Božena Němcová

The Grandmother

Božena Němcová

The Grandmother

Published by Good Press, 2021

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4064066463199

Table of Contents

(not individually listed)

Biographical sketch of the author

Table of Contents

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

Table of Contents

Bozena Nemec was born in Vienna, February 2, 1820. Her father, John Pankel, was equerry to the Duchess of Zahan, the owner of the large Nachod estates. The Duchess spent most of her summers in the castle at Nachod, where she was visited by many distinguished people from all parts of Europe, and even from England. Most of the incidents related in THE GRANDMOTHER story are based on fact, for the Princess of the story was the Duchess of Zahan, and Barunka, none other than the author Bozena Nemec. The Duchess early recognized Bozena's talents and did not a little to encourage and aid her in her education. The life at the castle had also much influence upon the young girl.

Bozena's father was a great lover of music and literature, and tried to awaken the same taste in his children. He loved them all; but Bozena on account of her talents was his favorite child, and she in turn clung to her father with great devotion. In after years she said, "Father could do with me what he wished. When he turned his beautiful eyes to me and said, "Go, my Bozenka, do this or

that, I would have jumped into the fire for him." This love was the source of much of her inspiration.

It was quite different with the mother. Theresa Novotny was a woman who in no way rose above the common mass of woman kind. She loved her husband and her children; she was an excellent house keeper; but city life in Vienna had changed the bright peasant girl into a stiff lady of few words and of great austerity in morals and behavior. The smallest fault was sharply reprimanded; and for severer punishments, which were by no means rare, the children were expected to thank her. Bozena looked upon this as something fearful, and never could be induced to do it, although she knew that a much harder whipping was sure to follow her refusal. She said: "Although at times my feelings urged me to submit, my feet would not move from the spot, and my lips refused to utter the words of repentance."

Bozena's education as regards books was begun when she was but four years old. Her mother brought her a card from the market, upon which were the letters of the alphabet in large, black print. Giving her the card she said: "Here Bozenka, since you can learn songs you can learn your letters."

Her first teacher was an "uncle," as he was called,—though in reality he was uncle to no one. It was said of him that he knew how to do more than eat bread. Bozena said: "I went to show him my card and he offered to teach me. I soon learned the letters and how to put them together to form words. At the same time I learned to write, using for this purpose the large lead buttons upon his coat and vest.

In the summer we studied but little. He went about with me and taught me the names of flowers and trees and the habits of insects."

When Bozena was six years old she was sent to school in another village, where she was to live with her godmother. She had never heard anything good of schools, and had every reason to be afraid. At home they often said to her: "Just wait; when you get to school, they'll teach youto mind!" The old servant trying to comfort her would say: "Dear child, it cannot be otherwise. Teaching is torturing; every one must bear it. When I went to school I was thrashed like rye." Bozena, in her recollections says: "The first morning, when I awoke at Chvalin, I thought I was the most unhappy creature in the whole world. Weeping I arose and weeping I dressed myself. At the breakfast table my godmother said to Aunt Agnes: 'When you go to the market, take Bozena with you to school; she has already been announced.' My heart seemed to be held in a vise, and my tears were ready to fall; yet I feared to cry before my godmother. Aunt Agnes took the basket, and putting my satchel over my shoulder started with me for school."

On the way, Bozena refused to go on and begged to stay at home one day longer. Much persuasion and considerable force were required before the old aunt succeeded in getting her into the school room, but her fears were soon dispelled by the kind, pleasant school master. In this school she remained six years, and it was this teacher, as she afterwards acknowledged, who laid the foundation of her future culture and taught her to love her neighbor, her

country, and her God. She kept his memory green in the pretty tale of "The Schoolmaster."

