

Birth place of the brave and free,  
O'er thee, Poland, clouds may lower;  
Noble hearts are shrined in thee,  
Hearts that spurn a tyrant's power.

Patriots who her rights maintain,  
Against the despot's servile band;  
Who have sworn to burst the chain,  
Or perish with their native land.

"A good strain, good Rolof, and very well sung," said the jester, "an a man could command the sense of hearing in such a hubbub. I would for once I were hard of hearing. The braying of so many asses without, and the tinkling of your harp within, have turned my ears to leather."

"Why then, master fool, increase the noise? Your jingling cap and bells add but a feeble treble to the deep bass of the crowd."

"One fool, I've heard in my wise days, old boy, makes many. The fools without are roaring for a king, I am ringing for my dinner. The house is empty—the buttry is locked—the cook up to his ears in politics, instead of being immersed in the affairs of grease—and I must preach patience to my empty stomach. So which do you think is the most profitably employed?"

"I know you, sir fool, to be no admirer of any crown but your own."

"That's real patriotism," said the jester, taking off his cap, and holding it aloft, with a ridiculous grimace of admiration; "mine is the cap of liberty. Look ye, 'tis as light as air, and its merry bells still usher in bright thoughts. Master Rolof, I would not change my thornless diadem to be elected king of Poland, in these troublous times."

"It is expected," said Rolof, "that my Lord Lechus will be chosen king."

"Confound the knave!" returned the jester. "He will rule them with a rod of iron. The nomination of such a ruler, will make rebels and democrats of us all. They had better choose some poor and honest varlet like myself. Some light-hearted fool, who in his folly might teach them wisdom."

"Your jest is bitter."

"It suits the unsettled spirit of the times; when men have lost a tyrannical ruler, they may enjoy both liberty of speech and conscience. If my Lord of Cracow is to be our king, we shall have to give an account, not only of words, but of unuttered thoughts."

"Walls have ears, sir jester; and even fools may have cause to rue their one day's liberty."

"Well, let us be merry while we may," said Zouski; "tomorrow is yet in the skies—and come what will, one hour of freedom is worth an age of slavery."

"Do you think, good Zouski," said the old man with an anxious glance of enquiry, "that our noble

master stands any chance in this contest for royalty?"

"Not so good a one as I do," said the jester, resuming his game at ball. "The Poles are a warlike people, Boleslaus is old, and a man of peace. He would not lead then forth to conquest; and they are too poor to exist without plundering their neighbours. The Lord of Cracow is proud, avaricious, and sanguinary. He will make war, for the love of shedding blood, and the justice of the cause will be decided by the wealth of the nation he has a mind to despoil, while his poor subjects will be doubly taxed at home to pay for the expenses of the army abroad. Bright days are in store for us good Rolof. The people may well shout! Ha! ha! ha!"

"You have only described two of the candidates, sir jester—discuss the other ten."

"Grammercy for the task, you have inflicted upon me," said the jester; "why man they possess all the bad qualities of the Lord of Cracow, without his talents. The tyrant is a clever tyrant, but they would prove both tyrants and fools."

"Alas, for the poor country," said Rolof. "She has fallen upon evil days. I begin to wish my dear master might be elected king after all."

"You could not wish him a greater evil," said the jester. "But the country?" asked the old man. "Must right itself," returned the jester. "There are plenty to be found amongst her brave citizens, as wise as me, and more valiant withal, who would shed the last drop of their blood to obtain her freedom."

"The princess tarries long, this morning," said the old man. "She and her noble lover should have been here two hours after sunrise, and 'tis now high noon."

"The fair Rixa shews her wisdom," continued the jester, "in obstinately persisting to ride a horse that she is unable to manage. To win her favour today, I must praise her fine horsemanship. But jesting apart, I wonder what detains her." He stepped up to the window and looked anxiously forth. "I should be sorry to lose my pretty playmate; one smile of hers is worth all the vociferations of this stormy crowd."

"She'll be too late for the pageant," said Rolof. "Do, friend Zouski, go forth into the street and report their coming."

"Would you have me thrust my nose into the hornet's nest while the hive is swarming," returned the jester. "They will not cluster round their king till noon. Ah, 'tis a rare medley, yet nine days hence and all this noisy shew of loyalty will scarcely serve to raise a laugh around the hearth at night. I prophesy, with the wisdom belonging to mine office, that this day's folly will be marked with blood."

"I have, you forget your office; is this a jest?" said a voice near him, which made both the jester and his gossip start. "Who made you a prophet?"