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THE POLISH DAUGHTER, QUEEN OF FRANCE.

"Cast thy Bread upon the Waters."

A TRUE STORY OF THE LAST CENTURY.

On the morning of the 30th of February, 1730 a young man, poorly clad, was standing near the gate of the Castle of Weissemburg, a few miles from Strasburg. Snow was falling heavily, and the cold was excessive, piercing the thin garments of the lad, who seemed to be about sixteen years old, and causing him to shudder, as he uttered some angry words in a low tone.

He was soon joined by a man enveloped in an ample cloak, and whose face was concealed by a slouched hat.

"Hist!" said the latter, laying his hand heavily on the youth's shoulder; then, pointing up to a window in the castle, he added, in a deep whisper, "Stanislaus is there; he still lives."

"That is not my fault, my lord," replied the lad whose name was Michael.

"You must gain admittance to the castle."

"How can I accomplish it in these wretched clothes?"

"I see that I must think of everything," replied the stranger. "Here, take this,"—and opening his cloak, he gave a basket to the boy. "It contains porcelain ornaments," he said, "and the princess Maria, I am told, is fond of purchasing such things. They will be a means of approaching her father."

"But the snuff-box?" asked Michael.

"It is among the porcelain, and filled with the best Spanish snuff, well seasoned," he added, laying an ominous emphasis on the last words.—"Stanislaus is the only inhabitant of the castle who takes snuff, so that it is sure to reach its destination."

"I will do what you require," said the boy; "but on your part, my lord, remember what you have promised. You see I am starving and ill-clad; my mother, too, is in great misery, and my sister is dying."

"As long as Stanislaus continues to live, your mother, your sister and yourself will continue to suffer cold and hunger," replied the stranger, as he walked off.

"What does he care?" murmured Michael to himself. "He has warm clothes and a delicate breakfast awaiting him; while I, my mother, and my poor sister—"

At this moment the castle gate was opened by a servant, and the young man, approaching him quickly, said:

"Have pity on me, sir, and let me speak a word to the princess Maria."

"Another beggar!" exclaimed the servant, in a rough tone.

"I am not a beggar, but a child of Poland, exiled, like our king."

"Ah! and so you come to ask for money, on the plea of being a fellow-countryman?"

Instead of showing anger, Michael replied, in a gentle voice:

"I come to see if the princess will kindly purchase all that I have left in the world—these ornaments."

"Ha! that is another affair. Wait here, I will tell the princess."

So saying, the valet retired and shut the gate.

Michael waited for a long time, and a painful numbness attacked his limbs, when he was aroused by a sweet voice, saying:

"You have some porcelain ornaments to sell?"

The person who addressed him was a young girl, closely enveloped in furs, which half concealed her gentle, pleasing countenance. An elderly, grave looking lady accompanied her.

"Ah! princess," said Michael, in a piteous tone; "I am a poor Pole. My father died fighting in the cause of King Stanislaus, leaving my mother, my sister and myself in such distress that we sold what we had, and now these are the last."

"Poor boy! let me look at them," said the princess, kindly; "but first come in; it's dreadful cold here."

"What, Princess!" said the old lady, "introduce a stranger into the castle?"

"A poor Pole, Mockzinska."

"How do we know that he is really one," replied the duenna. "Perhaps, dear princess, I am wrong; but your royal father's life has been often threatened; and this youth has a bad countenance."

"I confess, Mockzinska," said Maria, in a very low voice, "that his appearance is not prepossessing, but the poor boy did not make himself—and ought we to punish him for his ugliness?—However, your precaution is wise; we will stay here." Then, approaching Michael, she said:

"Let us see your porcelain, my friend."

Michael's brow relaxed, and he hastened to open the basket.

"Here," said he, "is a china vase, with six cups to match—they were a wedding present to my mother; and here is an ancient and unique snuff-box, which belongs to my great-grandfather."

Every Pole knows that our noble king Stanislaus loves Spanish snuff, so I spent my last coin in filling this box with the rarest and finest that was to be had, hoping that through your hands, gracious princess, he will accept it as the offering of an attached subject."

"Is the snuff pleasant?"

"Very much so," replied the false merchant, "but I will not offer your highness a pinch, because it is very strong, and apt to affect a young person's head. It is only strong men that can bear it."

"How much do you expect for all these things?" said Maria.

"Ah, dear princess," interrupted the governess, "recollect that yesterday you gave the last contents of your purse to a poor starving woman, and you have nothing left but that bright louis-d'or, which has just been struck with the effigy of the young king, Louis XV., which you said you would not change."

"Well, Mockzinska," said the princess, with a childish air face that suited her innocent face, "I confess I shall be so glad to give my father this curious snuff-box, and adorn my mother's cabinet with these pretty ornaments, and if the young man will give them for my louis—"

"That is just what M. Levi offered me for them yesterday," said Michael.

