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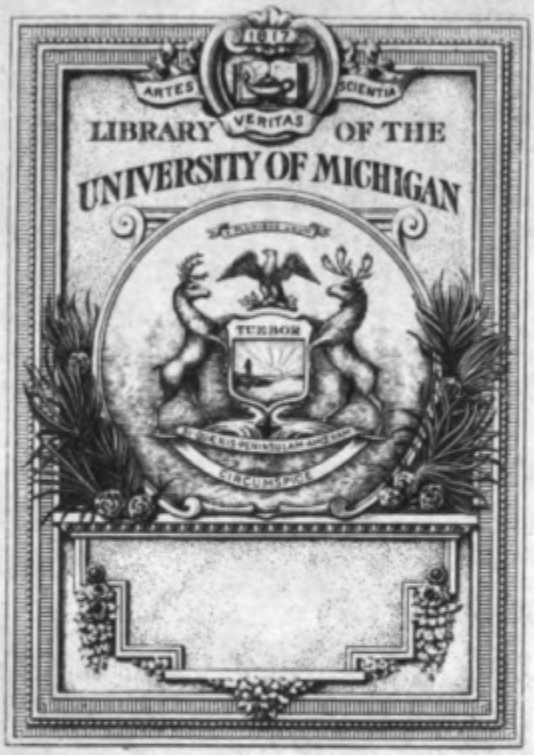

THE GIFT OF
Polonia Literary Circle

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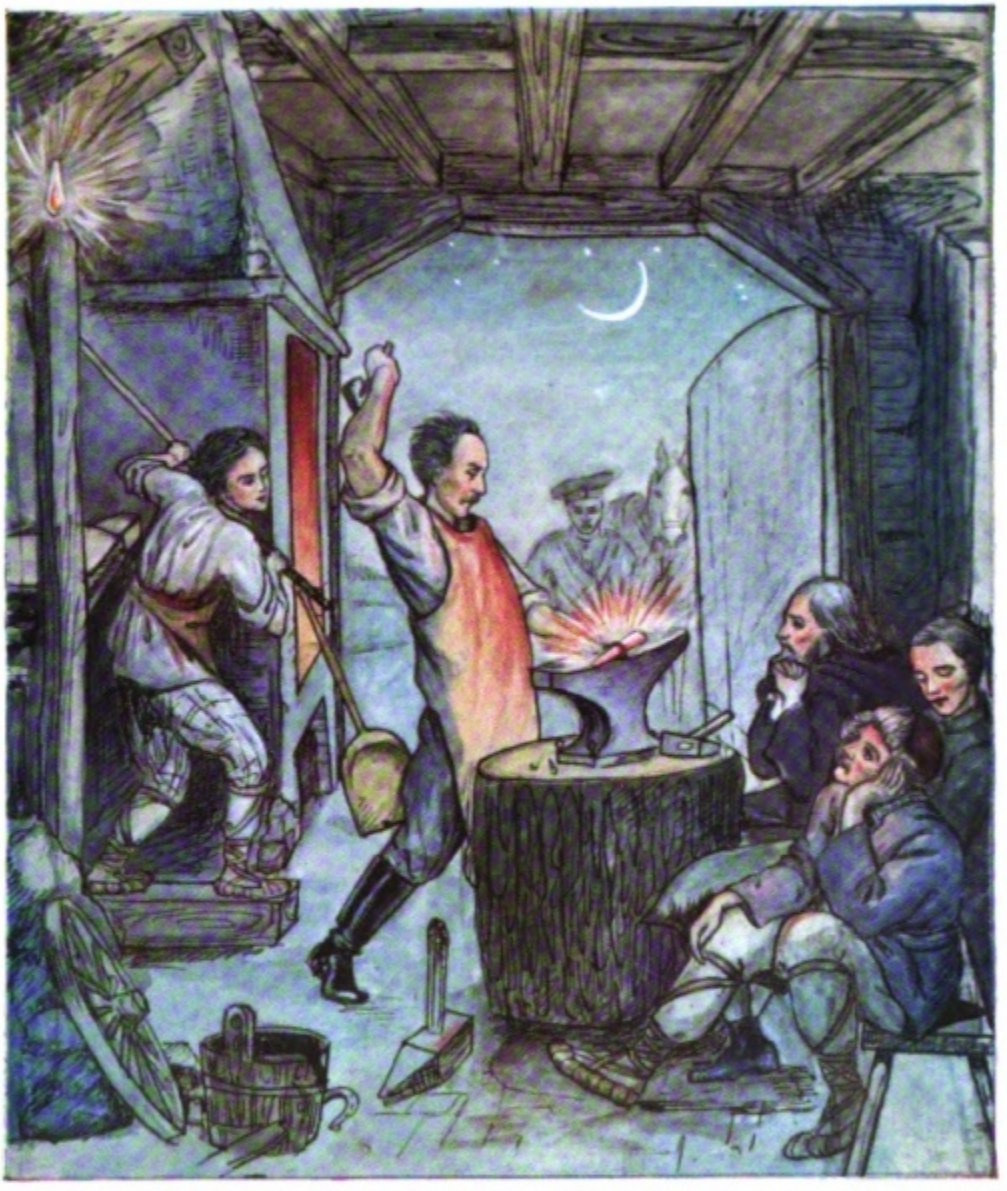

Stefan kept glancing at them as he plied the bellows.

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The Old Man of the Woods.

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The guide waited for the horseman to come up to him.

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"We will be brothers."

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"What have we here?" shouted the sergeant in command.

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Interlude

IN the Russian capital of Petersburg on the Neva, Nicholas the Tsar—who wore the crown of Ivan the Terrible, of Peter the Great, and of Catherine—called a council of his diplomats and generals. When they were assembled in his palace his face paled with anger before them and he spoke in harsh, biting tones. "So this one thing that I have desired, this royal crown of Poland, no one of you may find. For a year I have sent emissaries and agents, I have paid spies, and I have dispatched even armies to locate this jewel for me. Is there no general with power enough to perform this thing? Is there no diplomat with skill enough to wring from men's lips the secret of this powerless crown? Reports come to me from here, and reports come to me from there, and all say that they are upon the track of the crown but cannot lay hands upon it."

A general bowed before him: "Your Greatness, we have searched high and low for this crown, indeed we have been through every city and town as with a comb. But we can find none who know for a certainty where the crown has been, nor

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"They have set fire to the house."

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"We must be getting near the center of the woods," Stefan thought.

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The Royal Crown of Poland.

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Pierre loaded and fired.

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Epilogue

The Song of the Poet

AND now the land lay prostrate beneath the conqueror. Where towns and prosperous farms had been, there rose only thin smoke to heaven from the ashes already turning cold. Where there had been song and dance now rose the mourning of children for their fathers, of mothers for their sons. Across the great wastes of wild Siberia went company after company of exiles to spend their lives away from their families in mines or quarries. Schools were closed, the native language was forbidden, and about the old city of Vilno the land was plowed with tears and blood.

A nation without a State! A people without a visible nation! And upon these people lay the yoke of three great empires. What but a miracle could ever bring this nation to the light again? Laws of other nations were forced upon them, a new language written in strange characters was given them for

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