



M. Wańkowicz

**IN A POLISH
FIELD-HOSPITAL
IN
1918**

From the Diary of a Red Cross Sister

Translated from the Polish by Mrs. Aniela Pruszyńska

1913

IN A TOWN

AT THE

1913

1913

Nº 010

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The sketch on the cover designed by Mr. St. Dembiński represents the Polish Military Cross "For Valour" awarded to the authoress of the diary and to the other sisters of the Red Cross Hospital in Cichinicze.

PREFACE

(By the Translator)

THIS little book "*Szpital w Cichiniczach*" appeared in Polish a short time ago. Many such have been written before and since: if I undertook to translate this one in particular, it was because I thought it gives such a good idea of the Polish spirit which has grown through centuries of strife in the defence of Christendom and Christian ideals of liberty and honour and right—that undying spirit, hopeful against all hope, which never doubts or throws down its armour, trusting to the end in victory, and even in the moment of danger and in the face of death is more mindful of Poland's honour than of its own individual life or death.

In that, perhaps, lies the great difference between Poles and Russians.

The characteristics of the Russians were well understood by Tolstoy, the passiveness in the face of evil; their history proves it. They never could, or even tried to shake off a yoke. They bore with passive patience over 200 years of Tartar captivity, then, when the decadence of the "Golden Horde" freed them, they suffered centuries of tyranny of their own Tsars. Now, they bear the Bolshevik rule as patiently. Political murder was always their only way of fighting against evil.

Poland pushed back over 98 Tartar invasions which threatened Europe. When she failed at last, after 800 years of glorious existence, outnumbered by the united forces of three of the greatest military powers of Europe, she rose six times against her oppressors, to regain independence. Those who have been in the former Polish borderland at the time of the Revolution, might have seen

Bolsheviks and the German army has come. I was eager to see her. She had just come from "the front" as a sister of the Polish Red Cross, preceded by fame which told of her doings in Cichinicze.

"Well, Sophie, how was it all"—I asked my girl of the Yogis and bull-doggies.

She smiled. "Oh, nothing. We've been there and we've come back—that's all".

Although there was ideally everything in that answer, I never rested till I got at her diary. There were several bound copybooks, the work of years—little of memoirs, much of a chronicle, written with a scrupulous exactitude that was almost pathetic. From all the collection I picked out the episode of Cichinicze.

From those pages, written in sleepless nights, in the face of death and shame, I note out the living tale from the words of the narrator, spectator and heroine.

I give it here. Like many others it is "a part of the epos", a part of that never ending epos of Poland's Borderland, that epos broken up and going on for centuries, written not in books or illustrated history, not even in song and legend: for, in that land of un-Polish ethnographical undergrowth, there was nobody to create it, but engraved silently in the souls and characters of men.

That part of Poland's Borderland exists no longer, having been ceded by the Treaty of Riga to Soviet Russia. Let this tale fall upon its grave, like a wreath of white flowers.

M. Wańkiewicz

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