"And you refused?"

"I refused him, madame, but I shall not refuse you. Please to take them."

"Keep them for a moment; I will fetch the money."

The false Pole was waiting for the return of Maria, when suddenly his countenance changed, and seizing his basket, he ran off with all speed. The person whose appearance seemed to cause him such terror was a poor woman, well known in Weissemburg for her extreme destitution and her honesty.

The princess returned, looking regretfully at her beautiful, sparkling louis-d'or, but when she raised her eyes the porcelain merchant was gone.

"Very strange!" she said; and calling the poor woman, who was the only person in sight, she asked her whether he had gone.

"I have not seen any one, madame," replied she, in so feeble tone that Maria's heart was immediately touched.

"What ails you?" she inquired.

"Cold and hunger, madame."

"Dear Mockzinska," said the princess, "will you kindly desire the servants to bring this poor woman something to eat?"

The governess willingly complied, and Maria, turning to the mendicant, said—

"Have you any children?"

"Two, madame—a son nearly grown up, and a daughter, ten years old, who is dying."

"What is her disease?"

"Misery, lady; we live in a damp cellar, have nothing but rags to cover us, and nothing to eat but what we pick up in the street."

"Here, good woman," said the princess, "take this—placing in her hand the treasured louis-d'or, totally forgetting both its brilliant effigy, and the porcelain it was destined to purchase."

"All this," cried the woman, astonished at the sum.

"It is very little to relieve so much misery," said Maria, gently, "tell me, where do you live?"

The mendicant named a wretched lane, and burst into tears, while she tried to thank her benefactress.

Just then Mockzinska returned, followed by a servant carrying provisions which he gave to the woman.

"May I take them home?" she asked.

"Certainly," replied the princess, "and expect a visit from me to-morrow."

Uttering heartfelt thanks and blessings the poor woman departed; and ere the princess could enter the castle the false merchant reappeared.

"Here are the ornaments, princess," he said.

"My friend," replied she, "I advise you to take them to M. Levi. I have just disposed of the very last piece of gold that I possessed."

Michael's features assumed an expression of such savage disappointment that for a moment Maria felt frightened. However, her kind heart attributed his anger to his poverty and need, so she added:

"If you do not sell them to M. Levi, you can return, and I will see about buying them."

"I shall return," replied Michael, in a tone that sounded like a menace.

The porcelain, as our readers will naturally conjecture, had not been offered to M. Levi, nor to any one else, so that Michael returned the next day to the castle, where dwelt the unfortunate King of Poland. He could not see the princess, she had gone out; and the same disappointing answer was given him on the succeeding day, when he again returned.

The boy walked slowly away, and as he was passing through an obscure street, a neighbor met him.

"Michael," cried he, "how is it that you have not been home for the last three days?"

"I had business to attend to," was the gruff reply.

"Ah, very well," said the neighbor, "you'll see something new when you get to your mother's—that's all."

And though Michael called after him, he did not vouchsafe any further explanation, but walked quickly away, whistling a tune.

The words, "you'll see something new," troubled the young man; for, like all who have been accustomed to misfortune from their cradle, he forbode nothing but evil, and his heart was not so utterly depraved but that he still retained some feelings of affection. He hastened to the squalid dwelling which he called home, and had his foot on the threshold, when a child, who was playing outside, said:

"Michael, your mother is not here; she is gone to live in a nice little cottage beyond the fields which you see from the end of the next street."

Greatly astonished, the boy proceeded to the place mentioned, and was doubting whether he should enter the neat little garden which surrounded the cottage, when a voice from the door addressed him:

"Ah, Michael, welcome!"

And a little girl, very pale, but whose eyes beamed with joy, advanced to meet him.

"Louisa," cried he, darting towards her, "what miracle is this?"

"A miracle, dear brother, done by an angel who came to us," said the child; and, taking Michael's hand, she drew him towards a bright fire, on which the pot was boiling, and showing him the neat little kitchen, she added, "Look! all this was given to mamma by a young lady, who brought us here yesterday in a beautiful coach. We are expecting her now, for she said she would come here to-day."

"Is that you, my son?" said a woman, coming out of the inside room. "What have you got there?" she added, pointing to the basket which Michael carried.

"Porcelain, which I was commissioned to sell?"

"And which has kept you three days away from your mother, my son," said she, in a tone of gentle reproach.

Before Michael had time to invent a falsehood, which he would not have scrupled to sell, a carriage stopped at the garden gate, and a young lady, followed by an elderly one, stepped out of it. They entered the house, and approaching the fire, exclaimed:

"How very cold it is!"