When Bozena left school, she lived at Chvalkovitz in the family of the steward of the manor. As her stay here had much influence upon her life, some account of her surroundings will not be out of place. She said:

"The steward was a good friend of my father's, and that was why I was placed in the family. He was a man in middle life, the most learned of all the officers, indeed, of the whole neighborhood. He had a fine library, and that not merely for ornament. Shakespeare and Goethe were his favorite authors. He was well versed both in the classics and in modern literature. He read French and English and always took the best journals. He was also very fond of gardening. Although he wished well to the Bohemians, his own sentiments were those of a true German. He was a good, jovial man, an admirer of beauty, fond of good living, hospitable, and agreeable to all. His influence could have been exerted much for good, had his domestic relations been different.

"His wife, who was several years his senior, was in no way congenial to him. She had been maid of honor to the Princess, and when young must have been beautiful; but now her black hair and her sky blue eyes were her only remaining charms. This, however, was not the cause of the trouble. She and her husband were not adapted to each other. She was a bigoted Catholic, while he was a Protestant who hated priests. She could bear no reflections upon the nobility; the time she had spent in the castle she

regarded the most delightful period of her life, and her husband tormented her for this with the most bitter irony.

"Then, too, he preferred Bohemian cookery, while she prepared everything according to an Austrian cook-book. When he would not eat, her eyes filled with tears as she said: 'Aber, August, es ist ja gut, iss nur.' To which he usually replied: 'Ich glaub's, liebe Netti, habe aber keinen appetit.' Then he smiled grimly, arose, drank a glass of wine, and went into the fields,—a sure sign that something was wrong. These fits grew more and more frequent, until not a day passed when he was not under the influence of liquor, and at such times he indulged in the most cutting remarks, causing intense suffering to his wife. I often came upon her kneeling with hands upraised before the crucifix, and weeping bitterly. I pitied her, but on other occasions I was sorry for him. He wanted to enjoy life, but something ailed her all the time; she was swathed in flannels from one end of the year to the other. When she went to bed, she was dressed like a driver ready to start for Amsterdam.

"He read late at night and early in the morning, and when thus engaged no one dared disturb him. His wife was very jealous of him, and in her turn succeeded in inflicting on him as much wretchedness as he on other occasions caused her. They had three children, and it grieved him much that they were not at all bright. As I was there for study, I often went to him to ask a question, to have something explained, or to change my book, and he always did everything for me with the greatest pleasure. When I had read a book through, I was obliged to tell him its contents, and he explained what I had not understood.

Some evenings I read to him; in short, I became his pet and at once aroused the jealousy of his wife. Later it was worse."

She describes the house as follows: "The manorhouse had, indeed, been renovated, but upon the old foundation, so that it was half old and had lost none of its somber appearance. It lacked not in dark underground passages nor in fearful tales of ghosts, so that I was almost dead with terror when I was obliged after dark to cross from the apartments of the servants to our own rooms. The way led through a long, dark corridor, lighted by high gothic windows, through which the light of the moon came in, making fantastic shapes upon the walls. It was said that a white lady haunted the passage, also one of the family of Dobren, who had been murdered there and who walked about in his shroud, from his room to the chapel, carrying his head under his arm.

"And my chamber! I was lost in it. It was high, dark, with tall windows and oaken blinds. The doors were of the same material, with heavy iron bolts which I always closed for the night. But one becomes accustomed to everyvthing; —I, too, soon felt at home in the old manor-house, and looked upon myself as one of the 'ladies of the castle' of whom I had read so much."

A young and beautiful castle maid must also have her knight, and so far as is known there were two such knights, who lived in the castle above. Of these she speaks:

"The one was a youth about seventeen years of age, a relative of the lord of the castle. He was a good boy, but somewhat foolish, handsome, but with no expression in his

face. We were good friends, but when I was told that he was in love with me, that was the end of our friendship.

"The other knight was quite different. He was no longer young, being about thirty-six years of age. He was dark, well built, but small. His face had something satanic in it, but was not repulsive. His forehead was high, his hair, dark brown; he had handsome white teeth, his eye—that was demoniac. He could look dreamily, lovingly, so that all the young women were in love with him. When he fixed his eye upon any one, which he often did, he was irresistible. The person was like a bird charmed by the eye of its destroyer.

