

"Old lady," said Vladimir Savicky, "go and fetch a bottle of wine and get something to eat too, perhaps Roman is hungry. But where are you? Where is Ana?" asked the old man, looking at Magdalena.

"Do not worry, she has gone to get things ready," replied the girl smilingly.

"'Tis well! 'tis well!" Then turning towards the two Poles. "You do not know how Roman can talk. You should hear him. Roman, you must say it again."

The old wife came with wine and cold meat. She placed meat in front of her boy, and the wine before the older men. They all began to talk. But Roman's voice sounded melancholy in the stillness of the summer day. Then they began to drink to Roman's health, to the health of each one of them.

"To Poland!" cried Roman excitedly, striking the table with his fist. And then he began to speak:

"Do you realize how the downtrodden people begin to murmur and to agitate? Soon there will rise a mighty storm which will break down the prison walls, the note of liberty will ring through our native land! Ah, you do not know the anguish and the bitterness there! Stranger-ridden and desolate! Since Kosciusko died there are exiles and desolation everywhere! Mother," cried Roman, then turning towards the old woman, "give me the case from over there, I must sing something to you."

With these words his eyes darkened and he stared into space. The old people looked at him, much moved, their heads upon their breasts, not speaking a word. Quiet reigned in the old house, and in the garden there was peace; a fiery sunset, crowned with clouds of flame, was merging into the green sea of the woods. Golden rays penetrated into the old veranda and shone on Roman's hair.

His mother handed him the case.

"Well," said the young man, "I will sing you something with my cither. I will sing of our grief."

Then, beneath his fingers, the strings began to murmur as though awaking from sleep. Roman bent forward and began, the old people sat motionless round him.

Sad tones vibrated through the quiet of the old house, notes soft and sorrowful like some remote mournful cry, notes deep with the tremor of affliction; the melody rose sobbing through the clear sunset like the flight of some bird of passage.

In the souls of the old people there rose like a storm the clamour of past sorrows. The song lamented the ruin of fair lands; they seemed to listen, as in a sad dream, to the bitter tears of those dying for their native land. They seemed to see Kosciusko, worn with the struggle, covered in blood, kneeling with a sword in hand.

Finis Polonić! Poland is no more! Ruin everywhere, death all around; a cry of sorrow rose; the children were torn from their unhappy land to pine away and die on alien soil!

The chords surged, full of grief, through the clear sunset. Then slowly, slowly, the melody died away as though tired with sorrow until the final chord finished softly, like a distant tremor, ending in deathlike silence.

The listeners seemed turned to stone. Roman leant his head upon his hand, and his eyes, full of pain, turned towards the flaming sunset. His chin trembled; his mind was full of bitter memories. The old men sat as though stunned, like some wounded creatures, their heads upon their breasts; the old mother cried softly, sighing, her eyes upon her Roman. As the young man turned his eyes towards the