

## THE POPCORN MAN.

Clinton Scollard in St. Nicholas.

There's a queer little man lives down the street

Where two of the broadest highways meet,  
In a queer little house that's half of it glass,  
With windows open to all who pass,  
And a low little roof that's nearly flat,  
And a chimney as black as papa's best hat.  
Oh, the house is built on this funny plan  
Because it's the home of the popcorn man!

How does he sleep, if he sleeps at all?  
He must roll up like a rubber ball,  
Or like a squirrel, and store himself  
All huddly-cuddly under the shelf.  
If he wanted to stretch he'd scarce have space

In his bare little, spare little, square little place.

He seems like a rat cooped up in a can,  
This brisk little, frisk little popcorn man.

I know he's wise by the way he looks,  
For he's just like the man I've seen in books,

With his hair worn off and his squinty eyes,  
And his wrinkles too—oh, I know he's wise!

And then just think of the way he makes  
The corn all jump into snowy flakes  
With a "pop! pop! pop!" in a covered pan,  
This queer little, dear little popcorn man!

## THE ABDUCTION OF A KING.

The abduction of Stanislaus Augustus, king of Poland, in the very midst of Warsaw, his own capital, was probably as audacious an exploit as any body of conspirators ever conceived or accomplished. Perhaps I should say "nearly" accomplished, since at the last moment the king effected his escape, but in its earlier stages the attempt was completely successful. The instigators of the offense were the confederate Polish nobles, who had never recognized Stanislaus as lawfully elected, and, not without reason, looked upon him as the mere tool of Russian tyranny.

The man who planned the details of the abduction was the celebrated Polish patriot Pulaski. He it was who engaged a body of forty adventurers to carry it out, under the leadership of three daring men, Lukowski, Strawinski and Kosinski, whom he had won over, and who had sworn to deliver up to him the king, dead or alive.

Making their way by stealthy journeys from Czitschokow, in Great Poland, they entered Warsaw on the 2d of November, without being discovered. They were disguised as peasants in charge of carts loaded with hay, under which were concealed their saddles, weapons and ordinary dress.

They did not all penetrate into the heart of the city; some remained at the gates. The others, on the following evening, collected, with due precautions, in the street of the Capucins; for they calculated, "from information received," that the king would pass that way on returning to his palace at the accustomed hour.

And so it happened.

Between nine and ten o'clock, leaving the residence of his uncle, Prince Czar-

toriski, to whom he had been paying a visit, the king drove into the trap prepared for him. His escort did not exceed some fifteen or sixteen grooms and troopers, and an aid-de-camp rode with him in his carriage.

Suddenly a number of well-armed men sprang out of the darkness, and surrounded both the carriage and escort, ordering the coachman to pull up. Before he could obey, a shower of bullets clattered against the vehicle and struck down an equerry who had posted himself on the doorstep to defend his master. The escort had fled at the first shot; even the aid-de-camp was gone; the king was all alone. It was a pitch-dark night, and he attempted to profit by the darkness; but before he had taken half-a-dozen steps, a rough hand clutched hold of his hair. "We have you now," cried the man who had stopped him; "your hour is come!" and a pistol was discharged so close to his face that he afterwards said he could feel the heat of the flame. At the same time a sabre stroke was aimed at his head, and cut through his hat and hair to his skull. Meanwhile the conspirators had remounted their horses; two of them seized his collar and dragged him on behind them, while they rode at full gallop five hundred paces through the streets of Warsaw.

The alarm had by this time been given in both the palace and the city. The guards hastened to the scene of the outrage, but discovered only the King's hat, soaked in his blood. It was at once concluded that he had been killed, and his dead body carried off by the murderers; the city was filled with all kinds of dreadful rumors.

The King was soon breathless and exhausted with the cruel treatment to which he had been subjected. He was unable to stand, and his captors were obliged to mount him on horseback. Then they proceeded at a still more rapid pace. On reaching the city gate they found it closed, so that the only means of escape was by leaping the ditch. They did not hesitate. The King was of course compelled to follow their example. He pushed his horse forward, but he fell in the middle. A second attempt, a second failure, and the poor animal broke his leg. Stanislaus was dragged out covered with mud and greatly disordered; another horse was provided, and the desperate ride resumed. But not before they had relieved him of all his valuables, leaving only his handkerchief and tablets. Even Lukowski shared in the plunder, snatching the ribbon of the King's black eagle, with the diamond cross attached to it.

Most of the conspirators now dispersed; no doubt in order to warn their chiefs of the captive's approach. Only seven remained, under the command of Kosinski. The night had grown so heavy that they had lost their bearings, and knew not where they were. Moreover, their

horses were spent with fatigue, and would not budge a step further. The party were compelled to alight, and forced the King to do the same—though he had but one boot, the other having stuck in the mud of the city ditch.

For some time they continued to wander about the fields, unable to discover any regular road, or to get out of the neighborhood of Warsaw. At length they remounted King Stanislaus, two of them holding him up in the saddle with their hands, while a third led the horse by the bridle. Thus they stumbled on, until the King, perceiving that they had struck into a path which led to the village called Burskow, warned them that some Russian soldiers were stationed there, who would probably attempt his rescue. Strange advice, you will say, for the King to have given his abductors; but it was really dictated by consummate prudence. He was reasonably afraid that on seeing the Russian guard the conspirators might have killed him and taken to flight; whereas by informing them of the danger to which they were exposing themselves, he to some extent gained their confidence. And, as a matter of fact, thenceforward they treated him with great lenity. Finding himself unable to endure any longer the painful posture they had forced upon him he begged them to provide him with a boot and another horse. To this they assented; and then resumed their journey over the pathless tracts, frequently retracing their course without knowing it, until they finally found themselves in the wood of Bielany, not more than a league from Warsaw.

Meanwhile the capital was a scene of consternation and perplexity. The guards were afraid that if they pressed the pursuit of the captors, the latter, in their rage, might put the King to death under the cover of darkness. On the other hand, by delaying, they gave them time to convey their victim to some secure retreat, whence it might not be possible to rescue him. At last, several nobles mounted their horses and followed up the traces of the conspirators until they reached the point where the King had crossed the ditch. There they picked up his pelisse, which the King had lost in the scuffle, and as it was blood-spotted and shot-torn, it confirmed them in their belief that the king was no more.

Stanislaus and his captors were still wandering in the wood of Bielany, when they were suddenly alarmed by the sounds of the Russian patrol. After holding a short conference together four of them disappeared, leaving Kosinski and two other guards with the king. A quarter of an hour later they came upon a second Russian guard, and the two men fled, so that the king was alone with Kosinski. Both had abandoned their horses and were on foot. Exhausted by all he had undergone, Stanislaus begged