"He was a strange man. At times he was a great spend-thrift, then again he was the most exemplary of men. Now he laughed at the whole world and no sentiment was sacred to him; and yet I saw the time when he was entirely overcome by his own feelings. He seemed cold, and yet he was the most passionate of men. He was a man of the world, experienced in all the ins and outs of society. Although fond of gay company, he himself was never gay. He was passionately fond of dancing, but was never carried away by the excitement. While he danced, his face was paler than usual, but his eyes betrayed the fire within.

"He had no respect for women. I never saw him kiss the hand of any lady, nor give a compliment to any of them. He held our mistress for nought; she was the butt of all his wit. He ruled the house; the steward liked him, and the rest of us were afraid of him. Whenever he fixed his eyes upon me, i trembled, and yet I was never angry; I was the only one whom he loved; before me he wept like a child, but that was much later. At this time he had regard for my youth

and treated me with great consideration, and severely reprimanded any one who dared utter a word of double meaning before me."

Bozena remained in this family only two years, but the instruction she gained in that short time was invaluable to her. Under the direction of the steward she had read many excellent books, and what he had not given her she took and read secretly. She had been placed there to learn German, music, and needle work. Music she soon gave up, when her instructor told her she had no talent for it. As for her needle work, her teacher found her very careless and often reprimanded her severely; but she bore his censure meekly, knowing that it was well deserved.

Her time was spent among books, and she lived in an ideal world whose inhabitants were the heroes and heroines of novels, poems, and dramas. When she returned home she continued her reading, borrowing books from the castle library.

Her life at home was quiet, but full of ideals and aspirations. She looked forward to the future as to a new world that had wondrous treasures in store for her.

But her dreams were cut short by her marriage, in 1837, to Joseph Nemec, an officer of finance in Kosteletz. It was a marriage without love, entered into at the wish of her father. How she regarded this step may be judged from her own words.

"The years of my girlhood were the most beautiful of my life. When I married I wept over my lost liberty, over the dreams and beautiful ideals forever ruined. . . Woman's heart is like wax, every picture is easily impressed; but

what does it all avail? Now everything seems to me pale, tame, and cold, and lead seems to course through my veins. I could weep over myself, when I consider my condition."

Although Madame Nemec looked upon her marriage as entirely unhappy, it was not without some redeeming features. Her husband was a very estimable man, beloved of many friends. He was, moreover, a man of culture, an ardent patriot, and had his wife been an ordinary woman they might have lived happily together. But what she lost in her marriage she tried to make up in her literary life.

While Madame Nemec had always taken a deep interest in all things pertaining to her country, and her early education had been in the Bohemian language, she knew nothing of the literature of her native land until the family moved to Polna, where she became acquainted with the writings of Tyl.[1] She had already written some tales, and now, roused by patriotic enthusiasm, she composed the beautiful poem, *To the Bohemian Women*. This and several other poems and tales gained her much popularity, so that when, in 1841, the family moved to Prague, she was received with open arms into the circle of young authors. The chief of these were Erben, Tyl, Chelakovsky, Nebesky, and Chejka.

The last named gentleman proved of the greatest service to her. He saw that she was introduced among the most cultivated ladies, provided the way for some culture in art, and induced her husband to engage for her a Bohemian teacher, which he not only willingly did, but himself began to study the language. These were happy and profitable days for the author, but they were of short duration. In

1845, her husband was again transferred, this time to Domazlitz (Taus). A new field of labor was now open to her. She found abundant material to work up, and during this time she wrote: *Pictures from Domazlitz*, *Fables*, *Karla*, and *The Mountain Village*.

