POLAND UNDER THE HEEL.

WHEN THE PRUSSIANS CAME TO POLAND. By Laura de Gozdawa Turczynowicz. (G. P. Putnam's Sons; $1.25.)

Madame Laura de Gozdawa Turczynowicz, in spite of her formidable name, is an American woman. As Miss Blackwell of New York she went to Europe to study and sing, and after three years married a Polish aristocrat, who was for a time professor in the University of Cracow. The family estates were in Russian Poland, and Turczynowicz was connected in more recent years with the Department of Agriculture and the problems of agricultural education in that backward country. His wife entered into his labors with zeal; and as they went from place to place, organizing and teaching the peasants, it seemed to them that Poland was entering upon a new stage of evolution, looking toward better times than had ever been known.

In the midst of all this came war. At first mere confusion and uproar; then the unification of popular feeling, Russians and Poles dropping their quarrels to unite against the common enemy. There was, it appears, no wish for war; certainly no ferment of public opinion demanding it. The first reaction was that of naïve distress; the author's servants, on hearing the news, "as one, like a chorus, threw their aprons over their heads and began to howl, just as a dog keens and whimpers in the night when he is frightened." So with others, the manifestations varying with temperament, until people began to get used to the excitement, and to identify themselves with national ideals of victory and expansion. This was merely a matter of a few days, and less than a week after the terrible news had come a vague rumor that it was all a mistake produced a distinct feeling of disappointment. If any had their doubts as to the outcome, there was no time or chance to discuss them; there was so much to do, and working for the great cause was so exhilarating. The Red Cross organization at Suwalki was under the presidency of the author's husband, and she herself was a Red Cross nurse. The general moral elevation of the country seemed to find expression in the order from the Czar that all alcoholic liquors, with certain exceptions, should be destroyed. The spirits were seized by the police, and poured upon the ground, amid bestial scenes of peasants drunk on the last available drops, even lapping the liquor with their tongues as it flowed over the earth. "I thought then what a wonderful thing the Czar had done for humanity. How brave it was deliberately to destroy a tremendous source of income in order to help his people!"

Then the wounded came. The hospital, at a pinch, could take about two hundred and fifty. There had been no preparation, and everything had to be done. Cossacks arrived from the east, and innocently asked, as they came into Suwalki, if that was Berlin! Exaggerated stories of victory were current; the Russians had poured into East Prussia, by the road that passed close to the author's house. Then the noise of battle was heard, and orders came to evacuate the town. Three chapters describe the incidents of the flight, but after various adventures Mme. Turczynowicz and her three children were able to return to Suwalki, the Germans having been driven out. Her husband became inspector of the Sanitary

Engineers at Lemberg in Galicia, which was then in the hands of the Russians.

Omitting details, it is now sufficient to state that the Germans returned to Suwalki, and the author, her husband far away, was left in the old house with her three children. She could not leave, one of her little boys being desperately ill with typhus fever. For seven months they had to remain, the children sickening one after the other, their lives at times despaired of. Finally, after sending in numerous petitions, they were granted permission to leave for America by way of Holland, and they sailed from Rotterdam in September, 1915.

The story of the long months of German occupation is told with extraordinary, with terrible vividness. Ability to write well is combined with an intimate knowledge of the country and the people, and strong sympathy for all who suffer. In comparison, numerous narratives of war experiences now before us seem superficial and inadequate. It would be difficult to imagine a more complete and convincing exhibition of the seamy side of war. German "frightfulness" is shown in its least restrained form, yet in the midst of horrors individual Germans did their best to be relatively or entirely decent.

> The church was the only thing left to the people — they knelt round about the building in the dust of the street before it — a heart-breaking sight — those poor creatures — never talking much, now grown quite inarticulate. The crucified people! Even the children were still and quiet, and weak. I often wondered what they prayed for,— what the idea back of the telling of their beads was,— and I came to the conclusion they were without thought,— just dumb and numbed with suffering, waiting for death to release them. That same mental attitude was in the air: every one felt so. Grey despair walked and sat with us; we had to fight not to be overpowered. How many there were who tired of the struggle, laying violent hands on their own lives; daily we heard of someone who had gone in this way.

In the face of such a narrative, which not only interprets the general situation but gives innumerable details, it is difficult to preserve one's mental balance. How the author lived through the events described, and yet kept her sanity and resourcefulness, we find it difficult to understand. She not only managed to save herself and her children, but was the good angel of the town, incessantly helping those who could not help themselves. What may have happened since she left, we can only imagine.

If we try to set aside our emotions, and interpret the story of Suwalki from the point of view of psychology and sociology, it is necessary to recognize certain facts. It is undoubtedly true that in times of war exceptional individuals with criminal tendencies are likely to become prominent. Thus we are told that "the Russian hospital was given a new surgeon-in-chief. He, the incarnation of *Schrecklichkeit*, too hard and cruel to be longer tolerated in the German hospital, was given charge over the Russians. When I learned this, there were a number of officers sitting about my table drinking coffee. They told it as a good joke that this brutal man had been appointed, laughing uproariously that his first demand had been for a larger *Leichen Halle* (morgue)." This dominance by some of the worst elements, unrestrained, sufficiently explains many of the apparently unnecessary horrors of war. No one doubts the presence in our own population here in America of individuals who would make hell on earth could they have their way,— of those, indeed, whose efforts in this direction are much more successful than we like to remember. Secondly, the well-known German war-policy — or for that matter, peace-policy — of subordinating the individual to national ends gives a certain justification to acts which regarded singly appear to be those of mere brutes or lunatics. As the author shows in many passages, the German soldiers themselves were not spared except so far as it was to the German interest to spare them. The individual, *unless an officer*, was absolutely of no account. That the officers, especially the higher officers, were able to escape from the clutches of the machine to some extent, and preserve personal privileges which had no particular relation to their efficiency, shows merely that individualistic instincts could not be entirely downed. The rank and file, after victories, were allowed — even encouraged — to display their personality in debauch, as a sort of safety valve. In addition to all this, it must be added that Suwalki is near the border of East Prussia, which had been raided by the Russians at the beginning of the war. It was the first place on which vengeance could be taken, and we are told that the excuse for everything always was "Remember East Prussia."

It is very doubtful whether all these evils may be ascribed to the inborn pugnacity of man, or to the barbaric nature of the Germans in particular. Max Eastman says that in the long struggle for existence, "the patriotic and pugnacious tribes survived — we are those tribes." Yet after all, it was the Pueblos who survived, rather than the Apaches, the industrial and agricultural folk, rather than the professional fighters. The former could exist without the latter, but a world of rob-

bers means the extinction of the species. It is a fact that mankind is extremely open to suggestion, is highly educable, is amazingly responsive to environmental conditions. In this lies at once the hope and menace of the future. There is apparently no reason in their general hereditary make-up to explain the conduct of the Germans at Suwalki, or that of any other groups or individuals who have behaved disgracefully during the war. Aside from certain abnormal persons with debased inheritance, such as are found anywhere, those Germans were and are capable of all the decencies of life, and of many admirable virtues. The problem is to restore their humanity by restoring normal human conditions.

Something more is involved than a mere matter of sentiment, and the Germans are not the only ones who need assistance. Our hard but pressing problem is to determine for ourselves no less than for others what are the optimum conditions for human existence, and in what ways our activities may be guided into beneficent channels. By doing this at home we may do more to prevent the recurrence of Poland's miseries, in the long run, than by going half-way along the militaristic road.

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