobieski's only son, now dead.

Vice and Crime Unknown Among [illegible]

THINK of a healthy, happy community of 80,000 people, where crime and vice are unknown, where the jail stands with open doors, and the small force of plain-clothes police has nothing to do.

Is not this an ideal place for a summer outing by the sea?

Such is Avalon, Cal., one of the most remarkable cities in the world in many ways.

Avalon is a Pacific Ocean resort on the Island of Santa Catalina, renowned the world over for its tuna fishing. It is about fifty miles from Los Angeles.

Avalon is principally a city of tents. It was designed to furnish means of seaside life and summer outings to hundreds of families that could not afford the expense of hotel life or to rent furnished cottages. Now, instead of hundreds, thousands of families take advantage of its opportunities.

The Pacific coast is especially adapted to camping out. Early recognition of this fact led to the establishment of Avalon.

Large numbers of people living in the interior of California or along the mountain slopes desired to vary the monotony by spending a few weeks or several months of the summer beside the sea. Unable to build or rent cottages, they began to camp in tents along the shore.

This custom increased from year to year. Finally, enterprising business men saw a future in providing tents for this class of vacation sojourners, and so Avalon sprang into being.

King Arthur longed for an earthly paradise,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.

Such a place, the projectors of Avalon thought, could be found upon Santa Catalina Island, where the grievous mental and physical wounds received in the daily battle for bread could be speedily and happily healed [illegible] company, an immens[illegible] the shore was levelled [illegible] system of water wor[illegible] installed.

Trees were planted, [illegible] taurant built, parks [illegible] playgrounds construc[illegible] office, health departm[illegible] jail provided. There [illegible] for the jail, however. [illegible] vices of the solitary [illegible] Peace and the few po[illegible]

Avalon's winter po[illegible] 1,200, but when the [illegible] of spring comes, the [illegible] by leaps and bounds.

Like the rush to a [illegible] gold field is the sum[illegible] to Avalon. The war[illegible] long under way before [illegible] by the sea has a popula[illegible]

While the hotel and [illegible] tages are usually crow[illegible] vacationists prefer to [illegible] These can be rented at [illegible]

Food of every kind [illegible] ed, cooked or uncooked [illegible] store, or commissary [illegible] board at the hotel. [illegible] maintain a culinary de[illegible] prefers to avoid that [illegible]

In this way, nearly a[illegible] troubles may be avoide[illegible] the entire time of the s[illegible] over to relaxation and [illegible] band concerts and othe[illegible] are provided.

Most remarkable in a [illegible] such size is the total le[illegible] ness. Tents are left ope[illegible] ed day and night, b[illegible] stolen. The jail is [illegible] those prone to evil-[illegible] doors stand open all [illegible] evidence of a law [illegible] provided.

Tenting at Avalon [illegible] be a delight, becaus[illegible] and sanitary arrang[illegible] each canvas home. [illegible] private bath, lavator[illegible] all details of family l[illegible] be made as private a[illegible]

This successful c[illegible] tented city suggests [illegible] similar possibilities [illegible] coast. The owning [illegible] lon derives its pro[illegible] fares, tents, whic[illegible] hotel, restaurant a[illegible] from its provision [illegible] sary.

The result is [illegible] families are enabl[illegible]