Madame Nemec's experience at Domazlitz was somewhat singular. She delineated the life of the people so faithfully that some of the tradesmen, imagining that she was holding them up for ridicule, tried to rouse the people against her. Charles Havlichek[2] took her part, and so ably defended her in the papers that the people turned to her with greater love than before. She tried to instruct them through conversation, read to them, and lent them books, and they appreciated her kind labors, followed her from village to village, until the police interfered, thinking that she was propagating ideas hostile to the government. While at Domazlitz, she contracted the dread disease, consumption, so that her future work was done under great disadvantages.

In 1847, M. Nemec was transferred to Neumark, on the Bavarian frontier. Here his wife's health was considerably improved. She wrote: "I feel much better and am becoming fleshy; perhaps it is because my life in these mountains is so peaceful. We sent the two elder boys to Domazlitz to school, and I am very lonesome; you know I live only in my children. O, heavens, soon the world will claim them and then my heart shall yearn for them in vain!" This peaceful life at Neumark was of short duration; in 1848, they were transferred to Nymburg.

The same year came the stormy times when the revolutionary wave swept over Europe. Bohemia, too, was involved; and M. Nemec, as an ardent patriot, could not look on with indifference. In a letter dated at Nymburg we read: "Believe me, no one here knew what to do. All, Germans as well as Bohemians, wanted to go to the assistance of Prague. I wept for my husband as already lost, but was resigned, sending him in God's name to fight for his country." As might be supposed, she, too, was not silent; for all faithful Bohemians were carried away by enthusiasm, imagining that the time had come for delivering the great mass of their countrymen from servitude, and for securing for all constitutional rights. At this time she wrote *Peasants' Politics* which gives a very good idea of the way the countrymen looked upon the constitution, and the rights and privileges promised them.

The active part Madame Nemec and her husband took in the revolution did not remain overlooked by the government. In 1849, M. Nemec was transferred to Liberetz, the following year to Hungary, and in 1853, he was placed upon the retired list with a pension of three hundred and fifty florins. This was a great blow to the family, and from this time poverty was added to the numerous ills against which they had to struggle. The same year they lost their son, Henry, and Madame Nemec, broken down by her afflictions, was taken seriously ill.

After this the family lived mostly in Prague, M. Nemec being closely watched by the police. He engaged in some literary labors and held various positions on the staff of some of the newspapers. But the amount thus earned was

so small that the family were reduced to great want. A small collection was made for them; but the hosts of friends that had surrounded the promising author in the days of her prosperity scarcely showed themselves in her adversity. A few remained true, but they were not able to assist her. Her difficulties, too, were increased by her reckless generosity. This was a trait of her whole family and is well described in the story, in the scene where Grandmother relates to the Princess her journey from Silesia to Bohemia. Add to this her open and confiding nature, and it may easily be seen that she was often made the dupe of selfish, designing persons. She believed in them and shared with them all she had, whether it was much or little. Thus, when the collection spoken of above was given her, she immediately divided it with a young man who was just then in the house and who had awakened her sympathy by the recital of his own trials and financial difficulties. This, too, was one of the causes that often disturbed the domestic harmony of the Nemec family.

The year 1861 was the darkest of her life. Eager to seize any opportunity whereby she might relieve herself from eating the bitter bread of charity, she accepted the offer of a publisher at Lytomysl to give her her board and twelve florins for every thirty-two pages of manuscript which she should write. She accordingly moved to that city; but the publisher treated her most cruelly. Not only did he refuse to give her the price agreed upon, but he went so far as to order the hotel keeper not to give her any food at his charge. As she had come from Prague almost penniless, she was obliged to live on bread and water until she could

receive assistance from her husband. Her expenses ranged from four to eight kreutzers a day. She returned to Prague shortly after, completely discouraged and broken down both mentally and physically, and died the following year. She was buried in the old cemetery of Visehrad, and several years later the ladies of the American Club erected a suitable monument over her grave.

