



HARVEST-HOME IN POLAND.

POLAND AND THE POLES.

POLAND, in North-eastern Europe, was for ages a flourishing kingdom; but after long and severe struggles it was subdued and spoiled by the power of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. It is now divided among the conquerors, the first possessing the largest share. In days of prosperity it had a population of 11,000,000, but which is now reduced to about 5,000,000.

The Poles were formerly noted for

their courage and independence, but are now held by their masters in a state of great subjection. In personal appearance those of rank are tall and of noble bearing. Their countenances are open and generous; and in manners they are polite and lively. But the poorer classes are generally short in stature, and rude and slovenly in their habits. A scanty supply of food, and the hard service which they render to their taskmasters, tend to make them a debased and impoverished race.

In regard to dress, the English and

French style now commonly prevails; though there are many who still adhere to the old national fashion—a bright-coloured and braided waistcoat with sleeves, an upper robe, or cloak, a sash fastened round the body, leggings of yellow leather, and a fur cap, while a sword hangs at the side, as a mark of noble birth. The ladies, who are usually fair and graceful in manner, wear a *Polonaise*, or pelisse edged with fur. The working classes seldom use shoes, their clothes are scant and coarse, and their ragged children run after the carriages of travellers with a piteous cry of *Kleba, kleba*, or "Bread, bread." On Sunday the female peasantry adorn themselves in a tawdry patchwork of glowing colours.

There are many Jews in Poland, who are usually the innkeepers of the country, and wretched and dirty ones they are indeed. The Poles belong partly to the Romish and partly to the Greek Church. Some efforts are being made to make known to them a purer faith, among which is the printing of religious tracts in their own tongue. Farmers are the most thriving class of the common people of the land. With them the harvest-home, as among other people, is a time of great festivity. Our engraving, from a Polish print, represents a scene sometimes witnessed on such occasions.

So early as 1658, more than a hundred years ago, before the actual partition of Poland, a scheme for the division of its territories was discussed by the courts of Sweden, Austria, and Prussia, and, but for the interference of France, would probably then have been carried into effect.

For a time, it is true, the great qualities and exploits of war of John Sobieski averted impending doom. The champion of Christendom, he saved the capture of the Austrian capital by the Turks, and dealt a blow to the Mussulman power which permanently checked its advance into Europe. But even before the death of this sagacious and heroic prince,

Poland was torn by contending factions, past all hope of cure.

To the second partition, which took place in 1793, the Diet gave an enforced sanction. In it Austria had no share. Four thousand square miles of territory was now all that remained of Poland, which, on the one hand, had extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and on the other, from Smolensko to Prague. Stung to the quick by a sense of the national degradation, the Poles, of their own accord, took up arms. Led by the brave Kosciusko, they compelled the invaders to evacuate Cracow. There they proclaimed the constitution of 1791. Encouraged by successes, the citizens of Warsaw rose, and, after a resistance which lasted thirty-six hours, drove out the Russians. Kosciusko now fell back on the capital, where he was besieged for three months by the forces of the King of Prussia.

After sustaining a loss of many thousand men, the Prussians were compelled to withdraw. Left thus free, the Polish leader marched against the converging armies of Russia. Disappointed in the reinforcements on which he had calculated, and unable to make a safe retreat, nothing remained but to risk a battle with the disciplined forces of the enemy. Though a glorious defence was made by the Poles on the right and centre, a furious charge of Russian cavalry on their unsupported left, threw them into irretrievable confusion. Kosciusko, covered with wounds, was taken prisoner. The fate of Poland was now virtually sealed. The remorseless Suwarroff pressed on to Warsaw. The assault on the fortified suburb of Praga, by seven columns of Russians, was met by all the energy which valour could impart, but in vain.

The victorious Suwarroff entered Warsaw. Twenty-nine thousand Poles perished. The aged Polish king was carried to Russia, where, in captivity, a few years afterwards he died.