

V



MARYSIEŃKA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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Marysienka

Gallery of Count Roman Potocky, Lencut, Galicia

(41)

MARYSIENKA

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

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To
LA COMTESSE XAVIER BRANIČKA
(née COMTESSE POTOČKA)
OF THE CASTLE OF WILLANÓW
—THE HOME OF MARYSIEŃKA 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

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 Cræsus 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.

Mons. de St. Venant has done me the kindness of examining the collections of muniments in the Nièvre, Marysieńka's native district.

I also owe some precious items of information to Comte Xavier Braniński, the present owner of the Castle of Willanów, Sobieski's last place of residence. But in Poland itself I found few unpublished records. A series of publications undertaken by the Academy of Science at Cracow, in connection with the second centenary of the deliverance of Vienna, has exhausted the local sources of information. Six volumes of documents represent my own share in this result. The archives of that country, besides, are some of them peculiarly difficult of access, whilst others cannot be turned to account. One of the latest explorers in that direction, Mons. Korzon, has been forced to cast a veil of anonymity over certain of his references.

I find myself in a somewhat difficult position as to Mons. Korzon, who has offered, spontaneously and most graciously, to send me the valuable pages of a very important work, entitled *The Fortunes, good and evil, of Sobieski* ('*Dola i Niedola Jana Sobieskiego, 1629-1674*'), which he is about to send forth, and the publication of which has been undertaken by the Cracow Academy—a most eclectic body, and with every claim to the quality. The second volume of this book having only just been sent to press, and the complete work not being due to appear for another year, I have been specially favoured by this early bestowal of the first, I am sincerely obliged to the author: but as, after having treated me fairly well in his work, he proceeds to handle me tolerably ill, I have some difficulty in comprehending his intention.

To borrow an expression of his own—at the sense of which, indeed, I am forced to guess—his action is, no doubt, a piece

of 'obstructive diplomacy' (p. 347). On the whole, however, I am very much obliged to him, and my only regret is that I have not been able to extract all the good I had hoped from his work, seeing the author has set himself to make a book of theories—and theory in history is the last thing I seek for.

But I am very glad to advise those of my readers whose taste in that direction is stronger than my own, to peruse the volume, which, from this particular point of view, is replete with interest.

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