The moment Michael saw them he tried to escape, but the young lady stopped him, saying:

"Well, my friend, have you sold your porcelain to M. Levi?"

"No, madame," stammered he.

"Gracious princess, do you know my son?" asked the poor woman, whose name was Salson.

"How can this Pole be your son?" inquired the princess, in her turn. But, seeing the confusion of the son and the anger of the mother, she added, kindly, "I understand it all, Madame Salson; pray forgive him, as I do, a deception which was only meant to gain relief for you and Louisa. Certainly, if he had told me the truth, and not invented the story about M. Levi, but said simply, 'My mother and sister are perishing; I would have given my louis-d'or to him as gladly as I gave it to you. So,' she continued, addressing Michael, 'your ornaments are not sold?'"

"Alas, no, madame!"

"My son! my son!" cried the widow Salson, in a tone of grief, "I fear you are greatly changed for the worse. You mix with bad company, and you have forsaken the honest shoemaker with whom I placed you. And now, where did you get this porcelain?"

"From a friend—from a real Pole," replied the boy, with downcast eyes and an embarrassed air.

"Then your friend," said Maria, "is, I suppose, still in great want?"

"Ah, yes, madame!"

"Happily I am rich enough to relieve him. My grandfather had the kindness yesterday to replenish my purse, so that I will purchase all the contents of your basket. Let me see," she added, taking out the articles, "the snuff-box for my father; the vase for my grandmother; the six cups for my dear mother."

"And what will you keep for yourself, princess?" asked Mockzinska.

"Ah! I will ask papa for a pinch of his Spanish snuff."

And so saying, she opened the box, and was going to smell its contents, when Michael, who was anxiously watching her movements, darted towards her, snatched the snuff-box from her hand, and threw it into the fire.

"What do you mean?" cried various tones the spectators of this daring action.

The princess alone was silent; with a proud, indignant air she looked fixedly at the culprit.

"Michael, are you mad?" said his mother.

"Brother," said Louisa, "don't you know the princess, the angel who cured me?"

"Speak, Michael, I command you," said Maria, in a tone that became her royal birth.

The guilty boy covered his face with his hands, and cried, in a choking voice:

"I am a monster; I deserve nothing but death. While she was saving my mother and sister, I was trying to bring anguish to her heart."

"Wretch, that snuff was poisoned, and you meant my father to receive it through my hands." And the princess would have fallen to the ground, had not Mockzinska received her in her arms.

"Ah, it can't be true, princess, it can't be true," cried poor Madame Salson.

"Speak, sir," said Maria, recovering from her faintness.

"It is true," murmured Michael.

"It is true," repeated the princess; "true that you meant to kill my father—my dear, noble father! What evil had he ever done you?"

"None, madame; but, oh! I do not implore your pity for myself, but for my mother and my little sister. Listen to me, and the boy fell on his knees before Maria; "the men who employed me for this accursed purpose, said to me without ceasing, 'While Stanislaus lives your mother, sister, and yourself, will endure cold and hunger; then—'"

"Who are those men?" asked Maria, silencing her indignation in order to discover her father's enemies.

"I know neither their names, their rank, nor their number," replied Michael. "But to-morrow I have an appointment to meet, under the castle wall, him, who, during the last eight days, has been my eril genius. You now, princess, know as much of them as I do. As to imploring your pardon, it would be useless; my fate is fixed, my life is doubly sold—forefeited to those who avenge your father's death, and to those who conspired against him."

"I will take you under my protection," said the princess; "no harm shall happen to you.—But keep your appointment at the castle. My good father!—O, God, preserve him, and grant him the reward of his virtues."

"He has it already in you, dear princess," said the weeping Madame Salson. "Have you not been his preserver, and that through your great goodness to us?"

"Ah, Mockzinska," cried Maria, "let us hasten to the castle; I long to see my father after the danger he has escaped."

Thus were the days of Stanislaus preserved by the kindness of his daughter; and she, after the lapse of a few years, was destined to reap the reward of her virtue. The exiled family of Poland were still living in retirement at Weissemburg, when one day the Cardinal di Rohan, Bishop of Strasburgh, arrived at the castle with important news for the king. After his departure, Stanislaus entered the apartment where his wife and daughter were working with their needles. "Let us kneel and thank God!" said he.

"My father," cried Maria, "you are recalled to the throne of Poland!"

"Ah, my daughter," replied the dethroned monarch, "heaven has granted us a greater favor—you are Queen of France!"

On the 5th of September, 1725, Louis XV. espoused at Fontainebleau, Maria Leockzinska, daughter of Stanislaus, ex-king of Poland. She fulfilled the duties of a wife and a queen in the same exemplary manner that she had done those of a daughter, and a princess.