Her husband lived till 1869. Her son Charles is a professor in the Agricultural College at Tabor, Jaroslav fills a similar position in the Real School at Odessa, and her daughter, Dorothea, is a teacher in Jincin, Bohemia. The two motives that guided Madame Nemec in her work were her patriotism and her love for the common people. While at Domazlitz she wrote to a friend: "The common people, they are my joy; I feel refreshed whenever I grasp the hard, rough hand of one of these women."

In reply to the advice given in the Prager Zeitung, that all should learn German as fast as possible and thus end that eternal strife between the two nationalities, she says:

"Yes, that would be well, only that by so doing we should become estranged from the greater part of our nation, which looks to us for guidance and light." This is the key note to her whole life and work. She loved the common people and labored to elevate them. She knew that she could reach their hearts much more quickly through their mother tongue than through another language, and for this reason she wrote in Bohemian, although she had been better educated in the German language. Then, too, she longed to see her nation strong, great, and free, and many

fervent words were spoken and written by her to arouse the educated women to greater earnestness in its behalf.

As regards religion, Madame Nemec believed in the essential principles of Christianity, but was an enemy to priestcraft and superstition. Writing from Domazlitz she said:

"The ruin of several villages here is that accursed Jesuitism. Not far from here are two priests of that order, and you have no conception of the evil they have done! They have imposed upon the people, stupefied them, led them into poverty, so that they walk about bewildered like so many wandering sheep. And no one dares touch that hundred headed dragon!"

While a child, it was her custom to pray before the picture of Christ.

"While praying, I did not turn my eyes from it, and I gazed so long that it ceased to be a mere picture. Christ seemed to be before me in reality; to him I prayed, to him I made known my wants, asking for his help and guidance. My father praised me, said that I was pious, held me up as an example to the other children, who performed their devotions carelessly, often dozing or pushing each other; they did not see before them the living Christ!"

Madame Nemec was not the worshiper of mere culture. In one of her letters is the following:

"You say that you desire nothing so much as culture. Believe me, if you knew the nature of culture here (in Germany) as it is exhibited in its results, you would be astonished. Above all things I desire to protect my children against this culture. I know not what to think! My highest

aspirations, too, were to gain culture; and yet to-day I have the conviction that more precious than all learning is simplicity of manner and purity of heart. I see here among the cultured a contempt for worthy sentiments; I see the conceptions of virtue perverted or uprooted, and this not only among individuals, but throughout society. Domestic happiness, sincere love and tenderness, these are unknown. This culture of which the wealthy boast forms a deeper and deeper abyss betwen the learned and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, and who is there to reconcile these opposites?"

The works of Madame Nemec were collected and published, in 1862, in eight volumes, and again, in 1875, in six volumes. THE GRANDMOTHER is without question her best work, but *The Mountain Village* is also a novel of much excellence. As a story, it is superior to the former, since it has a more developed plot; but as a picture of Bohemian life, it is too local and restricted. The other works consist of shorter stories, tales and fables, and *Recollections from my Life in Hungary*.

Since the days of Madame Nemec many authors have arisen, and a great deal has been written that has been received with much favor by the public. As novelists, Mrs. Caroline Svetla, Alois Jirasek, Benes Trebisky, and, perhaps, some others are superior to Madame Nemec; but as a faithful artist of Bohemian country life,—one that saw and was able to reproduce the salient characteristics of the country people,—she has no equal; and her works will ever be regarded as a precious legacy to her people.

1. ↑ One of the earliest novelists of this period in Bohemia.
2. ↑ One of the patriots who fell a victim to Austrian intolerance.

Chapter 1

Table of Contents

THE GRANDMOTHER.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

IT was long, long ago, when last I gazed on that dear face, kissed those pale, wrinkled cheeks, and tried to fathom the depths of those blue eyes, in which were hidden so much goodness and love. Long ago it was when, for the last time, those aged hands blessed me. Our Grandmother is no more; for many a year she has slept beneath the cold sod.

