

**MARYSIEKA, MARIE DE LA
GRANGE D'ARQUIEN,
QUEEN OF POLAND, AND
WIFE OF SOBIESKI, 1641-1716**

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Marysieka, Marie de la Grange d'Arquien, Queen of Poland, and Wife of Sobieski, 1641-1716 by
K. Waliszewski

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K. WALISZEWSKI

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MARIE DE LA GRANGE D'ARQUIEN
QUEEN OF POLAND,
AND WIFE OF SOBIESKI
1641-1716

BY

K. WALISZEWSKI

Translated from the French by

LADY MARY LOYD

With a Portrait

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1898

To
LA COMTESSE NAVIER BRANIČKA
(née COMTESSE POTOČKA)
OF THE CASTLE OF WILLANÓW
—THE HOME OF MARYSIENKA AND SOBIESKI,
RESTORED BY THE CARE OF ITS PRESENT OCCUPANTS
BY HER OWN GRACIOUS PERMISSION,
I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK

INTRODUCTION

WHO was Marysieńka?

A Frenchwoman, who became Queen of Poland, where this name was bestowed upon her.

The fact has but little interest for you, reader? 'Nor for me either!' I would reply, if this peculiarity (not an ordinary one, by any means) were the only one her story offers. But the question of the manner in which the daughter of a mere captain in Monsieur's Guard, needy and of somewhat shady reputation to boot, contrived to succeed an Austrian archduchess on one of the fairest thrones of Europe, must present some aspects worth investigation.

And there are better things yet, to be discovered in this scrap of history. Better even than the curious, complicated, and exceedingly obscure episode of the numerous French candidatures—those of Anguien, Condé, Longueville—to the Polish throne, all of which, we see, are connected with this woman's strange career, using, or being used by her—for the great Condé was mixed up in the business, and Mazarin, and De Lionne, and the *Grand Roi* himself.

Something better yet, I say! It was not the mere facts to which I have just referred, which tempted me, some time since, to discuss this free-lance of royalty in a series of papers, published in a French Review (*Le Correspondant*, 1884-1886).

Those sketches should not be too closely compared with

the present work. I lay no claim to immutability in literary formula, nor even in historical view.

There is Sobieski.

Not the hero as you have known him, but the hero She recognised long before Vienna—for in love, as in war, the man did everything on the heroic scale; and Marysieńka bore sixteen children! Here we have a romance, and a correspondence, not curious and amusing only, but, as I firmly believe, unique. On the pinnacle of a mighty destiny, and in actual human experience, at all events, such love, and such letters, can hardly have existed twice over.

You have a taste, my reader, for psychological evidence? Sit you down, and you shall have your fill. But let me bestow one warning on you. I give you, to use the fashionable term, *a slice of history*, and of what is, occasionally, very serious history indeed. But documentary proof, in the literal sense of the word—such as that with which numerous contemporary publications must have made you familiar, without diminishing its repulsiveness by a single jot—you will not discover.

In this attempt of mine to call up a scarcely known figure, amidst scenes with which, I fear me, you hardly care to make closer acquaintance, I have felt impelled to adopt a form which is in itself an experiment, and something, too, of a profession of my own faith.

I have, in fact, wondered whether, when the historian departed from the models which made the fortune of historical works in past times, to follow those instilled into our imaginations by the modern spread of exact science, he did not gravely err. Have we gained so very much in exactness? Less, I trow, than we have lost in readers!

The endeavour to assimilate our knowledge, and the

certainties we may draw therefrom, to the knowledge and the certainties of physical and chemical science, has always appeared to me a rash and hopeless undertaking. You may send ten men with telescopes to study a solar eclipse in Kamschatka, and they will bring you back ten observations, all of them identical, within a hairsbreadth as to distance, and a quarter of a second as to time. That is astronomy! But question ten different witnesses of an accident which has just set the whole street in an uproar. By the time you get to the third, the cabman who has run over a foot-passenger has turned into a cyclist crushed beneath an omnibus. That is history!

Is no truth whatever to be found in history, then? If I thought that, I would write no history at all. But historical truth seems to me to depend far more on intuition than on actual study, and therefore I am tempted to say of my profession what the great modern German has said of his, 'It is more of an art than of a science.' Whence I conclude that the writing of history not only admits of, but calls for, artistic treatment: and the practical outcome of this conclusion is, that my story will even be found to contain conversations. We must all strive to evoke and recreate living beings, and that is what can never be done with the dead letter of documents alone.

Yet be not deceived! These dialogues of mine have none but the faintest resemblance to those of Herodotus and Thucydides. Every word spoken by my hero and heroine, like the smallest trait in each character, is founded on reliable evidence. Matter, and, in many cases, even text, have been drawn from archives as dusty as could be desired. An exception should be made, with your permission, for those at Chantilly. There is no dust there. Those archives have been, and will long continue, let me hope, the best kept

in Europe, under the care of the kindest and most helpful of curators. I beg M. Macon kindly to accept this expression of my gratitude.

Little did I foresee that a similar debt, contracted on the same spot, would be paid beside a newly-made grave! The emotion with which I make my acknowledgment is all the deeper, and the thought that the shadow of a noble and beloved memory hovers over these pages, the perusal of which, I would fain think, would have given *him* pleasure, is a satisfaction to me. Much that they contain relates to the history of his race.

I am encumbered, in the present instance, with debts of the same nature. The guardians of public and private stores of documents, whether French or foreign, are my never-ceasing creditors, and I run sore risk of dying before I discharge my liabilities. But I never forget what I owe to them, as also to the Baron d'Hunolstein, to my excellent comrade M. Frederic Masson, to the Rev. Père Pierling, of the Society of Jesus, and to my good friend M. Julien de St. Venant.

Baron Hunolstein actually confided to me, on one occasion, no less a treasure than the supplement to the *Mazariniana* at the Quai d'Orsay, which is preserved in the archives of the house of Montmorency-Luxembourg.

Mons. Frederic Masson is a very Cæsus of learning, who casts his stores of knowledge out of window to his friends passing in the street below. My one regret is that I have not been able to make fuller use of the share I have gathered up.

The Rev. Père Pierling probably knows more than any other Frenchman of what is being done amongst foreign archives. The notes on Italy and England, which he was good enough to communicate to me, have been of the greatest service.