NOT GUILTY.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

One day, a good many years ago, a young woman knocked at the door of a little cottage in the suburbs of the town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The knock was immediately responded to by the opening of the door from within. An aged woman, nearly dressed, and who had evidently risen from her wheel, was the sole inmate of the little cot.

"Bless your heart, girl," said the dame, as she entered with her visitor, and sat down to the wheel again, "there must be something particular about you to-day, for you did not use to knock."

"I was afraid some one might be with you, mother," said the girl, who had taken a seat opposite to the spinner.

"And though a neighbor had been here," replied the dame, "this surely wouldn't have frightened you away. But the truth is, you have got something to say to me, Catherine; continued the speaker, kindly; "out with it, my dear, and depend upon the best counsel that old Hannah can give."

The young woman blushed, and did not immediately speak.

"Has William Hutton asked you to be his wife, Catherine?" said the dame, who easily and

rightly anticipated the matter that was in the mind of her youthful visitor.

"He has, mother," was the reply.

The old woman began to birl earnestly at the wheel.

"Well, my dear," said she, after a short pause, "is not this but what you have long expected—aye and wished. He has your heart; and so, I suppose, it needs no witch to tell what would be the end on't."

"This might all be very true, but there was something upon Catherine's mind which struggled to be out, and out it came."

"Dear Hannah," said she, seating herself close by the dame, and taking hold of her hand, "you have been a kind friend—a parent—to me, since my own poor mother died, and I have no one else to look to for advice but yourself. I have not given William an answer, and would not till I had spoken to you; especially as something—as you once said—"

"What did I say, Catherine?" interrupted the old woman; "nothing against the man you love, surely. He is, from all that I have seen and heard, kind-hearted, industrious, and every way well behaved."

"Yes, Hannah," replied the young woman;—"but you once said, after I had brought him once or twice to see you, that you did not like those—those sorts of low fits that sometimes fall upon him even in company. I have often noticed them since, Hannah," continued Catherine, with a sigh.

"Plague on my old, thoughtless tongue for saying any such thing to vex you, my dear child. Heed not so careless a speech, Catherine. He was a soldier, you know, a good many years ago—before he was twenty—and fought for his country. He may have seen sights then that make him grave to think upon, without the least cause for blaming himself. But, whatever it may be, I meant not, Catherine, that you should take such a passing word to heart. If he has some little cares, you will easily soothe them and make him happy."

As the worthy dame spoke, her visitor's brow cleared, and, after some further conversation, Catherine left the cottage, lightened at heart with the thought that her old friend approved of her following the course to which her inclinations led her. Catherine Smith was indeed well entitled to pay respect to the counsels of Hannah. The latter had never been married, and spent the greater part of her life in the service of a wealthy family at Morpeth. When she was there, the widowed mother of Catherine had died in Newcastle, and on learning of the circumstance, Hannah, though a friend merely, and no relation had sent for the orphan girl, then about ten years of age, and had taken care of her till she grew fit to maintain herself by service. At finding herself unable to continue a working life longer, Hannah had retired to Newcastle, her native place, where she lived in humble comfort on the earnings of her long career of servitude. Catherine came back with her to Newcastle, and immediately went into service there. Hannah and Catherine had been two years in these respective situations, when the dialogue which had been recorded took place.

On the succeeding expiry of her term of service, Catherine was married to the young man whose name has been stated as being William Hutton. He was a joiner by trade, and bore, as Hannah had said, an excellent character. The first visit paid by the new married pair was to the cottage of the old woman, who gazed on them with maternal pride, thinking she had never seen so handsome a couple. The few years spent by Hutton in the army had given to his naturally good figure an erect manliness, which looked as well in one of his sex as the slight, graceful figure, and fair ingenious countenance of Catherine was calculated to adorn one of womankind. Something of this kind was in the thoughts of old Hannah when Catherine and her husband visited the dame's little dwelling.

Many a future visit was paid by the same parties to Hannah, and on each successive occasion the old woman looked narrowly, though as unobtrusively as possible, into the state of the young wife's feelings—with a motherly anxiety to know if she was happy. For, though Hannah—seeing Catherine's affections to be deeply engaged—had made light of her own early remarks upon the strange and most unpleasant gloom occasioned ally if not frequently observable in the look and manner of William Hutton, the old woman had never been able to rid her own mind altogether from misgivings upon the subject. For many months after Catherine's marriage, however, Hannah could discover nothing but open unalloyed happiness in the air and conversation of the youthful wife. But at length Hannah's anxious eye did perceive something like a change. Catherine seemed sometimes to fall, when visiting the cottage, into fits of abstraction, not unlike those which had been observed in her husband. The aged dame felt greatly distressed at the thought of her dear Catherine being un-