

[Here We Can Be Glad #5]

N.H.F.W.P. #1801

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Subject; Living Lore

HERE WE CAN BE GLAD

Chapter 5

Honey-moons were unknown in those days. So Monday saw Katherine and Jan in their places in the mill. Katherine worked up to the birth of Charlotte, her first child. Meanwhile they had moved to larger quarters. They now lived in two rooms, the kitchen was the centre of the household. They did everything but sleep there. Katherine was a very good cook. She delighted in making the old Polish dishes, pirogi, golumpi, sauer krout sweetened with fresh cabbage and sometimes mushrooms added or dried peas to thicken it and always barszoz -- soup / of every variety, beet, mushroom, sausage, fish. This barszoz with black rye bread and fruit and perhaps cheese was their supper. The pastries and breads which took so long to bake she bought at the Polish bakery. This shop was a God-send to the women. It saved their strength and time for work in the mill. But it was easy to cook now, for in this new place Katherine had a new stove. Almost new for Jan had bought it from someone returning to Poland. This stove was Katherine's delight. A neighbor came in one day just as she finished cleaning and polishing it. What an opportunity to show off the stove!

Katherine turns one damper. "See, make hot the stove and this one make hot the oven. This one for cool off, no cook now or only a leetle bit."

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The place for the ashes and the tank for the water all had to be explained and shown. "No have fancy stove like this in Poland. Men make stove. Two weeks, men make stove. No make of this, so hard, iron. No, use ground. Take beeg piece ground, go like this," she treads with her feet.

"Make dough, like bread, twist like bread. Lay one piece down and another down and another piece. Soon have stove. Man take wood, plenty

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WOOD / BUILD BEEG HOOD MAKE FAR BACK. Soon all finished. Maybe last two years. Sometime maybe break. Woman take ground, make dough."

Katherine rises and treads, again making dough. She gestures with vigor , showing how the woman fills the cracks in the break of the stove and smooths all it over.

"Now, alright. Bake again good, make bread cake. All time burn wood in stove. No burn coal in Poland. No like coal, no understand. Use wood here too. Better, much better."

"Fired with the neighbor's interest, she asks, "You like see pictures of old country? Yes?"

With one of her quick motions she darts into the bed-room and dashes back with her black hand-bag. It is crammed with a woman's usual assortment of letters, cards, make-up, keys, a little money and what she wants to show-- family photographs.

"This my fadder, mudder. What color dress? Black, all black. Kerchief on head, bright, ver' bright, all 'round kerchief bright. She make and fadder, he can make. Fadder strong, ver' strong. Big moustache. see? Strong man."

The next photograph is a family group taken much earlier. A very large square is hanging on the wall in the background. The children's and mother's clothes are lavishly embroidered. She explains, "Family leetle, all leetle. Here fadder, mudder, Charlotte,

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Kathleen, me, Henry. Long dresses wear, beeg, beeg (reaches way out with her arms) plenty big. No wear here, me send back to sister, she wear. Me help, Charlotte help make dresses fancy. Look funny, eh? Pretty? Maybe. No wear here, only church, have celebration then wear. You like big square? My fadder make on loom. He goes up, down with 3 feet and swish, swish with shuttle."

Words are not enough to give this picture of her father at the loom. She must execute all the motions of weaving.

"He make good. Me ask in letter, they send me one maybe, have for play in church."

Katherine shows more family photographs. The men are less foreign looking than the women, even the women with 'stylish' English clothes.

"This my brudder, his girl. He marry her. He smatt smart man, make money. You knew Jew, yes? He sell to Jew. Raise plenty eggs, pig, chicken, milk-- sell Jew. Make plenty money, he smart man."

The last picture she shows is one of a church. Very simple, with lovely lines, apparently in the country.

"Here picture of church, all new. Break up old church, all break. Go to church in old stable. Make all new church on same spot. Ver' nice,"

To the right and back of the church is a thatched cottage.

"That," points Katherine, "is my home. Mudder, brudder, live there now. Sister work in shoe factory. Marry. No live here, live city. Other sister she dead. All live in Poland, only me in America."

Katherine sees her neighbor to the stair top, " Thank you. Hear all about Poland. Thank you!"

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Having awakened memories of her home Katherine decides to write to her mother. She sends her a dollar. She figuses, "One dollar, she go to priest, he geeve two dollar and half Polish money. For two dollar geeve Five. Lots money. Mudder glad. She think. 'Katherine, she reech, she glad in America."