the web, threading silk on the looms and smoothing the surface with her hand, while the weaver lowers down strands of purple, silver, and gold, creating brilliant flower motifs; even so the breeze wove its web of vapors over the earth, while the sun embroidered it.

Matthias stood warming himself in the sun. He had said his prayers and was setting about his domestic chores. Gathering an armful of grass and leaves, he sat down in front of his house and whistled. At once a host of rabbits leapt from their holes. Their long ears, like white daffodils springing up from the grass, shone white; their eyes glistened like blood-red rubies beading the velvet green cushion of the sward. Cocking their ears they sat up and looked about. At last, lured by the cabbage leaves, the entire little flock of furballs scampered toward Matthias. To his very feet they hopped, then up on his lap and shoulders. The old man—himself as white as a rabbit—loved to have them flock around him. And so, stroking their warm furry bodies with one hand and scooping up millet seed from his hat with the other, he scattered the grain over the grass for the sparrows. At once a noisy throng dropped from the cottage eaves.

The old man was thus taking pleasure in their banquet, when the rabbits suddenly bolted for their holes; with a flutter of wings the startled birds returned to the eaves. A party of new guests walked smartly into the yard. A delegation had arrived from the rectory to seek Matthias’s advice.

“Praised be the Lord Jesus Christ!” they greeted him from a distance with low bows.

“Now and forever, amen” came Matthias’s reply.

On learning of the party’s pressing business, he ushered them into his cottage. They filed in and seated themselves on the bench. The leading delegate stood up among them and began to present the matter. Meanwhile, more and more of the nobility arrived. Most of them were Dobrzyn-folk, but there were also a good many neighbors from the surrounding villages. Some were armed, some not. Some arrived in traps, some in britzkas. Others came mounted, still others on foot. They drew up their carts, hitched their rigs to the young birch trees and, burning with curiosity over the progress of the talks, began to mill about the house. The parlor being now filled, they crowded into the entranceway. Others, thrusting their heads through the open window, listened intently.

(to be continued in the next issue)

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