But to me she is not dead. Her image, with its lights and shadows, is imprinted upon my soul, and as long as I live, I shall live in her. Were I master of an artist's brush, how differently, dear Grandmother, would I glorify you! but this sketch—I know not, I know not how it will please. But you used to say, "Upon this earthy ball, not a soul that pleases all." If, then, a few readers shall find as much pleasure in reading about you as I do in writing, I shall be content.

Grandmother had three children, a son and two daughters. For many years the older daughter lived with relatives in Vienna; when she married, the younger took her place. The son, a mechanic, worked at his trade in a small town in Bohemia, while Grandmother dwelt in a village upon the borders of Silesia. Her family consisted of herself and Betsey, an old servant who had been in the family ever since Grandmother could remember.

Grandmother did not live the life of a recluse; all the people of the village were to her brothers and sisters; she was to them a mother, a counsellor, and a friend. No christening, wedding, or funeral could go on without her. The course of her life was so even, her days were so busy and happy, that she desired no change—she would have been content to live thus forever.

This even course of life was disturbed by a letter. Grandmother often received letters from her children, but none ever came before, fraught with such momentous questions for her to solve. It was from her daughter in Vienna, who told her mother that her husband had obtained service in the household of a certain princess, whose estates were but a few miles distant from the village where Grandmother lived, and that he was to be at home with his family during the summer only, while the princess lived in the country, and therefore it was their earnest desire that Grandmother should come to live with them. Indeed, no excuse would be accepted, as both she and the children had set their hearts upon it and were eagerly looking for her arrival.

Upon reading this letter Grandmother burst into tears. She did not know what to do. She loved her daughter, and her heart yearned towards her grandchildren whom she had not seen; on the other hand, the good people of the village were very dear to her, and it was hard to break away from all the old associations. But blood is thicker than water. After much tossing up of the matter, her maternal instincts came to the aid of her convictions, and she decided to go. The old cottage, with all it contained, was given over into the care of Betsey with these words: "I don't know how I shall like it there; and perhaps, after all, I shall die here among you."

A few days after this a wagon stood at the door of the cottage. Wenzel, the driver, placed upon it Grandmother's large flowered chest; her feather-beds tied in a sheet; the spinning wheel, to her an indispensable piece of furniture; a basket, containing four top-knotted chickens; and a bag with a pair of party-colored kittens. Last, but not least, came Grandmother herself, her eyes red from weeping. It was no wonder that she wept; for around her stood the villagers, who had come to bid her farewell, and followed by their blessing she rode slowly to her new home.

What bright anticipations, what rejoicing at The Old Bleachery,—for thus the people called the isolated house that had been assigned to Grandmother's daughter, Mrs. Proshek, as her home on the estates of the princess. Every few moments the children ran out to the road to see if Wenzel was coming; and every passer by heard the wondrous news that Grandma was coming. The children

kept asking each other, "How do you suppose Grandma will look?"

They knew several grandmas, whose images were curiously confounded in their little heads, and they could not decide to which of them their own could be compared.

At last the long expected team arrived. "Grandma's come!" shouted the children in a chorus. Mr. and Mrs. Proshek rushed out to meet her; Betty, the maid, followed carrying the youngest child, and behind her came the three children accompanied by the two dogs, Sultan and Tyrol.

The wagon stopped at the gate, and Wenzel helped a little old woman to alight. She was dressed in the garb of a peasant, having her head wrapped up in a large white kerchief. This was something the children had never seen before, and they stood still, their eyes fixed upon their grandmother. Mr. Proshek welcomed her cordially, her daughter embraced and kissed her, and Betty presented the dimpled cheeks of Adelka to be kissed. Grandmother smiled, called the child "her own sweet fledgling," and signed her with the cross. Then she turned to the other children and said: "O my darlings, my little ones, how I have longed to see you!" But the children, with downcast eyes, stood as if frozen to the spot, and uttered never a word; and not until they were ordered by their mother would they step forward to be kissed, and even then they could not recover from their amazement. They had known many grandmothers in their life, but never one like this; they could not turn their eyes from her; they walked round and round and examined her from head to foot.

