

In the end they grew silent, looking intently at one another, smiling. The gentle rustle of the lime trees broke the heat and stillness of the August day.

"Whence do you come, Roman?" questioned the old man suddenly.

"From Warsaw," said his son, raising his head.

The old man opened wide his eyes, then he turned towards Ana.

"Do you hear that, old lady, from Warsaw?"

The old lady nodded her head, and said wonderingly:

"From Warsaw!"

"Yes," said Roman, "I have journeyed throughout Poland, full of bitterness, and I have wandered among our exiled brothers in all parts of the world."

Profound misery rang in his powerful voice. The old people looked smilingly at him, lovingly, but without understanding him. All acute feeling for their country had long ago died away in their hearts. They sat looking happily into the blue eyes of their Roman, at his fair, smooth face, at his beautiful luxuriant hair.

The young man began to speak. Gradually his voice rose, it rang powerfully, full of sorrow and bitterness. Where had he not been! He had been everywhere, and everywhere he had met exiled Poles, pining away among strangers, dying far from the land of their fathers. Everywhere the same longing, everywhere the same sorrow. Tyrants ruled over the old hearth, the cry of the oppressed rent the air, patriots lay in chains or trod the road to Siberia, crowds fled from the homes of their fathers, strangers swept like a flood into their places.

"Roman, Roman!" said the old woman, bursting into tears, "how beautifully you talk."

"Beautifully talks our Roman, old lady," said Vladimir Savicky sadly, "beautifully, but he brings us sad tidings."

And in the old man's soul old longings and bitter memories began to stir. On the threshold Magdalena stood dismayed and shuddered as she looked at Roman.

Suddenly two old men entered by the door. One had thick, grizzled whiskers, the other a long beard in which shone silver threads.

"Ah," cried the old Savicky, "here comes Palchevici, here comes Rujancowsky. Our Roman has come! Here he is!"

"We know," said Rujancowsky gravely, "we have seen him."

"Yes, yes, we have seen him," murmured Palchevici.

They both approached and shook Roman warmly by the hand.

"Good day and welcome to you! See, now all the Poles of this town are met together in one place," said Rujancowsky.

"What?" questioned Roman. "Only these few are left?"

"The others have passed away," said old Savicky sadly.

"Yes, they have passed away," murmured Palchevici, running his fingers through his big grey whiskers.

They were all silent for a time.