They wondered at the curious little coat, with its full pleating, like organ pipes, behind; the green linsey-wolsey petticoat, bordered with a wide ribbon was an object of great admiration; they were pleased with the flowered kerchief that was tied beneath the large, white head shawl. They sat down upon the ground that they might examine better the red wedge-shaped insertion in her white stockings, and also her black slippers. Willie touched the pretty patchwork on her handbag, and the fouryearold Johnny, the older of the two, slyly raised her white apron; he had felt something hard beneath it, something hidden away in her large outside pocket, and he wanted to know what it was. Barunka, the oldest of the children, pushed him away, whispering: "Wait, I'll tell on you! you want to feel in Grandma's pocket!"

That whisper was a little too loud, it would have been heard behind the ninth wall; Grandmother noticed it, and turning from her daughter she put her hand in her pocket and said: "Well, look at what I have here!" She placed upon her lap a rosary, a jack-knife, several bits of crust, a piece of twine, two horses and two dolls made of gingerbread; these were for the children. As she distributed them she said: "Grandma brought you something more." Thus speaking she took from her handbag some apples and Easter eggs, and set the kittens and chickens at liberty. The children shouted with delight. Grandma was the best of all grandmas! "These kittens were born in May, are four colored, and will make excellent mousers. These chickens are so tame that if Barunka teaches them, they will follow her about like puppies."

The children then began to inquire about this and that, and soon were on the best of terms with Grandmother. Their mother rebuked their endless questioning; but Grandmother said: "Never mind, Theresa, we are happy in each other's love," and so they had it their own way. One sat in her lap, another stood upon a bench behind her, and Barunka stood before her, intently gazing into her face. One wondered at her snow-white hair, another at her wrinkled forehead, and the third cried: "Why Grandma, you have but four teeth!" She smiled, smoothed down Barunka's dark brown hair, and said: "My child, I am old; when you grow old, you, too, will look different." But they could not comprehend how their smooth, soft hands could ever become wrinkled like her's. The hearts of the grandchildren were won the first hour, for Grandmother surrendered herself to them entirely. Mr. Proshek won her love by his frankness and the goodness of heart that beamed from his handsome face. One thing, however, she did not like, and that was that he could speak no Bohemian. What little German she had ever known she had forgotten, and yet she so longed to have a talk with John. He comforted her some by telling her that although he could not speak the language, he understood it quite well. She soon perceived that two languages were used in the family: the children and the maid spoke to Mr. Proshek in Bohemian, while he replied in German, which they understood. Grandmother hoped that in time she, too, would be able to understand it; and in the meantime she would get along as well as she could.

Another thing that did not quite suit her was the appearance of her daughter. She had expected to find her as she was when she left home, a bright, cheerful peasant girl; and now she saw before her a stately lady, in city garments, of stiff manners and few words. This was not her Theresa! She observed, too, that their domestic life was quite different from that to which she had been accustomed; and although, for the first few days, she was surprised and delighted, she soon grew tired of the new ways, and had it not been for the grandchildren, she would have packed up and returned to her own little cottage.

Mrs. Proshek, it is true, had some city notions; but she was not to be disliked for this, for on the whole she was avery estimable woman. She loved her mother dearly, and the departure of the latter would have grieved her much. She was not a little disturbed when she perceived that her mother was becoming homesick; and guessing the cause, she said to her: "Mother, I know that you are used to labor, and that you would not be content here, if you had nothing else to do than to go about with the children. Should you desire to spin, I have some flax up in the garret, and if the crop is good I shall soon have much more; still I should prefer to have you see to the housekeeping. My duties at the castle, together with my sewing and cooking, occupy all my time, so that the rest must be left entirely to the servants. Now, if you will be helpful to me in this, you may manage everything your own way." "That I will gladly!" replied Grandmother, overcome with joy. That very day she climbed up the ladder into the garret to see about the flax,

and the next day the children watched the process of making thread upon the spinning wheel.

The first thing of which Grandmother assumed full charge was the baking of bread. She did not like to see the servants handling "the gift of God" without any reverence or ceremony. They never signed it with the cross, either before or after taking it out of the oven; they handled it as if the loaves were so many bricks. When Grandmother set the sponge, she blessed it, and this she repeated each time she handled it until the bread was placed upon the table. While it was rising no gaping fellow dared come near it lest he should "overlook" it and make it fall; and even little Willie, when he came into the kitchen during baking time, never forgot to say: "May God bless it!"

Whenever Grandmother baked bread, the children had a feast. For each one she baked a little loaf filled with plum or apple sauce; this had never been done before. They, however, had to learn to take care of the crumbs."The crumbs belong to the fire," she used to say as she brushed them up and threw them into the stove. If one of the children dropped a bit of bread, she made him pick it up, saying: "Don't you know that if one steps upon a crumb, the souls in purgatory weep?" She did not like to see bread cut uneven, for she used to say: "Whoever does not come out even with his bread will not come out even with people." One day Johnny begged her to cut his slice from the side of the loaf, as he wanted the crust, but she said: "When one cuts into the side of the loaf, he cuts off God's heels! But whether it be so or not, you must not get into the habit of

being dainty about your food." So Master Johnny could not indulge his appetite for crusts.

Whenever there was a piece of bread that the children had not eaten, it always found its way into Grandmother's pocket; and when they happened to go to the water, she threw it to the fishes, or crumbled it up for the birds and ants. In short, she did not waste a crumb, and ever counseled the children: "Be thankful for God's gift; without it there are hard times, and God punishes him who does not value it." Whenever one of the children dropped his bread, upon picking it up he was obliged to kiss it. This was a kind of penance; and whenever Grandmother found a pea, she picked it up, found upon it the chalice, and kissed it with reverence. All this she taught the children to do.

If at any time a feather lay in the path, she pointed to it saying: "Stoop down, Barunka!" Sometimes Barunka was lazy and said: "O Grandma, what is one feather!" But Grandmother at once reproved her. "You must remember, child, that one added to another makes more, and a good housewife will jump over the fence for a feather."

The larger of the two front rooms was used by Mrs. Proshek as her bed-room. Here on occasions of domestic festivals the family used to dine or take their lunch. In this room they had modern furniture; but Grandmother did not like it here. It seemed to her impossible to sit comfortably in those stuffed chairs with their carved elbows, when one had to be constantly on one's guard lest they should tip over or break in pieces. Once, only, had she made the experiment. When she sat down and the springs gave way, she was so frightened that she almost screamed. The

children laughed at her and told her to come and sit down again, assuring ner that the chair would not break; but she would not try it again. "O go away with your rocker, who wants to sit in it? it may do well enough for you, but not for me." She was afraid to place anything upon the polished stands, lest they should be rubbed or scratched; and as for the large glass case that held all sorts of bric-a-brac, she declared that it was a nuisance; for the children were sure to knock into it and break something, and then get a whipping from their mother. Whenever Grandmother held Adelka, she sat by the piano, and when the little girl cried, she always quieted her by striking some of the keys; for Barunka had taught her to play with one hand the tune to the words, "Those are horses, those are horses mine."[1] While she played she kept time with her head. Sometimes she remarked: "What things people do invent! one would think a bird were shut up in there; it sounds like the voices of living creatures."

Grandmother never sat in the parlor unless she was obliged to do so. She liked best her own little room, which was next to the kitchen and the servants' apartments. Her room was furnished according to her own taste. By the side of the large stove that stood in the corner was a long bench. Next to the wall stood her bed, at whose foot was the large flowered chest. On the other side was a small bed, where Barunka slept; she had obtained this privilege as a special favor from her mother. In the middle of the room stood the large bass-wood table, the legs of which were bound together by braces thatserved as foot-rests. Above the table hung a dove made of an egg-shell and